

- Silence
- Poetry & discussion
- Prayer

WHAT JESUS RUNS AWAY FROM

— Rumi

The son of Mary, Jesus, hurries up a slope as though a wild animal were chasing him.

Someone following him asks, "*Where are you going? No one is after you.*"

Jesus keeps on, saying nothing, across two more fields.

"*Are you the one who says words over a dead person, so that he wakes up?*"

"*I am.*"

"*Did you not make the clay birds fly?*"

"*Yes.*"

"*Who then could possibly cause you to run like this?*"

Jesus slows his pace.

"*I say the Great Name over the deaf and the blind, they are healed.*

Over a stony mountainside, and it tears its mantle down to the navel.

Over non-existence, it comes into existence. But when I speak lovingly for hours, for days, with those who take human warmth and mock it, when I say the Name to them, nothing happens. They remain rock, or turn to sand, where no plants can grow.

Other diseases are ways for mercy to enter, but this non-responding breeds violence and coldness toward God. I am fleeing from that."

"*As little by little air steals water, so praise dries up and evaporates with foolish people who refuse to change.*

Like cold stone you sit on, a cynic steals body heat. He doesn't actually feel the sun."

Jesus wasn't running from actual people. He was teaching in a new way.

-- Version by Coleman Barks

"*The Essential Rumi*"

HarperSanFrancisco, 1995

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Flee from the foolish;

even Jesus fled from them.

Much blood has been shed by companionship with fools!

Air absorbs water little by little;

even so, the fool drains you of spirit.

He steals your heat and leaves you cold, like one who puts a stone beneath you.

The flight of Jesus wasn't caused by fear, for he is safe from the mischief of fools; his purpose was to teach by example.

-- Version by Camille and Kabir Helminski

"*Rumi: Jewels of Remembrance*"

Threshold Books, 1996

## THIRST — Mary Oliver

Another morning and I wake with thirst for the goodness I do not have.

I walk out to the pond and all the way

God has given us such beautiful lessons.

Oh Lord, I was never a quick scholar but sulked and hunched over my books past the

hour and the bell; grant me, in your mercy,

a little more time. Love for the earth

and love for you are having such a long

conversation in my heart. Who knows what will finally happen or where I will be sent,

yet already I have given a great many things away, expecting to be told to pack nothing,

except the prayers which, with this thirst,

I am slowly learning.

**The Deliverer** — *Tishani Joshi*

**OUR LADY OF THE LIGHT  
CONVENT, KERALA**

The sister here is telling my mother  
How she came to collect children  
Because they were crippled or dark or girls.

Found naked in the streets,  
Covered in garbage, stuffed in bags,  
Abandoned at their doorstep.

One of them was dug up by a dog,  
Thinking the head barely poking above the  
ground  
Was bone or wood, something to chew.

This is the one my mother will bring.

**\*\*\* MILWAUKEE AIRPORT, USA**

The parents wait at the gates.  
They are American so they know about  
ceremony  
And tradition, about doing things right.

They haven't seen or touched her yet.  
Don't know of her fetish for plucking hair  
off hands,  
Or how her mother tried to bury her.  
But they are crying.  
We couldn't stop crying, my mother said,  
Feeling the strangeness of her empty arms.

\* \* \* This girl grows up on video tapes,  
Sees how she's passed from woman  
To woman. She returns to twilight corners.

To the day of her birth, How it happens in  
some desolate hut  
Outside village boundaries  
Where mothers go to squeeze out life,

Watch body slither out from body,  
Feel for penis or no penis,  
Toss the baby to the heap of others,

Trudge home to lie down for their men  
again.

**BUMIPARSHA** — *Thich Nhat Hanh*

Death comes with his impressive scythe  
and says, "*You should be afraid of me.*"

I look up and ask,

"*Why should I be afraid of you?*"

"*Because I will make you dead.*"

"*I will make you nonexistent.*"

"*How can you make me nonexistent?*"

Death does not answer.

He swings his impressive scythe.

I say, "*I come and I go. Then I come again.*"

"*And I go again. I always come back. You  
can neither make me exist nor nonexistent.*"

"*How do you know that you will come  
again?*" Death asks.

"*I know because I have done that countless  
times,*" I say.

"*How do I know that you are telling the  
truth? Who can be the witness?*" Death  
frowns.

I touch the Earth and say, "*Earth is the  
witness. She is my mother.*"

Suddenly, Death hears the music.

Suddenly, Death hears the birds singing  
from all directions.

Suddenly, Death sees the trees blossoming.

Earth makes herself apparent to Death  
and smiles lovingly to him.

Death melts in the loving gaze of Earth.

O my beloved,

touch Earth every time you get scared.

Touch her deeply,

and your sorrow will melt away.

Touch her deeply,

and you will touch the Deathless.

**Delivered: A *Blessing*** — *Jan Richardson*

From the hundred wants  
that tug at us.  
From the thousand voices  
that hound us.  
From every fear  
that haunts us.  
From each confusion  
that inhabits us.

From what comes  
to divide, to destroy.  
From what disturbs  
and does not let us rest.

Deliver us, o God,  
and draw us into  
your relentless  
peace.

**SABBATHS 2001** — *Wendell Berry*

He wakes in darkness. All around  
are sounds of stones shifting, locks  
unlocking. As if some one had lifted  
away a great weight, light  
falls on him. He has been asleep or simply  
gone. He has known a long suffering  
of himself, himself shapen by the pain  
of his wound of separation he now  
no longer minds, for the pain is only himself  
now, grown small, become a little growing  
longing joy. Something teaches him  
to rise, to stand and move out through  
the opening the light has made.  
He stands on the green hilltop amid  
the cedars, the skewed stones, the earth all  
opened doors. Half blind with light, he  
traces with a forefinger the moss-grown  
furrows of his name,  
hearing among the others one woman's cry.  
She is crying and laughing, her voice a  
stream of silver he seems to see:  
*"Oh, William, honey is it you? Oh!"*

Sept 7 Readings / Blessings

**The DELIVERER** — *John Milton*

O how comely it is and how reviving  
To the spirits of just men long oppressed,  
When God into the hands of their deliverer  
Puts invincible might  
To quell the mighty of the earth, the  
oppressor,  
The brute and boisterous force of violent  
men,  
Hardy and industrious to support  
Tyrannic power, but raging to pursue  
The righteous and all such as honour truth!

He all their ammunition  
And feats of war defeats  
With plain heroic magnitude of mind  
And celestial vigour armed;  
Their armouries and magazines contemns,  
Renders them useless, while  
With winged expedition  
Swift as the lightning glance he executes  
His errand on the wicked, who surprised,  
Lose their defence, distracted and amazed.  
But patience is more oft the exercise  
Of saints, the trial of their fortitude,  
Making them each his own deliverer,  
And victor over all  
That tyranny or fortune can inflict;  
Either of these is in thy lot,  
Samson, with might endued  
Above the sons of men; but sight bereaved  
May chance to number thee with those  
Whom patience finally must crown.

(ii) All is best, though we oft doubt,  
What the unsearchable dispose  
Of Highest Wisdom brings about,  
And ever best found in the close.  
Oft he seems to hide his face,  
But unexpectedly returns  
And to his faithful champion hath in place  
Bore witness gloriously; whence Gaza  
mourns,  
And all that band them to resist  
His uncontrollable intent:  
His servants he, with new acquit  
Of true experience from this great event,  
With peace and consolation hath dismissed,  
And calm of mind, all passion spent.