

# For God All Things Are Possible

by The Rev. Mike Marsh

*The Rev. Mike Marsh wrote this on his blog the week after the accidental death of his 27-year-old son, in October 2009. Marsh is rector of St. Philip's, Uvalde.*

Over the last three-and-a-half months I have become increasingly aware of just how much grief and loss this parish has suffered and how difficult those three and one-half months have been. In that short time we have had five deaths of our friends, family, and parishioners. That is a lot of death and sorrow, a lot of pain and tears. Many of us are left with unresolved feelings and a multitude of questions:

What do I do next?

Where do I go now?

How do I – or even, will I ever – live, love, laugh again?

I am also aware that these deaths are the more visible and public losses and sorrows. I suspect many, maybe most of you, could name your own deaths, losses, pains, and sadness. Some of them are recent experiences, and some you have carried for years. Some of them other people know about, and some are known to you alone. They may not be as public or visible as the ones I just mentioned, but they are just as real.

Like Job our complaint is bitter, and the hand of God is heavy on us. With Job we wrestle with the question, “Where is God?”

Like Job, we are tempted to go looking for God – to lay our case before him, fill our mouths with arguments, learn what he would answer us, and understand what he would say to us (Job 23:4-5). Yet no matter where Job goes, he does not find God. Listen to what Job says:

“If I go forward, he is not there; or backward, I cannot perceive him; on the left he hides, and I cannot behold him; I turn to the right, but I cannot see him” (Job 23:8-9).

To run away searching is in some way to run away from God who is always already there in the pain and sorrow of life. Job begins to realize he must abandon his searching. He must abandon his searching for answers, abandon searching for ways to fix it and make everything better, and even abandon his searching for God. Ultimately he cries out: “If only

I could vanish in darkness, and thick darkness would cover my face” (Job 23:17).

His cry is the cry of abandonment. It is not the cry of one who has been abandoned; but the cry of one who abandons and surrenders himself to God. Job does what the rich young ruler from the Gospel of Mark (Mark 10:17-31) is unable to do – he offers all that he is and all that he has to God, to Christ. That is our work.

We who have known the losses and sorrows of life – whether they are of the last three-and-a-half months, three-and-a-half years, or three-and-a-half decades – have much to offer: tears, sadness, fears, loss, anger, questions, loneliness, emptiness, the deep longing that things would be different. These offerings are our prayers of surrender and abandonment, the path into that holy and sacred darkness, the luminous darkness that is God himself.

My belief and hope is that in this moment of surrender we are freed and enabled to hear anew the deeper, quieter, and often forgotten part of Psalm 22: “Yet you are he who took me out of the womb and kept me safe upon my mother’s breast. I have been

entrusted to you ever since I was born; you were my God when I was still in my mother’s womb” (Psalm 22:10-11).

So we must abandon ourselves to the darkness of that sacred womb from which new life, new creation, new love, new possibilities are born. I cannot tell you how that happens or what that might mean or look like for me or you. I just do not know.

Last week, a day or so before our son’s funeral, someone asked me, “So what’s the answer?” I said, “I have no answers.” “But you’re the priest,” he said; “you’re supposed to have the answers.” “I have no answers,” I said again.

Today I still do not have the answers. But I believe with all my heart, and I am absolutely convinced, that “for God all things are possible” (Mark 10:27).

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