

Psalm XXX

William Wellman

The title reads *Thanksgiving for Recovery from
Grave Illness.*

I decide this shall be my Psalm.

I will be well.

I, with the Psalmist, will be
made well by the Lord.

I take my drugs
as directed.

Psalm XXX every night.

Prednisone, Cellcept,
nothing changes.

I do not improve.

A move to stronger poison,
Cytosan.

Six weeks gone,
nothing changes.

I do not improve.

Psalm XXX every night.

Doubt arises and questions come forth—

What disease did the Psalmist have?

Why does God not hear

my supplication?

Lord be MY helper

Lord be MY helper

a helper.

Psalm XXX every night.

Boston will have answers.

Bombarded by degrees, a second biopsy—
the renowned pathologist finds a new disease.

This disease is not curable.

The voice on the phone mentions future kidney failure
(from across the hotel room, mom quickly reads the
disappointment in my eyes).

Time for stronger poison,

Rituximab.

Signature provided, serious
side effects.

I have not read Psalm XXX for weeks now.

Back to Florida

improvements none.

Rituximab joins the list of

no avails. Prograf because

why not?

My hair thins, falls out

all day, fills my hands. One more,

no avail.

One last treatment,

Plasmapheresis.

Two months—

these nurses, so nice and caring,

Gatorade/TV/two hours/blood out/

albumin in/clockwork.

All to no avail.

I start to look at Psalm XXX again.

I switch doctors,

We wait for kidneys to die.

I will not be healed,

I will not dance,

I will not sing.

Why,

Why in the hell would Psalm XXX be my Psalm?

I switch to Psalm XXXVIII

A Penitent Sufferers Plea for Healing

Psalm XXXVIII every night.

My kidneys fail,

I am strangely happy.

Dialysis,

Catheter projects from my chest, later

I get an AV Fistula.

I feel healthier now than I have in 18 months.

Psalm XXXVIII every night

makes much more sense.

Sitting in the chairs of dialysis clinics, we are icicles.

Dripping yet beautiful. I can always

find some smiles. However,

I can not escape

the fact that 50 years ago

I would be dead.

Night sweats, migraines, constantly in a

cloud. I am sick,

this is who I am.

*There is no soundness in my flesh
There is no health in my bones*
Psalm XXXVIII makes so much more sense.

I am beginning to see grace.
Father Brou and St. Ignatius have pushed me.
Bible studies, theology discussions,
Love alone is credible.
Mom will give me her kidney,
I shall have a transplant.
First, they must remove mine.
I was such a fool to read Psalm XXX.

Kidneys removed.
One laproscopically, one
old fashioned—a nicked blood vessel.
I can feel 100 years of surgical advancements
across my abdomen.
Two more months and I will be *etherised upon a
table, once more spread out against the sky.*
Psalm XXXVIII every night.

My faith strong,
Yet my hope human.
I wish for success instead of
presence.
Surgery completed,
Mom is ok.
For me the ICU: extreme hypertension.
The woman from Barbados flees in and out
with dirty jokes.
I am too tired to read,
I simply pray for no relapse.

Proteinuria.
I am retaining fluid,
I tell no one.
I am
scared.
Almost unheard of levels, 40 grams/24 hours.
The haunting ghost no
longer an apparition. Relapse,
All I envision is a life on machines.
For now it is back to
dialysis and plasmapheresis.
I am in a very dark place.
I am silent.

Stems of Life
Chanel Davidoff

I talk to no one
outside family and doctors. I send out emails with
encouraging words. Yet I am
in a dark place, ready to fall.
I am crushed, I am
defeated, *my pain is ever with me.* I am
in the dark hole, down to the Pit.
I begin to read Ash Wednesday, Lamentations III,
Psalm XXXVIII over and over, over and over.

I scream f**k you to get well cards
that say it is His will.
Why would someone ever write such things?
I am bottomed out.
My brother prays for those in the hospital
alone. I am thankful.
The church had a prayer service
in the small chapel, it overflowed
with friends and family.
I go to the hospital bathroom and cry
uncontrollably.
I read Ash Wednesday, Lamentations III,
Psalm XXXVIII over and over, over and over.



Psalm XXX cont'd

It is not His will.
I acknowledge the
meaninglessness of this world with a yes,
only that I may say yes to the meaning
offered in Christ.
I am learning hope:
At all times, no matter how sick,
Christ has been present.
Dialysis at 8 am, plasmapheresis at 12 pm,
these are marathon days.
Benadryl for itching,
puts me out.
I read Psalm XXX for some reason today.

A third kidney biopsy,
This time the
giant needle enters through my stomach.
During plasmapheresis
I reach a calm not my own.
The doctors come in as a group: solemn, stricken.
Results.
Bad, three weeks and half the kidney is permanently
scarred. I am
fine. I am ok. I know tomorrow I will be fine
as well.
Transplant nephrectomy,
indefinite dialysis.
I read Psalm XXX again.

I heal quickly, three kidneys
have now been removed from my body.
A welcoming calm, a
presence overwhelms me.
I am not yet joy, but
I am hope. Dialysis
has its own issues.
I learn joy, I think
about seminary. Possibilities.
Presence.
*You have turned my mourning into
dancing;
you have taken off my sackcloth
and clothed me with joy*
Psalm XXX, my Psalm.

■ **Will** is currently pursuing a Master of Divinity from Princeton Theological Seminary and also has a MS in Forestry from the University of Kentucky. A main focus for Will has been connecting faith and ecological communities through shared concerns and goals. Will is also the editor-in-chief at The EcoTheo Review.

The Guide

Carol Faith Warren

You were there to guide
When I did not know the way
The rocks were oh so high
And dark clouds hid the day
Each step took me closer to the edge
To the broken sea below
The midnight sky was closing in
There was no place left to go

You did not tell me what to do
Or even point the way
You listened to my tumbled speech
You listen to me pray
Still afraid to take a step
I fell upon my knees
Yet in those words the clouds did part
And let me stand at ease

A flood of tears has washed the scales
Of grief and pain I wore
My eyes were open now
Much clearer than before
I see a path that takes me back
The brink is not so near
I take a step and take a breath
I now can face the fear

Upon the rocky cliff I stand
And welcome salt and spray
I see the far horizon now
So you must have known the way
Your silent presence spoke
You did not let me stray
My feet are still upon the path
Tomorrow and today

No one can build a life again
Except the one inside
The work is yours
The guide will walk beside
As ever onward goes the trek
The world goes ever on
We walk within its' walls of glass
To touch the rosy dawn