

# Study 1 Beatitudes Matthew 5: 1-6

## Troublesome Waters

By Maybelle Carter/E.J. Carter/Dixie Deen  
(as sung by Iris Dement off her CD, "My Life")

Troublesome waters, much blacker than night,  
Are hiding from view, the harbour's bright light.  
Tossed on the turmoil of life's troubled sea,  
I cried to my Saviour: "Have mercy on me."

Then gently I'm feeling the touch of his hand,  
Guiding my boat in safely to land.  
Leading the way to heaven's bright shore,  
Where troublesome waters I'm fearing no more.

Troublesome waters around me do roll.  
They're rocking my boat and wrecking my soul.  
Loved ones are drifting and living in sin:  
The treacherous whirlpools are pulling them in

Then gently I'm feeling the touch of his hand,  
Guiding my boat in safely to land.  
Leading the way to heaven's bright shore,  
Where troublesome waters I'm fearing no more.

When troublesome waters are rolling so high,  
I lift up my voice and to heaven, I cry:  
"Lord, I am trusting. Give guidance to me,  
"And steady my boat on life's troubled sea."

Then gently I'm feeling the touch of his hand,  
Guiding my boat in safely to land.  
Leading the way to heaven's bright shore,  
Where troublesome waters I'm fearing no more.

## **Sweet Hour of Prayer**

*By William Walford and William B. Bradbury*

(as sung by Iris Dement on her CD, "Lifeline")

Sweet hour of prayer! sweet hour of prayer!  
that calls me from a world of care,  
and bids me to my Father's throne  
make all my wants, my wishes known.  
In seasons of distress and grief,  
my soul has often found relief,  
and oft escaped the tempter's snare  
by thy return, sweet hour of prayer!

Sweet hour of prayer! sweet hour of prayer!  
thy wings shall my petition bear  
to him whose truth and faithfulness  
engage the waiting soul to bless.  
And since he bids me seek his face,  
believe his word, and trust his grace,  
I'll cast on him my every care,  
and wait for him, sweet hour of prayer!

**Luci Shaw**

**Present**

At light-speed, God-speed,  
time collapses into now so that  
we may see Christ's wounds as  
still bleeding, his torso,  
that ready sponge, still  
absorbing our vice, our toxic shame.

He is still being pierced  
by every hateful nail  
we hammer home. In this  
Golgotha moment his body—  
chalice for the dark tears  
of the whole world—brims,  
  
spilling over as his life blood  
drains. His dying into the earth  
begins the great reversal—  
as blood from a vein leaps  
into the needle, so with his rising,  
we surge into light.

## FALLING AT YOUR FEET

By Daniel Lanois (off his "Shine" CD)

Every chip from every cup  
Every promise given up  
Every reason that's not enough  
Is falling, falling at your feet  
Every one who needs a friend  
Every life that has no end  
Every knee not ready to bend  
Is falling, falling at your feet  
Have come crawling, falling at your feet  
All fall down, all fall down, all fall down, all fall down, all fall down, all fall down, all fall down, all fall down, all fall down  
Every teenager with acne  
Every face that's spoiled by beauty  
Every adult tamed by duty  
All falling, falling at your feet  
Every eye closed by a bruise  
Every player who just can't lose  
Every pop star hurling abuse  
Every drunk back on the booze  
All falling, falling at your feet, all falling, falling at your feet  
All the information  
All the big ideas  
All the radio waves  
On electronic seas  
How to navigate  
How to simply be  
To know when to wait  
Explain simplicity  
In whom shall I trust  
And how might I be still  
Teach me to surrender  
Not my will, thy will

**Luci Shaw**

**Manna**

*They asked, and he brought quails,*

*And gave them food from heaven.*

—Psalm 105:40

I'm not asking for quails for dinner  
and if they flew in my window at mealtime,  
in a torrent of wind, I would think  
panic, not miracle.

Time is so multiple and fluid. I lose a day  
flying west, and gain it back returning.  
I am ravenous to know where I am today.  
And who. And how am I to be fed? And if  
the prayer I offered this morning at first light  
was known and answered last week  
am I in some horizontal pleat of time,  
some rock crevice in the mountain's shoulder  
with a great hand shielding me from  
the tempest of too much knowledge?

You never know what a simple request  
will get you. So, no expectation of birds  
from heaven. Rather, I will commit myself  
to this quotidian wilderness, watching for what

the wind may bring me next—  
perhaps a small wafer tasting like honey  
that I can pick up with my fingers  
and lay on my tongue  
to ease, for this day, my hunger to know.

## **To Be Alone With You**

**By Sufjan Stevens (from his “Seven Swans” CD)**

I'd swim across lake Michigan  
I'd sell my shoes  
I'd give my body to be back again  
In the rest of the room

To be alone with you  
To be alone with you  
To be alone with you  
To be alone with you

You gave your body to the lonely  
They took your clothes  
You gave up a wife and a family  
You gave your goals

To be alone with me  
To be alone with me  
To be alone with me  
You went up on a tree

To be alone with me you went up on the tree

I'll never know the man who loved me

## Study 2 Beatitudes Matthew 5: 7-12

### Come On Up To The House

By Tom Waits and Kathleen Brennan  
(off Waits' "Mule Variations" CD)

Well the moon is broken  
And the sky is cracked  
Come on up to the house  
The only things that you can see  
Is all that you lack  
Come on up to the house

All your cryin don't do no good  
Come on up to the house  
Come down off the cross  
We can use the wood  
Come on up to the house

Come on up to the house  
Come on up to the house  
The world is not my home  
I'm just a passin thru  
Come on up to the house

There's no light in the tunnel  
No irons in the fire  
Come on up to the house  
And your singin lead soprano  
In a junkman's choir  
You gotta come on up to the house

Does life seem nasty, brutish and short  
Come on up to the house  
The seas are stormy  
And you can't find no port  
Come on up to the house  
There's nothin in the world

(Chorus)

there's nothin in the world  
that you can do

you gotta come on up to the house  
and you been whipped by the forces  
that are inside you  
come on up to the house  
well you're high on top  
of your mountain of woe  
come on up to the house  
well you know you should surrender  
but you can't let go  
you gotta come on up to the house

(Chorus)



## **Just Now**

**By W.S. Merwin**

In the morning as the storm begins to blow away  
the clear sky appears for a moment and it seems to me  
that there has been something simpler than I could ever  
believe  
simpler than I could have begun to find words for  
not patient not even waiting no more hidden  
than the air itself that became part of me for a while  
with every breath and remained with-me unnoticed  
something that was here unnamed unknown in the days  
and the nights not separate from them  
not separate from them as they came and were gone  
it must have been here neither early nor late then  
by what name can I address it now holding out my thanks

## **What I Learned From My Mother**

**By Juila Kasdorf**

I learned from my mother how to love  
the living, to have plenty of vases on hand  
in case you have to rush to the hospital  
with peonies cut from the lawn, black ants  
still stuck to the buds. I learned to save jars  
large enough to hold fruit salad for a whole  
grieving household, to cube home-canned pears  
and peaches, to slice through maroon grape skins  
and flick out the sexual seeds with a knife point.  
I learned to attend viewing even if I didn't know  
the deceased, to press the moist hands  
of the living, to look in their eyes and offer  
sympathy, as though I understood loss even then.  
I learned that whatever we say means nothing,  
what anyone will remember is that we came.  
I learned to believe I had the power to ease  
awful pains materially like an angel.  
Like a doctor, I learned to create  
from another's suffering my own usefulness, and once  
you know how to do this, you can never refuse.  
To every house you enter, you must offer  
healing: a chocolate cake you baked yourself,  
the blessing of your voice, your chaste touch.

## Calling him back from layoff

By Bob Hicok

I called a man today. After he said  
hello and I said hello came a pause  
during which it would have been

confusing to say hello again so I said  
how are you doing and guess what, he said  
fine and wondered aloud how I was

and it turns out I'm OK. He  
was on the couch watching cars  
painted with ads for Budweiser follow cars

painted with ads for Tide around an oval  
that's a metaphor for life because  
most of us run out of gas and settle

for getting drunk in the stands  
and shouting at someone in a t-shirt  
we want kraut on our dog. I said

he could have his job back and during  
the pause that followed his whiskers  
scrubbed the mouthpiece clean

and his breath passed in and out  
in the tidal fashion popular  
with mammals until he broke through

with the words *how soon thank you*  
*ohmyGod* which crossed his lips and drove  
through the wires on the backs of ions

as one long word as one hard prayer  
of relief meant to be heard  
by the sky. When he began to cry I tried

with the shape of my silence to say  
I understood but each confession  
of fear and poverty was more awkward

than what you learn in the shower.  
After he hung up I went outside and sat  
with one hand in the bower of the other

and thought if I turn my head to the left  
it changes the song of the oriole  
and if I give a job to one stomach other

forks are naked and if tonight a steak  
sizzles in his kitchen do the seven  
other people staring at their phones

hear?

**Eyl Khanun" ("Merciful God")**  
**By Kadya Molodowsky**

Merciful God,  
Choose another people,  
Elect another.  
We are tired of death and dying,  
We have no more prayers.  
Choose another people,  
Elect another.  
We have no more blood  
To be a sacrifice.  
Our house has become a desert.  
The earth is insufficient for our graves,  
No more laments for us,  
No more dirges  
In the old, holy books.

Merciful God,  
Sanctify another country,  
Another mountain.  
We have strewn all the fields and every stone  
With ash, with holy ash.  
With the aged,  
With the youthful,  
And with babies, we have paid  
For every letter of your Ten Commandments.

Merciful God,  
Raise your fiery brow,  
And see the peoples of the world --  
Give them the prophecies and the Days of Awe.  
Your word is babbled in every language --  
Teach them the deeds,  
The ways of temptation.

Merciful God,  
Give us simple garments  
Of shepherds with their sheep,  
Blacksmiths at their hammers,  
Laundry-washers, skin-flayers,  
And even the more base.  
And do us one more favor:  
Merciful God,  
Deprive us of the Divine Presence of genius.

**THE PREACHER RUMINATES BEHIND THE SERMON**  
**By Gwendolyn Brooks**

I think it must be lonely to be God.  
Nobody loves a master. No. Despite  
The bright hosannas, bright dear-Lords, and bright  
Determined reverence of Sunday eyes.

Picture Jehovah striding through the hall  
Of his importance, creatures running out  
From servant-corners to acclaim, to shout  
Appreciation of His merit's gaze.

But who walks with Him?--dares to take His arm,  
To slap Him on the shoulder, tweak His ear,  
Buy Him a Coca-Cola or a beer,  
Pooh-pooh His politics, call Him a fool?

Perhaps--who knows?--He tires of looking down.  
Those eyes are never lifted. Never straight.  
Perhaps sometimes He tires of being great  
In solitude. Without a hand to hold.

## Study 3 Matthew 5: 13-16

### Holy Well

By Padraic Fallon

In the annals saints  
Sit in holy wells, talk freely  
To grim hermits, heal  
Who ails, the foot-holy  
Pilgrims who walk in wishes.

The dumb speak, the cripple  
Walks, the blind  
Find the dazzling world of the mind  
In new pigments. Here  
The ways of God seem wayward but very dear.

Speak the word, Saint  
In your welling mineral  
That world in a bright and single jet  
Go up, and inside it, lit up,  
God my space and my material

**On Angels**  
**By Czeslaw Milosz**

All was taken away from you: white dresses,  
wings, even existence.  
Yet I believe in you,  
messengers.

There, where the world is turned inside out,  
a heavy fabric embroidered with stars and beasts,  
you stroll, inspecting the trustworthy-seems.

Short is your stay here:  
now and then at a matinal hour, if the sky is clear,  
in a melody repeated by a bird,  
or in the smell of apples at close of day  
when the light makes the orchards magic.

They say somebody has invented you  
but to me this does not sound convincing  
for the humans invented themselves as well.

The voice -- no doubt it is a valid proof,  
as it can belong only to radiant creatures,  
weightless and winged (after all, why not?),  
girdled with the lightening.

I have heard that voice many a time when asleep  
and, what is strange, I understood more or less  
an order or an appeal in an unearthly tongue:

day draw near  
another one  
do what you can.

**I Find You, Lord, In All Things and In All  
By Rainer Maria Rilke**

I find you, Lord, in all Things and in all  
my fellow creatures, pulsing with your life;  
as a tiny seed you sleep in what is small  
and in the vast you vastly yield yourself.

The wondrous game that power plays with Things  
is to move in such submission through the world:  
groping in roots and growing thick in trunks  
and in treetops like a rising from the dead.

**Grace  
by Wendell Berry**

*for Gurney Norman, quoting him*

The woods is shining this morning.  
Red, gold and green, the leaves  
lie on the ground, or fall,  
or hang full of light in the air still.  
Perfect in its rise and in its fall, it takes  
the place it has been coming to forever.  
It has not hastened here, or lagged.  
See how surely it has sought itself,  
its roots passing lordly through the earth.  
See how without confusion it is  
all that it is, and how flawless  
its grace is. Running or walking, the way  
is the same. Be still. Be still.  
“He moves your bones, and the way is clear.”

## **Praise**

**By Rainer Maria Rilke**

O tell me Poet what you do? – I praise.

But the deathly and the monstrous,

How do you accept them, bear them? – I praise.

But the nameless, the anonymous.

How, Poet, can you still invoke it? – I praise.

Under every costume, every mask of us,

What right have you to be true? – I praise.

= Or that the calm and the-impetuous

Should know you, as star and storm? – Because I praise.

## Untitled

By Elizabeth Creamer

At a parish council meeting, some women clustering together decide, whispering so as not to be overheard and hurt his feelings, that the priest's shirt, decidedly dirty (for God's sake a smear of fast food and the brown burn of cigarette on one pocket) is but the latest sign of domestic disorder, and that it is time for a good soul with nothing but time on her hands to finally take over his housework. And, so, now, there is the woman who does the priest's laundry although her name is not listed in the church bulletin of course. She is, as everyone says, the salt of the earth, or, at least, the knees of Our Lady of Sorrows, this old woman who, for years, kneels in a back pew although the more hurried parishioners claim never to have seen her, which does not prevent them from asking her to take the job, even before they recognize that no one else will do it. And, the woman accepts the committee's appointment, of course, although her motivations would surprise them, having little to do with devotion to the priest and even less to parochial duty. She also does not look, although her visitors offer this as payment, for spiritual rewards in humble service. Instead, in the priest's mildewed basket spilling rumpled sheets and dirty tablecloths, she sees images on a silver screen, the possibilities of blank canvases. The laundry clutches at her wrists with steamy surfaces, harder to shake than the toddlers in the nursery who weekly tug at her balance as if demanding a last look, some rough stroke of recognition before the familiar strangers take them home. Without softness, she gathers them: the soggy towels and soggy infants. No call for humility, nor pride in her work; she simply knows what she sees and that her vision is a poem whispered in an old lover's foreign words which only she can translate and then swallow like a coded message in a child's mysterious game. Massaging her arthritic hands to a new morning's work, she steps to the line and takes the pin from her mouth closed against spills, closed against loss. Weak eyes water against the strong winter sunlight. She wipes the tears and lifts her arms into the whiteness, the transfiguration.