

## Third Sunday of Lent

### Sabbath Poem

#### How Long

How long does it take to make the woods?

As long as it takes to make the world.

The woods is present as the world is, the presence of all its past, and of all its time to come.

It is always finished, it is always being made, the act of its making forever greater than the act of its destruction.

It is a part of eternity, for its end and beginning belong to the end and beginning of all things the beginning lost in the end, the end in the beginning.

What is the way to the woods, how do you go there?

By climbing up through the six days' field, kept in all the body's years, the body's sorrow, weariness, and joy. By passing through the narrow gate on the far side of that field where the pasture grass of the body's life gives way to the high, original standing of the trees.

By coming into the shadow, the shadow of the grace of the strait way's ending, the shadow of the mercy of light.

Why must the gate be narrow?

Because you cannot pass beyond it burdened.

To come in among the tress you must leave behind the six days' world, all of it, all of its plans and hopes.

You must come without weapon or tool, alone, expecting nothing, remembering nothing into the ease of sight, the brotherhood of eye and leaf.

### Scripture John 4:5-42

<sup>5</sup>So he came to a Samaritan city called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. <sup>6</sup>Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired out by his journey, was sitting by the well. It was about noon.

<sup>7</sup>A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink." <sup>8</sup>(His disciples had gone to the city to buy food.) <sup>9</sup>The Samaritan woman said to him, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?" (Jews do not share things in common with Samaritans.)<sup>[a]</sup> <sup>10</sup>Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water." <sup>11</sup>The woman said to him, "Sir, you have no bucket, and the well is deep. Where do you

get that living water? <sup>12</sup> Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us the well, and with his sons and his flocks drank from it?" <sup>13</sup> Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, <sup>14</sup> but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life." <sup>15</sup> The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water, so that I may never be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water."

<sup>16</sup> Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come back." <sup>17</sup> The woman answered him, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You are right in saying, 'I have no husband'; <sup>18</sup> for you have had five husbands, and the one you have now is not your husband. What you have said is true!" <sup>19</sup> The woman said to him, "Sir, I see that you are a prophet. <sup>20</sup> Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you<sup>[b]</sup> say that the place where people must worship is in Jerusalem." <sup>21</sup> Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. <sup>22</sup> You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. <sup>23</sup> But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeks such as these to worship him. <sup>24</sup> God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth." <sup>25</sup> The woman said to him, "I know that Messiah is coming" (who is called Christ). "When he comes, he will proclaim all things to us." <sup>26</sup> Jesus said to her, "I am he,<sup>[c]</sup> the one who is speaking to you."

<sup>27</sup> Just then his disciples came. They were astonished that he was speaking with a woman, but no one said, "What do you want?" or, "Why are you speaking with her?" <sup>28</sup> Then the woman left her water jar and went back to the city. She said to the people, <sup>29</sup> "Come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done! He cannot be the Messiah,<sup>[d]</sup> can he?" <sup>30</sup> They left the city and were on their way to him.

<sup>31</sup> Meanwhile the disciples were urging him, "Rabbi, eat something."

<sup>32</sup> But he said to them, "I have food to eat that you do not know about." <sup>33</sup> So the disciples said to one another, "Surely no one has brought him something to eat?" <sup>34</sup> Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to complete his work. <sup>35</sup> Do you not say, 'Four months more, then comes the harvest'? But I tell you, look around you, and see how the fields are ripe for harvesting. <sup>36</sup> The reaper is already receiving<sup>[e]</sup> wages and is gathering fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together. <sup>37</sup> For here the saying holds true, 'One sows and another reaps.' <sup>38</sup> I sent you to reap that for which you did not labor. Others have labored, and you have entered into their labor."

<sup>39</sup> Many Samaritans from that city believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me everything I have ever done." <sup>40</sup> So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them; and he stayed there two days. <sup>41</sup> And many more believed because of his word. <sup>42</sup> They said to the woman, "It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is truly the Savior of the world."

## **More Light**

### **Here is where the world**

Here is where the world is being made,  
No human hand required,  
A man may come, somewhat afraid  
Always, and somewhat tired,

For he comes ignorant and alone  
From work and worry of  
A human place, in soul and bone  
The ache of human love.

He may come and be still, not go  
Toward any chosen aim  
Or stay for what he thinks is so.  
Setting aside his claim

On all things fallen in his plight,  
His mind may move with leaves,  
Wind-shaken, in and out of light,  
And live as the light lives,

And live as the Creation sings  
In covert, two clear notes,  
And waits; then two clear answerings  
Come from more distant throats –

May live a while with light, shaking  
In high leaves, or delayed  
In halts of song, submit to making,  
The shape of what is made.

### **The Difference is a Polished**

The difference is a polished  
blade, edgewise to the eye.  
On one side gleams the sun  
of time, and on the other  
the never-fading light,  
and so the tree that stands  
full-leaved in broad day  
and the darkness following  
stands also in the eye  
of Love and is never darkened.

The blade that divides these lights  
mirrors both – is one.  
Time and eternity  
stand in the same day  
which is now in time, and forever  
now. How do we know?  
We know. We know we know.  
They only truly live  
who are the comforted.

## Fourth Sunday of Lent

### Sabbath Poem: Remembering

Remembering that it happened once  
We cannot turn away the thought,  
As we go out, cold, to our barns  
Toward the long night's end, that we  
Ourselves are living in the world  
It happened in when it first happened,  
That we ourselves, opening a stall  
(A latch thrown open countless times  
Before), might find them breathing there,  
Foreknown: the Child bedded in straw,  
The mother kneeling over Him,  
The husband standing in belief  
He scarcely can believe, in light  
That lights them from no source we see,  
An April morning's light, the air  
Around them joyful as a choir.  
We stand with one hand on the door,  
Looking into another world  
That is this world, the pale daylight  
Coming just as before, our chores  
To do, the cattle all awake,  
Our own white frozen breath hanging  
In front of us; and we are here  
As we have never been before,  
Sighted as not before, our place  
Holy, although we knew it not.

### Scripture: John 9

**9** As he walked along, he saw a man blind from birth. **2** His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" **3** Jesus answered, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned; he was born blind so that God's works might be revealed in him. **4** We<sup>[a]</sup> must work the works of him who sent me<sup>[b]</sup> while it is day; night is coming when no one can work. **5** As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." **6** When he had said this, he spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva and spread the mud on the man's eyes, **7** saying to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which means Sent). Then he went and washed and came back able to see. **8** The neighbors and those who had seen him before as a beggar began to ask, "Is this not the man who used to sit and beg?" **9** Some were saying, "It is he." Others were saying, "No, but it is someone like him." He kept saying, "I am the man." **10** But they kept asking him, "Then how were your eyes opened?" **11** He answered, "The man called Jesus made mud, spread it on my eyes, and said to me, 'Go to Siloam and wash.' Then I went

and washed and received my sight.”<sup>12</sup> They said to him, “Where is he?” He said, “I do not know.”

<sup>13</sup> They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind. <sup>14</sup> Now it was a sabbath day when Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes. <sup>15</sup> Then the Pharisees also began to ask him how he had received his sight. He said to them, “He put mud on my eyes. Then I washed, and now I see.” <sup>16</sup> Some of the Pharisees said, “This man is not from God, for he does not observe the sabbath.” But others said, “How can a man who is a sinner perform such signs?” And they were divided. <sup>17</sup> So they said again to the blind man, “What do you say about him? It was your eyes he opened.” He said, “He is a prophet.”

<sup>18</sup> The Jews did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight until they called the parents of the man who had received his sight <sup>19</sup> and asked them, “Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?” <sup>20</sup> His parents answered, “We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind; <sup>21</sup> but we do not know how it is that now he sees, nor do we know who opened his eyes. Ask him; he is of age. He will speak for himself.” <sup>22</sup> His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews; for the Jews had already agreed that anyone who confessed Jesus<sup>[c]</sup> to be the Messiah<sup>[d]</sup> would be put out of the synagogue. <sup>23</sup> Therefore his parents said, “He is of age; ask him.”

<sup>24</sup> So for the second time they called the man who had been blind, and they said to him, “Give glory to God! We know that this man is a sinner.” <sup>25</sup> He answered, “I do not know whether he is a sinner. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see.” <sup>26</sup> They said to him, “What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?” <sup>27</sup> He answered them, “I have told you already, and you would not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you also want to become his disciples?” <sup>28</sup> Then they reviled him, saying, “You are his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. <sup>29</sup> We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where he comes from.” <sup>30</sup> The man answered, “Here is an astonishing thing! You do not know where he comes from, and yet he opened my eyes. <sup>31</sup> We know that God does not listen to sinners, but he does listen to one who worships him and obeys his will. <sup>32</sup> Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a person born blind. <sup>33</sup> If this man were not from God, he could do nothing.” <sup>34</sup> They answered him, “You were born entirely in sins, and are you trying to teach us?” And they drove him out.

<sup>35</sup> Jesus heard that they had driven him out, and when he found him, he said, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?”<sup>[e]</sup> <sup>36</sup> He answered, “And who is he, sir?<sup>[f]</sup> Tell me, so that I may believe in him.” <sup>37</sup> Jesus said to him, “You have seen him, and the one speaking with you is he.” <sup>38</sup> He said, “Lord,<sup>[g]</sup> I believe.” And he worshiped him. <sup>39</sup> Jesus said, “I came into this world for judgment so that those who do not see may see, and those who do see may become blind.” <sup>40</sup> Some of the Pharisees near him heard this and said to him, “Surely we are not blind, are we?” <sup>41</sup> Jesus said to them, “If you were blind, you would not have sin. But now that you say, ‘We see,’ your sin remains.

## More Light

### Coming to the woods

Coming to the woods' edge  
on my Sunday morning walk,  
I stand resting a moment beside  
a ragged half-dead wild plum  
in bloom, its perfume  
a moment enclosing me,  
and standing side by side  
with the old broken blooming tree,  
I almost understand  
I almost recognize as a friend  
the great impertinence of beauty  
that comes even to the dying,  
even to the fallen, without reason  
sweetening the air.

I walk on.  
distracted by a letter accusing me  
of distraction, which distracts me  
only from the hundred things  
that would otherwise distract me  
from this whiteness, lightness,  
sweetness in the air. The mind  
is broken by the thousand  
calling voices it is always too late  
to answer, and that is why it yearns  
from some hard task, lifelong, longer  
than life, to concentrate it  
and to make it whole.

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### The Frog

The frog, with lichened back and golden thigh  
Sits still, almost invisible  
On leafed and lichened stem,  
Invisibility  
Its sign of being at home  
There in its given place, and well.  
The warbler with its quivering striped throat  
Would live almost beyond my sight,  
Almost beyond belief  
But for its double note –

### Six days of work

Six days of work are spent  
To make a Sunday quiet  
That Sabbath may return.  
It comes in unconcern;  
We cannot earn or buy it.  
Supposed rest is not sent  
Or comes and goes unknown,  
The light, unseen, unshown.  
Suppose the day begins  
In wrath at circumstance,  
Or anger at one's friends  
In vain self-innocence  
False to the very light  
Breaking the sun in half,  
Or anger at oneself  
Whose controverting will  
Would have the sun stand still.  
The world is lost in loss  
Of patience; the old curse  
Returns, and is made worse  
As newly justified.  
In hopeless fret and fuss,  
In rage at worldly plight  
Creation is defied  
All order is unpropped,  
All light and singing stopped.

Among high leaves a leaf,  
At ease, at home in air and light.

And I, through woods and fields,  
through fallen days,  
Am passing to where I belong;  
At home, at ease, and well,  
In Sabbaths of this place  
Almost invisible,  
Toward which I go from song  
to song.

## Fifth Sunday of Lent

### Sabbath Poem: What hard travail

What hard travail God does in death!  
He strives in sleep, in our despair,  
And all flesh shudders underneath  
The nightmare of His sepulcher.

The earth shakes, grinding its deep stone;  
All night the cold wind heaves and pries;  
Creation strains sinew and bone  
Against the dark door where He lies.

The stem bent, pent in seed, grows straight  
And stands. Pain breaks in song. Surprising  
the merely dead, graves fill with light  
Like opened eyes. He rests in rising.

### Scripture: John 11:1-45

**11** Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. **2** Mary was the one who anointed the Lord with perfume and wiped his feet with her hair; her brother Lazarus was ill. **3** So the sisters sent a message to Jesus, <sup>[a]</sup> "Lord, he whom you love is ill." **4** But when Jesus heard it, he said, "This illness does not lead to death; rather it is for God's glory, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it." **5** Accordingly, though Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus, **6** after having heard that Lazarus<sup>[b]</sup> was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was.

**7** Then after this he said to the disciples, "Let us go to Judea again." **8** The disciples said to him, "Rabbi, the Jews were just now trying to stone you, and are you going there again?" **9** Jesus answered, "Are there not twelve hours of daylight? Those who walk during the day do not stumble, because they see the light of this world. **10** But those who walk at night stumble, because the light is not in them." **11** After saying this, he told them, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I am going there to awaken him." **12** The disciples said to him, "Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will be all right." **13** Jesus, however, had been speaking about his death, but they thought that he was referring merely to sleep. **14** Then Jesus told them plainly, "Lazarus is dead. **15** For your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him." **16** Thomas, who was called the Twin, <sup>[c]</sup> said to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with him."

**17** When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus<sup>[d]</sup> had already been in the tomb four days. **18** Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, some two miles<sup>[e]</sup> away, **19** and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them about their brother. **20** When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, while Mary stayed at home. **21** Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if

you had been here, my brother would not have died. <sup>22</sup> But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask of him.” <sup>23</sup> Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise again.” <sup>24</sup> Martha said to him, “I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.” <sup>25</sup> Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life.<sup>[f]</sup> Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, <sup>26</sup> and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?” <sup>27</sup> She said to him, “Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah,<sup>[g]</sup> the Son of God, the one coming into the world.”

<sup>28</sup> When she had said this, she went back and called her sister Mary, and told her privately, “The Teacher is here and is calling for you.” <sup>29</sup> And when she heard it, she got up quickly and went to him. <sup>30</sup> Now Jesus had not yet come to the village, but was still at the place where Martha had met him. <sup>31</sup> The Jews who were with her in the house, consoling her, saw Mary get up quickly and go out. They followed her because they thought that she was going to the tomb to weep there. <sup>32</sup> When Mary came where Jesus was and saw him, she knelt at his feet and said to him, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.” <sup>33</sup> When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, he was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved. <sup>34</sup> He said, “Where have you laid him?” They said to him, “Lord, come and see.” <sup>35</sup> Jesus began to weep. <sup>36</sup> So the Jews said, “See how he loved him!” <sup>37</sup> But some of them said, “Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?”

<sup>38</sup> Then Jesus, again greatly disturbed, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. <sup>39</sup> Jesus said, “Take away the stone.” Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, “Lord, already there is a stench because he has been dead four days.” <sup>40</sup> Jesus said to her, “Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?” <sup>41</sup> So they took away the stone. And Jesus looked upward and said, “Father, I thank you for having heard me. <sup>42</sup> I knew that you always hear me, but I have said this for the sake of the crowd standing here, so that they may believe that you sent me.” <sup>43</sup> When he had said this, he cried with a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out!” <sup>44</sup> The dead man came out, his hands and feet bound with strips of cloth, and his face wrapped in a cloth. Jesus said to them, “Unbind him, and let him go.”

<sup>45</sup> Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what Jesus did, believed in him.



## More Light

### Life forgives

Life forgives its depredations;  
new-shaped by loss, goes on.  
Luther Penn, our neighbor  
still in our minds, will not  
come down to the creek mouth to fish  
in April anymore. The year  
ripens. Leaves fall. In openings  
where old trees were cut down,  
showing the ground to the sky,  
snakeroot blooms white,  
giving shine unto the world.  
Ant and beetle scuttle through  
heroic passages, go to dust;  
their armor tumbles in the mold.  
Broad wings enter the grove, fold  
and are still, open and go.

### And now the lowland

And now the lowland grove is down, the trees  
Fallen that had unearthly power to please  
The earthly eye, and gave unearthly solace  
To minds grown quiet in that quiet place.  
To see them standing was to know a prayer  
Prayed to the Holy Spirit in the air  
By that same Spirit dwelling in the ground.  
The wind in their high branches gave the sound  
Of air replying to that prayer. The rayed  
Imperial light sang in the leaves it made.

To live as mourner of a human friend  
Is but to understand the common end  
Told by the steady counting in the wrist.  
For though the absent friend is mourned & missed  
At every pulse, it is a human loss  
In human time made well; our grief will bless  
At last the dear lost flesh and breath; it will  
Grow quiet as the body in the hill.

To live to mourn an ancient woodland, known  
Always, loved with an old love handed down,  
That is a grief that will outlast the griever,  
Grief as landmark, grief as a wearing river  
That in its passing stays, biding in rhyme  
Of year with year, time with returning time  
As though beyond the grave the soul will wait  
In long unrest the shaping of the light  
In branch and bole through centuries that prepare  
This ground to pray again its finest prayer.

## **Palm Sunday**

### **Sabbath Poem: Slowly, slowly**

Slowly, slowly, they return  
To the small woodland let alone:  
Great trees, outspreading and upright,  
Apostles of the living light.

Patient as stars, they build in air  
Tier after tier a timbered choir,  
Stout beams upholding weightless grace  
Of song, a blessing on this place.

They stand in waiting all around,  
Uprisings of their native ground,  
Downcomings of the distant light;  
They are the advent they await.

Receiving sun and giving shade,  
Their life's a benefaction made,  
And is a benediction said  
Over the living and the dead.

In fall their brightened leaves, released,  
Fly down the wind, and we are pleased  
To walk on radiance, amazed.  
O light come down to earth, be praised!

### **Scripture: Matthew 21:1-11**

21 When they had come near Jerusalem and had reached Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, <sup>2</sup> saying to them, "Go into the village ahead of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her; untie them and bring them to me. <sup>3</sup> If anyone says anything to you, just say this, 'The Lord needs them.' And he will send them immediately. <sup>4</sup>" <sup>5</sup> This took place to fulfill what had been spoken through the prophet, saying, <sup>5</sup> "Tell the daughter of Zion, Look, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a donkey."

<sup>6</sup>The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them; <sup>7</sup>they brought the donkey and the colt, and put their cloaks on them, and he sat on them. <sup>8</sup>A very large crowd<sup>[b]</sup> spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. <sup>9</sup>The crowds that went ahead of him and that followed were shouting, "Hosanna to the Son of David!

Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!  
Hosanna in the highest heaven!"

<sup>10</sup>When he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was in turmoil, asking, "Who is this?" <sup>11</sup>The crowds were saying, "This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee."

## More light

### It's spring

It's spring. The birds sing.  
And how explain their singing?  
The objective biologist wishes  
to know. He knows! Sex.  
The genes' imperative to survive  
in a hostile world. His bird  
is the Poppy Cock. The birds  
of the actual woodland sing  
to the season and their dearest loves  
their beautiful offering,  
as long ago Chaucer  
knew, who knew also  
that all love songs come  
from the one Muse: "Blessed  
be Seynt Valentyn.  
For on this day I chees yow  
to be myn, Withouten  
repenting, myn herte sweete!"  
Son sang the "smale fowles"  
in time-delighted trees  
in Chaucer's hearing and in ours  
eternal mystery.

### Off in the woods

Off in the woods, in the quiet  
morning a redbird is singing  
his song goes out around him  
greater than its purpose,  
a welcoming room of song  
in which the trees stand,  
through which the creek flows.

*\* quote from Chaucer are in old English, not typos!*