

# *Singing the Psalms of Ascent*

## Like a Weaned Child

Sixth Lent Reflection: **Psalm 131**

March 29, 2020

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### **On Limitations**

As created beings we have limitations

The long fascination with exceeding limitations, and the tragic consequences that follow

The Tower of Babel in Genesis 11

Greek mythology: Icarus and Prometheus

*Paradise Lost* by John Milton, *Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley, *Invictus* by William Ernest Henley

### **The Grasping Beyond Our Creaturely Limits Narrative of Genesis 3**

The meaning behind the prohibition from eating of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil

To “know” good and evil: to decide what is good and what is evil through personal experience

To take one’s place alongside God as able to arbitrate reality

The consequence of trying to live above our creaturely limitations is death: **Gen 2:17**

Like a baby child trying to go it alone, or an astronaut shedding his suit, a skydiver his chute

### **Psalm 131**

Notice “delight to the eyes” (**Gen 3:6**) with “my eyes are not raised too high” (**Psalm 131:1**)

“Desired to make one wise” (**Gen 3:6**) with “I do not occupy myself w things too great for me” (**131:1**)

Recognizing our limits, accepting our limits

Allows us to live like a weaned child

I do not need to fuss and grasp for what I need, knowing it will be given in time

I can allow myself to be carried near the old source of food without demanding to go back to it

I can be carried into new paradigms and new experiences without crippling fear

### **The Symbol of the Compass**

How a compass works: the magnet in your hand pointing to magnet north far away

When we can see nothing we need a fixed point outside ourselves

The limited creature must be depend upon the limitless God

Both to find the way home and to make our way there

### **Two Practices of the Weaned Child**

We are able to wait, able to delay gratification

We are able to enter into unfamiliar territory with a sense of anchoredness to God

The promise that is true at all times/places: “I am with you always to the end of the age” **Matt 28:20**

*Journey Signs: Lament as a Map > Wrapped in the Coat of God’s Keeping > Our Feet on a Rock > Sweet Drink from the Canteen > An Apple on the Tree > The Sure and Steady Compass*

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“Better to reign in Hell, than to serve in Heaven.”

— John Milton, *Paradise Lost*

In the [Western classical tradition](#), Prometheus became a figure who represented human striving, particularly the quest for scientific knowledge, and the risk of overreaching or [unintended consequences](#). In particular, he was regarded in the [Romantic era](#) as embodying the lone genius whose efforts to improve human existence could also result in tragedy: [Mary Shelley](#), for instance, gave *The Modern Prometheus* as the subtitle to her novel *Frankenstein* (1818).

Part of Frankenstein's rejection of his creation is the fact that he does not give it a name, which causes a lack of identity. Instead it is referred to by words such as "wretch", "monster", "creature", "demon", "devil", "fiend", and "it". When Frankenstein converses with the creature in Chapter 10, he addresses it as "vile insect", "abhorred monster", "fiend", "wretched devil", and "abhorred devil".

Out of the night that covers me,  
Black as the pit from pole to pole,  
I thank whatever gods may be  
For my unconquerable soul.....

It matters not how strait the gate,  
How charged with punishments the scroll,  
I am the master of my fate,  
I am the captain of my soul.

Quoted by Timothy McVeigh

“This inclination to ignore problems is once again a simple manifestation of an unwillingness to delay gratification. Confronting problems is, as I have said, painful. To willingly confront a problem early, before we are forced to confront it by circumstances, means to put aside something pleasant or less painful for something more painful. It is choosing to suffer now in the hope of future gratification rather than choosing to continue present gratification in the hope that future suffering will not be necessary.”

— M. Scott Peck, *The Road Less Traveled: A New Psychology of Love, Traditional Values and Spiritual Growth*

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