

A new order by Anna Gilcher

I want to live in love, open my heart, hear the deeper longings in each person. I want to believe—to live into—what I know to be true: that each one of us carries in ourselves longings so beautiful, so precious, that are the basis for everything we do, everything we do, no matter how ugly, how murderous, how tragic. Beautiful longings, beautiful, precious and holy.

I want to be a poet, to crystallize the longing, to set it forth in words that reach the deepest place in myself and another.

I want to feel the Holy Spirit stirring in me, to speak in Her voice, to reach out in radical acceptance of all, sacred and profane.

I want to live in a new order. I want to be newly ordered.

"See, the home of God is among mortals." A new heaven and a new earth.

A new order.

I can feel a new order trying to take root in me in many ways. An obvious place is in my coming fulltime to Seekers, and to stepping into the job of Sunday School Coordinator here. I have left something behind in order to create something deeper and wider here, with you. Another place where I see a new

order is that I can't seem to write sermons as I used to. I find myself wishing I could—I had more confidence in my sermons when they were tight, clear, narrative. But right now it is in the poet's voice that my preaching wants to come out. Perhaps it is that the poet's voice reflects the longings I long to connect with. *Out beyond ideas of right-doing and wrong-doing, there is a field. I'll meet you there,* writes Rumi.

Another place of "new order" is in my parenting. Ever since I've been doing nonviolent communication—or NVC—it has become clear to me that I want to do things differently. Not just with adults, where frankly, by comparison, it is easier—adults are much less likely to call me names, or punch me, or scream at me, or push my limits. I also feel a lot less responsible for adults' behavior than I do for my children's. But there's something new stirring in me, and it's precious to me, and I long for it in all my relationships; and I am most conscious of my longing for that with my children. I think I've been the most judgmental of them, out of all the folks I come in contact with. Good or bad. Whether I'm saying good job, good girl, right answer; or bad behavior, unacceptable, inappropriate... I want to be in that field with them, out beyond right and wrong. I want to trust in their preciousness even when—especially when—they are acting in ways I find incomprehensible—or repulsive, or frightening. I want to trust in our shared humanity as a place of transformation. I want to see the beauty of the needs and longings that are behind the behavior, and honor that deeply. I want to trust in the strength and truth of that; to be rooted as a tree is rooted in the ground, in the knowledge of the preciousness and tenderness of each of our selves.

I know that when I'm thinking in the spirit of right – wrong –

good – bad – convince – argue – critique – judge... I don't feel connected to the poetic new order I am trying to touch and which seems truer to me in some way. I'm not in that field where I can meet them; or you; or you; or you.

When I go to this place beyond right and wrong there is no unacceptable anymore. There is no inappropriate. There is only my testimony, and theirs. And yours. I can bear witness to things I can hardly bear, that cause me grief, that tear my heart out, that aren't in harmony with what I hold dear. And I can listen deeply to where their grief is, their longing. I can witness them. And I can witness you. And you.

My heart aches, and breaks.

If I know that each of us is trying to meet these beautiful and holy needs, the best that we know how to, that each of us is an integral and irreplaceable part of the fabric of the universe; and if I trust that I am called to an open and tender heart, that life is served when I meet you heart to heart, when I listen to the longings beneath what you are saying and doing—then how can anything or anyone be unacceptable? Tragic, yes. But "what God has made clean, you must not call profane."

I can feel my fear as I place this in front of you. "What about...?"

What about unruly children? Am I saying I am a permissive parent? Do I not care about order, and learning? What about

respect for the community?

Worse, beyond how I'm raising my children, what about the world? horrific acts of brutality? ... wanton cruelty? ...what about dehumanizing ways of speaking? ...what about injustice? ... captivity? Am I not to call them bad? Are we to just accept them all as the way things are and do nothing? Just sit around and smile like fools, pretending everything is okay when it is clearly not?

My heart breaks with all the dis-ease that's in the world, with the cruelty, the injustice, the oppression, the abuse. My heart aches and breaks.

Are we open to that ache? Can we ache, too, for those who cause oppression?

Marshall Rosenberg, the creator of Nonviolent Communication, tells a story in a training video I have seen called Making Life Wonderful, which was filmed at a workshop. He says, what would you think if an immigrant arrived in this country speaking no English and someone took him aside and said, I'm going to tell you what to say when you're really needing help, and feeling especially vulnerable—how to say "please." Here's what you say: Idiot!!

That would be a dirty trick, wouldn't it? he says. Marshall then goes on to say, Guess what? This trick has been played on us. We live in a culture in which, when we're feeling especially vulnerable, we learn to call people names, and

strike out in anger—we've been taught to do exactly the thing that is the least likely to get us the help and understanding we are so longing for.

My heart aches, and breaks. How can we be in relationship?

The relationship between Jesus and Judas has been really alive for me this week. Today's gospel passage begins, "When he had gone out..."—that is to say, Judas. You will recall that just before today's selection begins, Jesus has said that one of the disciples is going to betray him, and when asked which one it will be, he says, "it is the one to whom I give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the dish." He then gives it to Judas, saying, "Do quickly what you are going to do." "So," writes the author of the Gospel of John, "after receiving the piece of bread, he immediately went out. And it was night."

I've been struck with the imagery of Jesus sharing bread with Judas, of Jesus offering him—dare I say?— communion. Could this be a blessing upon his leaving? A recognition of the holy in him, of the deep and beautiful longings from which spring a tragic act...? ...a tragic act that was, amazingly, not irredeemable. When Judas leaves, Jesus begins to speak, saying, "Now the Son of Man has been glorified, and God has been glorified in him..." and he continues on with the line, "God will also glorify him in himself and will glorify him at once." Translated another way, these words "at once," are "immediately"—in the Greek it's the same word as was used for Judas' leaving after he received the piece of bread. The link is there, that Judas' departure has set the glorification in motion. He left immediately. God will glorify Jesus immediately. They are two parts of a whole.

I wonder whether the glorification of Jesus, the saving grace we are hearing about, stems from Jesus' willingness to bear witness to both the cruelty of Judas' action and the beauty and holiness of the longings behind the action. Jesus' willingness for his heart to ache, and break; for his body to ache and break as well.

What wondrous love is this, O my soul, O my soul!

What wondrous love is this, O my soul!

What wondrous love is this that caused the Lord of
bliss

To lay aside his crown for my soul, for my soul,

To lay aside his crown for my soul.

What wondrous love indeed. I'm remembering Peter saying, Who was I that I could hinder God?

Who are we that we can hinder the saving grace that we have been shown? Can we keep our hearts open, bear witness, reach out in love, connect with the deep and holy longings that are at the wellspring of all creation? Can we open our hands and let go—of being right, of judging wrongness?

Mary Oliver writes,

There are days

when the sun goes down

*like a fist,
though of course*

*if you see anything
in the heavens
in this way
you had better get*

*your eyes checked
or, better still,
your diminished spirit.*

The heavens

*have no fist,
or wouldn't they have been
shaking it
for a thousand years now,*

*and even
longer than that,
at the dull, brutish
ways of mankind—*

heaven's own

creation?

Instead: such patience!

Such willingness

to let us continue!

To hear,

little by little,

the voices—

only, so far, in

pockets of the world—

suggesting

the possibilities

of peace?

Keep looking.

Behold, how the fist opens

with invitation.

Keep looking.

Behold, how the fist opens with invitation.

Take, eat. This is my body, given for you.

Amen.