

Contemporary Reading: *Jesus the Question* by Danny Belrose,
from 'Let the Spirit Breathe' Personal Psalms, Prayers
and Pieces.

Bumper-sticker Christians say, Jesus Is The Answer!

Is he? I wonder. Is Jesus the answer or is Jesus the Question?

God, we want answers!

We want them tied up neatly and completely

so that the questions go away. Questions are disturbing!

They're so open-ended, unfinished! And yet...

And yet, questions can be so wonderful. So life giving. So enticing.

So sweetly mysterious. So necessary.

Thank you, God, for unfinished questions

for answers that satisfy only for the moment.

Thank you for wonder and wilderness,

for marvel and mystery, for horizons that call.

Thank you for the riddle of grace. The vastness of space.

The puzzle of being.

Thank you for your strange love wrapped up in a manger, a babe

a boy, a man bigger than slogans.

A Jesus making waves as well as calming seas.

The Jesus climbing hills, probing the darkness, searching his way!

Thank you for this incomplete Jesus, this Jesus of questions,
playfully sprinkling the salt of discovery on every bland soul,
including his own.

Thank you God for Jesus both Answer and Question.

Pause

For words of faith in our time

We give thanks

Danny Belrose, *Let the Spirit Breathe Personal Psalms, Prayers and Pieces*. Used by permission.

Gospel: Hear words of faith from the Gospel of John 3: 1-17

Now there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews. He came to Jesus by night and said, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do apart from the presence of God."

Jesus answered, "Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the commonwealth of God without being born from above."

Nicodemus said, "How can anyone be born after having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother's womb and be born?"

Jesus answered,

"Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the reign of God without being born of water and Spirit. What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not be astonished that I said to you, 'You must be born from above.'

The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit."

Nicodemus said, "How can these things be?"

Jesus answered, "Are you a teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things? "Very truly, I tell you, we speak of what we know and testify to what we have seen; yet you do not receive our testimony. If I have told you about earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you about heavenly things?

No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Chosen One. And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Chosen One be lifted up, that whoever believes in the Chosen One may have eternal life.

“For God so loved the world that he gave the Only Begotten One, so that everyone who believes in the Chosen One may not perish but may have eternal life.

“Indeed, God did not send Only Begotten into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved.

pause

For the Word that was in the beginning,
for the Word that invites and inspires,
for the Word embodied in us,

we give thanks.