

**Devotions for the Third Week of Lent -- Sunday, March 24 to Saturday, March 30**  
**Contemplations on Grief, Disaster and Loss**

**Lament**

[A messenger] came [to Job] and said, "Your sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house, and suddenly a great wind came across the desert, struck the four corners of the house, and it fell on the young people, and they are dead; I alone have escaped to tell you."

[Job replied,]

My sighing comes like my bread, and my groanings are poured out like water.

Truly the thing that I fear comes upon me, and what I dread befalls me.

O that I were as in the months of old, as in the days when God watched over me;

When the Almighty was still with me, when my children were around me.

[But now] my inward parts are in turmoil, and are never still; days of affliction come to meet me.

My lyre is turned to mourning, and my pipe to the voice of those who weep.

**Job 1:18-19; 3: 24-25; 29: 1-2, 5; 30:31**

**Readings**

*Better than baptisms or marriages, funerals press the noses of the faithful against the windows of their faith. Vision and insight are often coincidental with demise. Death is the moment when the chips are down. That moment of truth when the truth that we die makes relevant the claims of our prophets and apostles. Faith is not required to sing in the choir, for bake sales or building drives; to usher or deacon or elder or priest. Faith is for the time of our dying and the time of the dying of the ones we love.*

**The Undertaking**, by Thomas Lynch, a poet and undertaker from Milford, MI

*You must apply in person for Emergency Burial Assistance at your county DHS office, and provide supporting personal financial records as well as any required co-payment or supplement.... We regret that due to the uncertainty of eligibility, we cannot complete or schedule any services until receiving a decision notice from your caseworker and payment from the state treasury. This may result in services being delayed for several weeks or longer.*

**Michigan Cremation & Funeral Care website,**  
[www.mi-cremation.com/financialassistance](http://www.mi-cremation.com/financialassistance)

*When Jesus had crossed again in the boat to the other side, a great crowd gathered around him; and he was by the sea. Then one of the leaders of the synagogue named Jairus came and, when he saw him, fell at his feet and begged him repeatedly, "My little daughter is at the point of death. Come and lay your hands on her, so that she may be made well, and live."*

*While he was still speaking, some people came from the leader's house to say, "Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the teacher any further?" But overhearing what they said, Jesus said to the leader of the synagogue, "Do not fear, only believe." He allowed no one to follow him except Peter, James and John, the brother of James. When they came to the house of the leader of the synagogue, he saw a commotion, people weeping and wailing loudly. When he had entered, he said to them, "Why do you make a commotion and weep? The child is not dead but sleeping." And they laughed at him. Then he put them all outside, and took the child's father and mother and those who were with him, and went in where the child was. He took her by the hand and said to her, "Talitha cum," which means, "Little girl, get up!". And immediately the girl got up and began to walk about (she was twelve years of age).*

**Mark 5:21-23, 35-42**

## Reflections

The death of a loved one is a deeply unsettling event. Through funeral ministries, churches place themselves in the middle of profound pain and grief.

- In your own family's times of bereavement, what were sources of comfort? Were there particular aspects of a church's funeral ministry that conveyed God's grace?
- Have you seen cases where a church provided a funeral or bereavement help to families with no connection to a congregation? How did this happen? What difference did it make to family and friends?
- Consider cases where deep grief is compounded by severe financial concerns – having to borrow to pay for the funeral, or facing deep anxiety about the loss of a wage earner. Given the Bible's admonishments about widows and orphans, how do we discern our responsibility in these situations? How would the church know of such needs?

## Hymn

I was standing by the window  
On one cold and cloudy day  
And I saw the hearse come rolling  
For to carry my mother away

Can the circle be unbroken  
Bye and bye, Lord, bye and bye  
There's a better home a-waiting  
In the sky, Lord, in the sky

Lord, I told the undertaker  
Undertaker, please drive slow  
For this body you are hauling Lord  
I hate to see her go

Can the circle be unbroken  
Bye and bye, Lord, bye and bye  
There's a better home a-waiting  
In the sky, Lord, in the sky

I followed close behind her  
Tried to hold up and be brave  
But I could not hide my sorrow  
When they laid her in the grave

Can the circle be unbroken  
Bye and bye, Lord, bye and bye  
There's a better home a-waiting  
In the sky, Lord, in the sky

Went back home, Lord, my home was lonesome  
Miss my mother she was gone  
All my brothers, sisters crying  
What a home so sad and lone

Can the circle be unbroken  
Bye and bye, Lord, bye and bye  
There's a better home a-waiting  
In the sky, Lord, in the sky

**Can the Circle Be Unbroken**, Carter Family version of hymn originally by Ada Habershon, 1907.  
See Johnny and June Carter Cash, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=JLFbUbmH7To](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JLFbUbmH7To)  
Original version at <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/resources/will-the-circle-be-unbroken>

## Prayer

Keep watch, dear Lord, with those who work, or watch, or weep this night, and give your angels charge over those who sleep. Tend the sick, Lord Christ; give rest to the weary, bless the dying, soothe the suffering, pity the afflicted, shield the joyous; and all for Your love's sake, Amen.

**From the Episcopal Book of Common Prayer**