

# live loved



April 2009

Karen Block

Come now my love,  
my lovely one, come.

May the Creator  
bless you & keep you-  
May the Beloved Companion  
face you & have mercy upon you-  
May the eternal Spirit's countenance  
be turned to you & give you peace.  
May the Three in One bless you.

from "A New Zealand Prayer Book"

# The Beloved

“I have called you  
by name;  
You are mine.  
... you are precious  
in my eyes,  
... and I love you.

Is. 43: 1 & 4

compiled by Karen Block  
2007, revised 2011

Goal:

That you  
would today experience anew  
the love God has for **you!**



## A Morning Office:

The Lord be with you.  
**And also with you.**

We praise you with joy, loving God, for your grace is better than life itself. You have sustained us through the darkness, and you have blessed us with life in this new day.

My soul waits for the Lord  
more than those who watch for morning,  
**more than those who watch for morning.**

Declaration of Faith:

**I will wait for the Lord.**  
**My soul waits,**  
**and in His word**  
**do I hope.**

Songs of praise:

Canticle:

**In the shadow of Your wings**  
**I will sing Your praises, O Lord.**

The Lord is my light, my salvation;  
whom shall I fear?  
The Lord is the refuge of my life;  
of whom shall I be afraid?

**In the shadow of Your wings**  
**I will sing Your praises, O Lord.**

One thing I ask of the Lord,  
one thing I seek:  
to dwell in the presence of my God,  
to gaze on Your holy face.

**In the shadow of Your wings  
I will sing Your praises, O Lord.**

I believe I shall see the goodness  
of the Lord in the land of the living.  
O wait for the Lord!  
Have courage and wait,  
wait for the Lord.

**In the shadow of Your wings  
I will sing Your praises, O Lord.**

**+ In the name of the Father,  
and of the Son,  
and of the Holy Spirit. Amen**

Celtic Daily Office  
from the Northumbria Community

The Beloved – that's you!

Isn't it a wonderful thing to be invited? Today, your God is inviting you to spend some time with alone him. Ruth Harley Barton (2004) writes in her book “An invitation to Silence and Solitude”: “There is something in being invited that makes the heart glad. Someone is seeking me out, desiring my presence enough to initiate an encounter. The invitation to solitude and silence is just that. It is an invitation to enter more deeply into the intimacy of relationship with the One who waits just outside the noise and busyness of our lives. It is an invitation to communion and communion with the One who is always present even when our awareness has been dulled by distraction. It is an invitation to the adventure of spiritual transformation in the deepest places of our being, an adventure that will result in greater freedom and authenticity and surrender to God...”

Our God, who loves us so deeply, issues an invitation to us himself (Song of Solomon 2:10-13),

“Come then, my Beloved,  
My lovely one, come.  
For see, the winter is past,  
the rains are over and gone.  
Flowers are appearing on the earth.  
The season of glad songs has come,  
the cooing of the turtle dove  
is heard in our land.  
The fig tree is forming its first figs  
and the blossoming vines give out  
their fragrance.  
Come then, my Beloved,  
My lovely one, come.”

We desperately need moments when we rest in God's presence and allow ourselves to be with God with what is “true about us right now” (Barton. 2004).

I have discovered that I need to experience again and again this ‘being loved’ by God. He does it not just because he has to – since He is love – but because He wants to and because He likes me! Once is not enough! I need it more and more!

In Sacred Companions, David Benner (2002) tells us that “God doesn't want me to try to become more loving. He wants me to absorb his love so that it flows out from me... Our primary assignment... is letting ourselves be deeply loved by our Lord.”

Today the invitation is to you: to stop, to be still and to know that you are 'The Beloved' of God. Let Him love you. Accept it. Revel in it. Bask in it. Soak it up. Float on it.



Lectio Divina<sup>1</sup> - an approach to the Word that focuses on what God might want to say to me today through this Scripture.

Is. 43: 1 & 4; 54: 10

“Do not be afraid...  
I have called you by name;  
You are mine.  
... you are precious in my eyes,  
You are honored  
and I love you.  
...the mountains may depart,  
the hills be shaken,  
but my love for you  
will never leave you  
and my covenant of peace  
with you will never be shaken.”



Pray for God to speak to you and to protect you.

1. Listen to or read the whole passage. Just let it flow over you.
  - Sit in silence; don't analyze;
  - Let your mind take you back over it - what do you remember?
2. What word or phrase captures your attention?
  - As it is read, allow a word or phrase to hold your attention.
  - Sit in silence and just let that word or phrase resonate with in you; don't analyze; just let it sink in; write it down
  - \* If in a group setting share just the word or phrase (no need to explain).
3. How does it relate to your life right now? What is Jesus saying to you?
  - Sit in silence and just let that word or phrase resonate with in you; don't analyze; just let it sink in; converse with Jesus about it; write it down briefly to help you remember.
  - \* If in a group setting share briefly.
4. Is Jesus or God issuing an invitation to respond to him? What is he asking you to do or be?
  - Sit in silence and just let that invitation come to you; don't analyze, but you can converse with God about it; just let it sink in; write it down.
5. Rest in the presence of God<sup>2</sup>... Let go of everything and just rest in His presence... let go of it. Don't worry about how to fulfill the invitation... Don't fret. Just rest.
6. Resolve... As you leave resolve to hold on to this word and this invitation and to live it out in the coming days and weeks.

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<sup>1</sup> from Benner (2002) p.169-170)

<sup>2</sup> These last two steps come from Barton (2006) p. 61



The word or phrase:

My situation/connection:

God's invitation to me:

NOTE: I have found that reading and listening work very differently. I use a small tape recorder to record the passage I want to meditate on and listen to it over and over again.

Rest in His presence.... Come to the Father, come to Jesus, just as you are; come with "what is true about you right now". He wants to talk to you – just listen to Him tell you he loves you!

(Is. 43: 1,4)

**“Don't be afraid... I have called you by name...”**

What is your name? What does it mean? Can you hear a loving God calling you by your name? He is inviting you to join Him. How does that invitation make you feel? Do you believe it?

**“You are mine.”**

Are you His? When did you become His? What does it mean to you to belong to Him?

**“You are precious in my eyes.”**

How do you treat someone precious? Do you feel precious? What would make you know that you are precious? How does God treat you?

**“You are honored...”**

What does it mean when God says to you, “you are honored...?”

**“I love you.”**

Can you hear His voice saying this to you? Do you believe it? Just bask in His love. Listen to Him say it over and over again. What is His love like?

Some other Scriptures to reflect and meditate on:

Zephaniah 3: 17

“...The Lord your God has arrived to live among you.  
He is a mighty saviour. He will rejoice over you with great gladness.  
With his love, he will calm all your fears.  
He will exult over you by singing a happy song!”

Ephesians 3: 14-19 (paraphrased)

“Oh God, Creator of heaven and earth. I ask that from Your glorious, unlimited resources You will give me mighty inner strength through the Holy Spirit. Jesus, please be more and more at home in my heart as I trust in You. Help me to trust in You! Cause my roots to go down deep into the soil of Your marvelous love. Grant to me the power to understand how wide, how long, how high and how deep Your love really is. Grant me the grace to experience Your love Lord Jesus, even though it is so great I will never fully understand it. For it is then, that I will be filled with the fullness of life and power that comes from You, my God. Amen.”

Ephesians 1: 4 & 5

“Long ago, even before he made the world,  
God loved us and chose us in Christ  
to be holy and without fault in His eyes.  
His unchangeable plan has always been  
to adopt us into his own family  
by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ.  
And this gave Him great pleasure.”

Jeremiah 31:3

Long ago the Lord said,  
“I have loved you with an everlasting love.  
With unfailing love I have drawn you to myself.”

What shall we say about such wonderful things as these? If God is for us, who can ever be against us? Since he did not spare even his own Son but gave him up for us all, won't he also give us everything else? Who dares accuse us whom God has chosen for his own? No one—for God himself has given us right standing with himself. Who then will condemn us? No one—for Christ Jesus died for us and was raised to life for us, and he is sitting in the place of honor at God's right hand, pleading for us.

Can anything ever separate us from Christ's love? Does it mean he no longer loves us if we have trouble or calamity, or are persecuted, or hungry, or destitute, or in danger, or threatened with death? (As the Scriptures say, "For your sake we are killed every day; we are being slaughtered like sheep.") No, despite all these things, overwhelming victory is ours through Christ, who loved us.

And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love. No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.

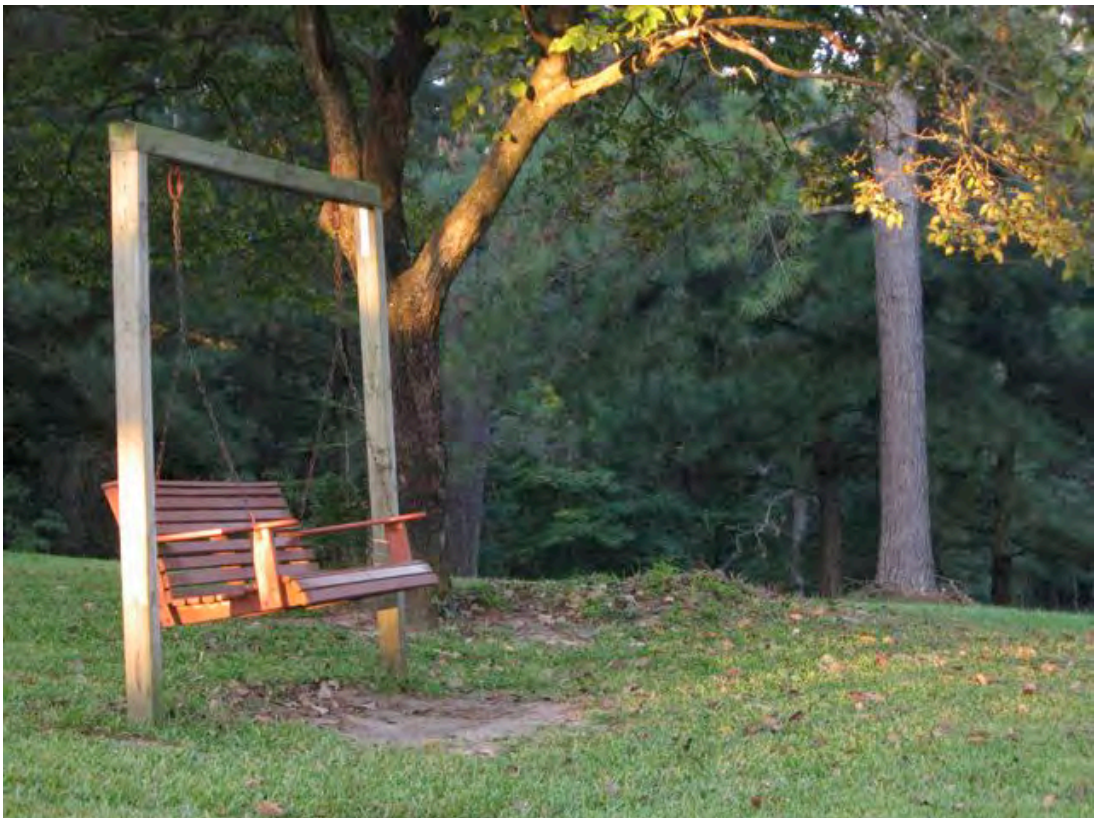
Other questions to reflect on...

Have you come to know, experience and believe in the love God has for you? How? Recall some of those:

Where do you find your identity? Have you been able to define yourself as one beloved by God?

Brennan Manning (2002) in "Abba's Child" quotes the journal of a man named John Eagan. John Eagan wrote in his journal the challenge that his spiritual director gave to him: "Define yourself radically as one beloved by God. God's love for you and his choice of you constitute your worth. Accept that, and let it become the most important thing in your life."

What blocks you from accepting this truth? Ask the Father to show you what the obstacles are... what the lies are... what keeps you from this freedom?





## Simple Collage:

1. Sit with whatever the prayer exercise has left you with for a few minutes. Let the Lord speak to you about that which he wants to reveal to you.
2. Go to the collage table, pick up a sheet of card stock in a colour that appeals, scissors, & a glue stick.
3. Choose 3-5 pictures that seem to be "right" to you. Don't take long, don't analyze - just pick.
4. Go to your space and trim, shape, arrange them on your paper. If there are words you need to add - use a marker to do so - but don't be afraid to just have pictures.
5. Glue down your images once you are pleased with an arrangement.
6. Asking God to use them to speak to you - take time to look at the images and the arrangement. There are some questions on the next page to help you process your collage. Take time to journal these thoughts, ideas, images, and invitations...

## Questions to help you process your collage...

1. What do you see? Describe the key images...
2. What attracted you to these images? Are they linked?
3. Is there any dissonance - anything that repels, frustrates, confuses you? Is there an image that you don't understand what it is doing in your collage? Are you ok with that?

4. What did you discover anything about God and/or yourself through the collage?

5. Do you have any sense of invitation? to live in a certain way... to respond to your current situation with a particular attitude...

6. What was the process of doing the collage like? Any surprises? struggles?

7. If you can, give your collage a title:

Appendix:  
Prayer of the presence of Christ  
from: "Free to Love, Free to Pray" by Max Olivia SJ (1994)

Close your eyes.

Take a couple of deep breaths.

Relax.

Now, imagine you have Jesus in front of you.

He is looking at you.

Notice Him looking at you.

Listen to Him as he tells you how much He loves you.

If you find yourself feeling uncomfortable,  
blocking this gift of love in any way,  
ask Jesus to free you of this obstacle.

Rest in His love.

## *Ebb & Flow*

*Grant to me, Lord,*

*Joy in receiving,*

*Joy in giving.*

*Love in-coming,*

*Love out-flowing.*

*Peace instilling,*

*Peace distilling.*

*Wisdom in-filling,*

*Wisdom outpouring.*

*Grant to me, Lord,*

*A rhythm of life.*

*David Adams. 1989. "Tides and Seasons: Modern prayers in the Celtic tradition."*



BLESS US LORD.

WITH WILD, UNIMAGINABLE BLESSINGS  
– THAT WE COULD NEVER DREAM OF OR HOPE FOR!  
BLESSINGS THAT ARE CLEARLY A GIFT FROM YOU.

FOLLOWING EACH BLESSING,  
GRANT US GRATEFUL HEARTS  
– FULL OF PRAISE AND JOY  
IN KNOWING WE ARE YOUR BELOVED ONES  
AND THAT YOU DELIGHT IN US  
AND YOU KNOW OUR DAYS  
AND HAVE A FUTURE  
FULL OF YOUR GOODNESS,  
YOUR KINGDOM  
AND YOUR PRESENCE!  
AMEN.

KAREN BLOCK, 2010

## Contemplative Collage

A collage is essentially a selection of pictures or words usually gleaned from magazines, old calendars, cards or newspapers. These are arranged on a blank page or piece of cardboard and glued down. It's as easy as that! You may well ask: "How can that be contemplative?" Fair question... Read on!

**Collage is about letting the truth be revealed.** Sometimes it is hard to stand back from our own life and see it from a more objective perspective. Collage is a contemplative way to allow this to happen. Both conscious and unconscious aspects of life find their way into the collage and remain there for ongoing discernment.

To use collage as a contemplative discernment tool allow a good chunk of relaxed, uninterrupted time. Have all the equipment at hand. Begin with a few moments of prayerful centering then browse through the magazines, cards, calendars etc. Tear or cut out pictures or words that somehow "grab" you. Don't analyse or censor your choices. Next survey what has "chosen you" and do a bit of sifting and sorting. Play around with layering the pictures (and maybe words) on the page. Keep adding, discarding and arranging until you feel satisfied. Then glue it all down.

The collage that has emerged will reflect back to you some aspects of yourself that may be well known to you and some that may surprise you. Some clear insights will emerge immediately. However, some choices on the page may reveal their truth only over time. Sit with the collage and open yourself to the wisdom of your spirit and God's Spirit. Come back to it from time to time and see if new layers of insight unfold.

Someone I know who often uses collage as a way of praying looked back months later on a collage which featured blue tea towels drying in the sun in a lovely garden. It had not made sense at the time but now it fitted with a growing sense that God was calling her to take pleasure in the simple things of life and let go the feeling that this wasn't enough.

**Collage is a way of getting under the radar.** In our very wordy world most of us try to "figure things out" cognitively and logically. Even our prayer can be couched in language we "know" is the way to pray. The well travelled tracks of theological language and concepts can make it hard for any new creative revelation to break through. Collage is one way to "get under the radar" of our left brain control and allow the right brain to show us things for which we may not previously have allowed space. Just as the symbols in dreams reveal more than we consciously "knew", so the pictures in collage serve as symbolic messengers.

In one retreat where collage was used as the way to spend a contemplative morning one person reported that she couldn't get away from choosing faces all kinds of faces, happy and sad, old and young, faces from many cultures. Her prayerful reflection on her finished collage was that her heart's desire was to take the risk of working with people rather than in the safe, behind the scenes job she currently held.

**Collage is art for non-artists!** Most of us agree that artistic expression plumbs the depths of the creative spirit within us. But some of us feel "artistically challenged"! Take heart! Collage is the perfect way to create a beautiful finished product without using a paintbrush or a pen! This will happen whatever is your initial motivation for making a collage. But you may want to have a specific idea, scripture or concept in mind and create an intentional collage to convey its meaning. Suppose for instance that you are pondering what it really means to "Be still and know that I am God" (Ps 46:10). Try holding that phrase in mind as you sift through your resources and select pictures and words that exemplify that attitude. The finished collage can be a visual invitation continuing to call you to stillness.

### **Practical hints.**

- A collage you want to keep for future display or reflection can be laminated quite cheaply.
- Taking a digital photo of a collage is a good idea if you want a copy small enough to put in your journal.

Excerpts from an article by Sheila Pritchard in 'Refresh', Spiritual Growth Ministries Journal of Contemplative Spirituality, Summer 06/07.



## Contemplative Prayer Walk

Creation itself, the physical universe, can provide a pathway to God. When we regard reality with awe, we open ourselves to appreciating the traces of the Divine Artist in the handiwork of God. We can often hear God speaking through the created world if we will but be open and attentive to listen. Jesus reflected on God's creation and gained insights which He included in his teachings (the birds of the air, the lilies of the field, the fig tree, the chicks...) One of the great spiritual writers remind us that God reveals God's self in the Book of the Scriptures and Book of Creation. God's revelation is on-going in and around each of us today!

The following is a simple prayer exercise which invites us to deliberately slow down and open ourselves to God. Allow at least thirty minutes for this contemplative walk...

Begin your walk alone, deliberately slowing down your pace, Take a few deep breaths...

Now open yourself to God, asking God to speak to you either concerning a specific question or conflict you may have, or about something God wants to show you...

Keep open to the outside world rather than simply mulling things over in your mind. Use your senses to become aware of what is going on around you. Use your eyes to look at things close up... and at a distance. Become aware of shapes, colors, textures... Look at things in relation to each other...

Does anything particularly attract your attention? If so, pause and take it in...Is God saying something through it?

Use your ears and really listen, both to sound... and to silence... Be aware of sounds going on inside yourself hear your inner self but then move out again...

Use touch to become aware of different textures - the bark of a tree, the earth, grass, a wall... Again, if something attracts you, pause and explore it... Become aware of anything God might be saying...

You may want to bring back something you have picked up - and spend even more time allowing it to reveal God to you...

When you finish your walk, pause for a moment and raise your heart and body in praise to a God who is so extravagant, bodacious and intimate!

**Amen! Alleluia!**

## Suggested Reading:

Benner, David G. 2003. *Surrender to love: Discovering the heart of Christian spirituality*. Illinois: InterVarsity Press.

Nouwen, Henri. 1992. *Life of the Beloved*. New York: The Crossroads Publishing Company.

Manning, Brennan. 2009. *The furious longing of God*. Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook.

## References:

David Adams. 1989. *Tides and Seasons: Modern prayers in the Celtic tradition*. London: Triangle.

Barton, Ruth Haley. 2004. *An invitation to silence and solitude: Experiencing God's transforming presence*. Illinois: InterVarsity Press.

Benner, David G. 2002. *Sacred Companions: Spiritual Friendships and Direction*. Illinois: InterVarsity Press.

Manning, Brennan. 2002. *Abba's Child: The cry of the heart for intimate belonging*. Colorado Springs: NavPress.

Oliva, Max, SJ. 1994. *Free to love, free to pray*. Indiana: Ave Maria Press.

Pritchard Sheila. 'Refresh' in *Spiritual Growth Ministries Journal of Contemplative Spirituality*, Summer 06/07

All the photos are of my family - my brother & sister-in-law, niece and nephews:

1. Matthew asleep on his Daddy (Dave)
2. Matthew & Barbara's hands
3. Swing-- in Texas

Please feel free to copy and use these materials  
just make sure you acknowledge the sources.  
Blessings, Karen Block

## A possible Schedule:

9:00 - 9:10	Introduction
9:10 - 10:00	Worship in song and the Word
10:00 - 11:45	Quiet/alone time with God
10:30 -	coffee break to be taken in silence
11:45 - 12:15	Sharing in pairs - pray together
12:30 - 1:30	Lunch
1:30 - 3:30	Simple collage or more time alone w/ God
3:30 - 4:00	Coffee break - to be taken in silence
4:00 - 5:00	Worship in song, sharing and prayer Closing prayer