

# Looking for the Light

a devotional from  
ST. CHARLES AVENUE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Thursday, May 7, 2020

by Margaret Winston

## Read:

*Psalm 31: 1-5*

*In you, Lord, I have taken refuge;  
let me never be put to shame;  
deliver me in your righteousness.*

*Turn your ear to me,  
come quickly to my rescue;  
be my rock of refuge,  
a strong fortress to save me.*

*Since you are my rock and my fortress,  
for the sake of your name lead and guide me.  
Keep me free from the trap that is set for me,  
for you are my refuge.*

*Into your hands I commit my spirit;  
deliver me, Lord, my faithful God.*

## Reflect:

Each morning, since the global pandemic so profoundly altered our world, I have taken to spinning off on my bicycle across the top of the levee, pedaling upriver just at the light of day. Often, when I first set out, my head is zinging with cumbersome minutia, my thoughts weighty with fear of the unknown. I am tempted towards dread and burdened by sorrow. And so, I brood. Until I catch the first glimpse of the elegant, white plumes of an egret gracing the marshy waters. Poised in radiant stillness and elegant in the singularity of focus the mere sighting of this solitary fisherman calms the furry in my head. Captivated by the motionless egret, I feel the relief of bearing witness to something much larger than myself. Slowly I experience a kind of surrendering of my fearful self.

An open heart makes way for awareness, humility, guidance, simplicity, and grace. God's grace. When prayer follows it offers deep comfort as we turn our head and heart with the ecstatic understanding that the Lord is our refuge, our fortress, our rock. In today's reading, Psalm 31 1-5, I was called to wonder what exactly are the

conditions that bring a soul to the point of surrendering, to the point of opening the heart to commune so passionately with God.

It seems that we are always looking for the right conditions to make us safe or happy or peaceful. We often look to material things with the belief that we will feel more solid, safe, and secure. But it has been my experience that when I least expect it, an egret appears.

God's grace found in a wading bird.

*Egrets*

*By Mary Oliver*

*When the path closed  
down and over,  
through the scumbled leaves,  
fallen branches,  
through the knotted catbrier,  
I kept going. Finally  
I could not  
save my arms  
from thorns; soon  
the mosquitoes  
smelled me, hot  
and wounded, and came  
to the edge of the pond:  
black and empty  
except for the spindle  
of bleached reeds  
at the far shore  
which, as I looked,  
wrinkled suddenly  
into three egrets---  
a shower of white fire!  
Even half-asleep they had  
such faith in the world  
that had made them---  
tilting through the water,  
unruffled, sure,  
by the laws  
of their faith, not logic,  
they opened their wings  
softly and stepped  
over every dark thing.*

**Ask:**

What are the conditions that tend to harden or close off your heart?  
What opens your heart to allow God to dwell within you?  
What are the conditions that free you to have faith in the unknown?

**Pray:**

Lord, I come to you with open heart and gratitude for your infinite wisdom.  
Grant me the strength to open my heart to uncertainty.  
Grant me the courage to calm my fears so that I may embrace your infinite gifts.  
In return, may I share this abundance.  
Amen.

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