

The Rev. Michael Burke  
The Second Sunday in Advent

St. Mary's Episcopal Church  
Isaiah 11:1-10; Matthew 3:1-12

*Somewhere, somehow, somebody must have  
Kicked you around some  
Tell me why you wanna lay there,  
Revel in your abandon*

*Honey, it don't make no difference to me  
Everybody's had to fight to be free  
You see, you don't have to live like a refugee*

- Tom Petty, 1979



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Once again, friends, Welcome to the Second Sunday of the Season of Advent, when we prepare a place for the coming of Christ in the fullness of time, the coming of Christ child into the manger on Christmas morning, and the coming of Christ into our hearts. and daily lives, day by day... right here, right now.

Advent brings to us, an invitation to “look within” at our inner house. With all the outer activity and busy-ness the season requires, (or seems to require), if we don't make a concerted effort to “look within,” we can end up with a “holiday without any insides.”

A “holiday without any insides” can be one in which we expend ourselves to near exhaustion, get stressed and frazzled with all the demands, and then build to a big explosion of activity on Christmas day. A couple of days later, the Christmas tree is all bagged up and laying out by the curb in a small mountain of trash, all the friends or relatives have gone home, and we feel empty and hollow inside. We feel empty, of course, because its all been about the “outer stuff,” its all been about external activities, duties, and events... In the rush to get everything done, somehow the inner world never got much attention.

But the answer, at least for me, isn't to run off into the desert somewhere to escape all this busy-ness we call “Christmas.” We don't *have* to choose between the outer and the inner worlds, because the journey of Advent is about joining the two together.

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In today's Gospel reading, you see John the Baptist using the words of Isaiah to join these inner and outer worlds. To do this, John introduces the metaphor of *landscape*.

*'Prepare the way of the Lord,  
make his paths straight.  
Every valley shall be filled,  
and every mountain and hill shall be made low,  
and the crooked shall be made straight,  
and the rough ways made smooth;  
and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.*

Those words go back some 2000 years to John the Baptist, yes, but he was quoting them from the Prophet Isaiah, some 800 years earlier. These people with Isaiah, they had been carried off into exile in Babylonia, they were hundreds of miles from home. The desert, hundreds of miles wide and searing hot, made the passage impossible. The only route “back home again,” was the route through which they traveled to get here: Northwest along the Euphrates River, a path almost unthinkable without platoons of soldiers and caravans of pack animals carrying all sorts of equipment and supplies. The way “back home again,” the way of “return” is literally up and down, up and down, up and down all the way around the Syrian and Arabian Deserts, up into modern day Turkey and then back down through modern day Syria into the promised land. It is the journey of a lifetime, and there’s little telling which is harder, the going-ups or the coming-downs.

Did the ancient exiles people of Israel want to make the journey even if they were somehow released from captivity and were told they could leave that place of exile given the chance? To be sure, some did and some didn’t. Some didn’t even believe there was a “home” in Jerusalem anymore. Others were too tired to get up and go. Some just laid there, and reveled in their abandon. Others were too distracted with the day to day demands of staying alive and caring for their families. Do you suppose Isaiah’s message of their return to Jerusalem was Good News to them? ... But God brought those people home, and oh, what rejoicing there was when they returned to the places and traditions of their ancestors!

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Now its 800 years later, and this time John the Baptizer appears in the wilderness coming forth to declare that “God is doing a new thing...”! And, of course, with God, the “new thing” looks a lot like the “old thing” God did a long time ago.

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This time the barriers are not just geographic barriers, as in *literal mountains and valleys*, but the barriers are metaphorical and personal. This time, the mountains and valleys are those of the landscape of the soul. The deserts are those places within where long ago the springs of hope, of faith, or trust ran dry. Places within where there is nothing but scorched earth from days gone by, shuttered relationships or shattering loss. Places where we believe love will never grow again. Places where trust, if it sprouts at all, will soon wither for lack of water. Places where the trauma never really heals. Where the insecurities linger. The mountains are obstacles we believe can never be surpassed, valleys deep cuts in our hearts, jagged tears that will not heal. The insurmountable circumstances of our lives. A desert and a wilderness is a dangerous place, a place of searing heat and bitter cold, where the cost of survival is hunkering down or wrapping yourself in a protective cloak to keep out the relentless wind.

Where are those places in your life? What hidden pains and brokenness do you carry to this place this morning?

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make his paths straight.  
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and the crooked shall be made straight,  
and the rough ways made smooth;  
and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.*

Is it Good News that the wild man John brings? Does it sound like Good News to you? Because the fact is: you *are* going home again, but to renewed a place of healing and abundant life. That may or may not be good news to you. Maybe even home again to a healing place you've never been before. In the words from the 11<sup>th</sup> chapter of the prophet Isaiah:


Where the "The wolf shall live with the lamb,  
the leopard shall lie down with the kid,  
the calf and the lion and the fatling together,  
and a little child shall lead them."

I said something like this also a few weeks ago: The good news is that God brings forth healing in our lives. The "bad news" is that often God does so, not by magically "removing" the pain from our lives, but by growing within us the strength and grace to *move through* whatever hardship we find ourselves in.

In the imagery of the scriptures this morning, the valleys will be lifted up and the mountains laid low, but at times it seems that happens shovelful by shovelful, one day at a time, all the time knowing that God's presence, and the Holy Spirit of Jesus moves within us and around us.

And so we move through these days of our lives. And so we move through this season of Advent: with images of wilderness, valleys low, and mountains high.

But within us, the changes are taking root, even now. Advent, above all else, is a time of preparation, with a special kind of alertness to what is happening within us.



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The "bad news" is that often God does so, not by magically "removing" the pain from our lives, but by growing within us the strength, grace, and resilience to *move through* whatever hardship we find ourselves in.

We are all invited to *do the work of Advent*: to prepare ourselves on the inside. Take stock of where we are in our lives and where we want to go. Where God calls us to grow. The old biblical word “repent,” almost ruined by misuse by too many bad late-night TV preachers, means to Look up! Take stock of where you are in your life right now. Take note of where God is, and is to be found in your life. Cultivate the conviction of where you want to be - what changes within and what growth you are called to.

And then ‘turn, turn, turn...’ Reorient yourself, your life, and your direction accordingly.

And walk – one step in front of the other. One day at a time. The change is not simply discovered in the rising of the sun in the morning and the descent into the falling darkness of evening, but in the slow turnings from day to day.

If it feels like a long walk home, that might be what it is. For some of us, a sense of healing and homecoming does seem a long way away.

And fear not... Repentance and slow turning are the word of the Holy Spirit with us.

St. Paul said in his letter to the church at Phillipi. “The One who began a good work among you will bring it to completion.”

Far beyond the wake-up calls of a holy man in the wilderness, dressed in camel’s hair and hollering about snakes...

Advent bids us: Prepare yourself: For in due season, your love will overflow more and more with wisdom, insight, and even compassion for the bruised and broken places within ourselves.

Prepare yourself: Your hearts going to break open and grow three sizes bigger as you make room for... ... and welcome the birth of Christ within.

St. Mary’s, prepare yourself, you’re going to leave behind your worries and catch fire for God, that is, with a passion for goodness, justice, kindness, and truthfulness, and above all... ... Love! In the days to come, you’re going to do God’s work with a passion and a purpose that no mountain, no valley can stop!

## REPENT (VERB):

Look up!

Take stock of where you are in your life right now.

Take note of where God is, and is to be found in your life.

Cultivate the conviction of where you want to be - what changes within and what growth you are called to.

And then ‘turn, turn, turn...’

Reorient your self, your life, and your direction accordingly.

And fear not...

Repentance and slow turning are the work of the Holy Spirit with us.

And why? Because theirs is a deep and abiding connection between the work that God is doing inside you, and the work you are doing on the outside. Go out there and BE the Spirit of Advent, people!

- ❖ Think and act spontaneously rather than on fears based on past experiences, for *God* holds your past and inhabits your present;
- ❖ Carry forth an unmistakable ability to simply enjoy each moment!
- ❖ Lose your interest in judging other people, and leave such things to God,
- ❖ Lose your interest in interpreting the actions of others,
- ❖ Lose your interest in conflict for conflicts sake,
- ❖ Lose your ability to worry about tomorrow!
- ❖ Be overcome by frequent, overwhelming episodes of appreciation,
- ❖ Feel yourself as part of God's incredible and Holy Creation, for *all living things* shall see the salvation of God,
- ❖ Be possessed by an uncontrollable urge to sing out in joy! (or for the timid among us, to hum gently to yourself in the car.)
- ❖ Find yourself incapable of sustaining a frown!
- ❖ Look at all you have, and say, O Lord, it is enough! O Lord, it is enough! In the face of seeming scarcity and fear, together, we are *all* more than enough.

You and I, we no longer have to live like refugees, like exiles, like the Israelites of Isaiah's time, like people on the run. We are on our way home again, for God is, even now, making a way in the wilderness.

*Every valley shall be filled,  
and every mountain and hill shall be made low,  
and the crooked shall be made straight,  
and the rough ways made smooth;  
and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.*

And if churchy language doesn't grab you, there's been a little Tom Petty running through my head the last couple days:

*Somewhere, somehow, somebody must have  
Kicked you around some  
Tell me why you wanna lay there,  
Revel in your abandon*

*Honey, it don't make no difference to me  
Everybody's had to fight to be free  
You see, you don't have to live like a refugee*

*- Tom Petty, 1979*

Let the Church say, "Amen!" Amen!

## Holy Scripture appointed for today:

### *The Collect*

Merciful God, who sent your messengers the prophets to preach repentance and prepare the way for our salvation: Give us grace to heed their warnings and forsake our sins, that we may greet with joy the coming of Jesus Christ our Redeemer; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

### *Old Testament - Isaiah 11:1-10*

A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse,  
and a branch shall grow out of his roots.

The spirit of the LORD shall rest on him,  
the spirit of wisdom and understanding,  
the spirit of counsel and might,  
the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.

His delight shall be in the fear of the LORD.

He shall not judge by what his eyes see,  
or decide by what his ears hear;  
but with righteousness he shall judge the poor,  
and decide with equity for the meek of the earth;  
he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth,  
and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked.  
Righteousness shall be the belt around his waist,  
and faithfulness the belt around his loins.

The wolf shall live with the lamb,  
the leopard shall lie down with the kid,  
the calf and the lion and the fatling together,  
and a little child shall lead them.

The cow and the bear shall graze,  
their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.

The nursing child shall play over the hole of the asp,  
and the weaned child shall put its hand on the adder's den.

They will not hurt or destroy  
on all my holy mountain;

for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD  
as the waters cover the sea.

On that day the root of Jesse shall stand as a signal to the peoples; the nations shall inquire of him, and his dwelling shall be glorious.

***Psalm 72:1-7, 18-19***

- 1 Give the King your justice, O God, \*  
and your righteousness to the King's Son;
- 2 That he may rule your people righteously \*  
and the poor with justice;
- 3 That the mountains may bring prosperity to the people, \*  
and the little hills bring righteousness.
- 4 He shall defend the needy among the people; \*  
he shall rescue the poor and crush the oppressor.
- 5 He shall live as long as the sun and moon endure, \*  
from one generation to another.
- 6 He shall come down like rain upon the mown field, \*  
like showers that water the earth.
- 7 In his time shall the righteous flourish; \*  
there shall be abundance of peace till the moon shall be no more.
- 18 Blessed be the Lord GOD, the God of Israel, \*  
who alone does wondrous deeds!
- 19 And blessed be his glorious Name for ever! \*  
and may all the earth be filled with his glory.  
Amen. Amen.

***The Epistle - Romans 15:4-13***

Whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, so that by steadfastness and by the encouragement of the scriptures we might have hope. May the God of steadfastness and encouragement grant you to live in harmony with one another, in accordance with Christ Jesus, so that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Welcome one another, therefore, just as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God. For I tell you that Christ has become a servant of the circumcised on behalf of the truth of God in order that he might confirm the promises given to the patriarchs, and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy. As it is written,

"Therefore I will confess you among the Gentiles,  
and sing praises to your name";

and again he says,

"Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people";  
and again,

"Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles,  
and let all the peoples praise him";  
and again Isaiah says,

"The root of Jesse shall come,  
the one who rises to rule the Gentiles;  
in him the Gentiles shall hope."

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

### ***The Gospel - Matthew 3:1-12***

In those days John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness of Judea, proclaiming, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near." This is the one of whom the prophet Isaiah spoke when he said,

"The voice of one crying out in the wilderness:  
'Prepare the way of the Lord,  
make his paths straight.'"

Now John wore clothing of camel's hair with a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey. Then the people of Jerusalem and all Judea were going out to him, and all the region along the Jordan, and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.

But when he saw many Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bear fruit worthy of repentance. Do not presume to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our ancestor'; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. Even now the ax is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

"I baptize you with water for repentance, but one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to carry his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and will gather his wheat into the granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire."



## Bits and Pieces:

After service last week, someone jokingly said to me, "Thank you for the explanation of the Sacrament of Christmas Wrapping." We both laughed at how silly it sounded, but in a very real sense it was true. Something is sacramental when it reveals, in the midst of the ordinary things of this life, something of the hidden grace of God at work. As Episcopalians, we are heirs to the great Anglican sacramental tradition of seeing the world as the place where "God shows up." In the best of our tradition, we look for the Holy in the midst of the ordinary.

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I shared with you a little of my own journey of using the outer things of the season, such as shopping or decorating to reflect on my own inner life. When I am dealing with gift-wrapping, I have been trying to ask myself, "What gifts am I preparing to give from within my own heart?" In this holy season, what gift from God am I preparing my heart to receive? What "decorations" mark my inner house? Are they ornaments of Joy, of Wonder, or Peace. (M. Burke, Advent 2, 2004.)

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One of the essential paradoxes of Advent: that while we wait for God, we are with God all along, that while we need to be reassured of God's arrival, or the arrival of our homecoming, we are already at home. While we wait, we have to trust, to have faith, but it is God's grace that gives us that faith. As with all spiritual knowledge, two things are true, and equally true, at once. The mind can't grasp paradox; it is the knowledge of the soul. (Michelle Blake in The Tentmaker.)

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*How silently, how silently  
The wondrous gift is giv'n!  
So God imparts to human hearts  
The blessings of his heav'n.  
No ear may hear his coming;  
But, in this world of sin,  
Where meek souls will receive him, still  
The dear Christ enters in.*

*O holy Child of Bethlehem,  
Descend to us, we pray;  
Cast out our sin, and enter in,  
Be born in us today.*

(Philip Brooks, O Little Town of Bethlehem)

### **"Artists in Exile: Expressions of Loss and Hope,**

is a new exhibition that investigates of the experience of exile in the visual arts, and is on view at the Yale University Art Gallery.

See:

<https://news.yale.edu/2017/09/05/gallery-exhibit-explores-experience-exile-visual-arts>

## Radical Resilience

(An excerpt from: BUILDING RESILIENCE: When There's No Going Back to the Way Things Were; By Alice Updike Scannell / Foreword by Stephanie Spellers; Morehouse Publishing.)

When my friend LouAnn asked me what this book was about, I told her that it's about resilience—not so much the kind where you rebound from difficulties and get on with your life but the kind when there's no going back to what was before and you have to figure out how to be yourself in that new reality.

“Oh my gosh,” she said. “That's huge.” She told me that she had surgery on her neck about a year before and some of the nerves to her tongue were bruised. For several months she couldn't move her tongue enough to talk or chew food. “I'm a storyteller,” she said, with a tone of alarm in her voice. “What was I going to do? I couldn't be myself. It was a terrible time.

If I'd thought it would be a permanent condition, I really don't know what I would have done. It would have felt like I could never really be me again.”

We usually think of resilience as the ability to recover from an adverse experience and pick up our lives where we left off. It is that too. LouAnn was fortunate that her tongue muscles eventually recovered.

But there are times when adversity permanently changes our reality and we can't go back to the way things were.

We can't do the things we used to do that were part of our identity—the things that gave meaning and purpose to our lives, that gave us a reason to live. It feels as though our quality of life has been smashed to pieces and is gone forever. Fear for our future wrenches our insides. We don't know what we'll do.

When adversity permanently changes our reality, there is no going back to the way things were. Resilience then becomes the work of coming through the adversity so that, at least on most days, we see our life as still worth living. With this kind of resilience, we come through the adversity knowing that we're still ourselves, even though things are very different for us now. I call this radical resilience.

Jan Schumacher is an example of radical resilience.

She was the owner of a high-end bridal shop before a blood infection nearly killed her. In the painful and lengthy process of treatment and recovery, Schumacher lost parts of both thumbs and all or parts of her fingers on both hands. "But I really got a miracle," she said as she held up her hands to show her prosthetic appendages. The prosthetics didn't look much like hands.

They looked more like the claws of a lobster or a crab. But they gave her the ability to grasp, to pick up and hold things—something she hadn't been able to do for months. They felt like a gift.

For Schumacher, they're a miracle.

After almost a year, she was ready to move on to the next chapter of her life. She exuded vitality as she wondered what she would do next. However, she didn't think it would be the person-to-person sales she loves. Those sales are usually sealed with a handshake, which she thought would be awkward for her customers. Schumacher was certain that she wanted to do something that would help others. And because she loved running her own business, she wanted whatever she decided on to be something that she could still do herself.

Radical resilience is a challenge. It's radical because it connects with the roots of our being. Radical resilience draws from our essential self, demanding that we engage with meaning and hope in new ways in order to feel that our life is still worth living. It's radical also because it's accompanied at some point by a surprising sense of gratitude, as Jan showed as she held up her awkward mechanical hands and called them her miracle. And it's radical because it transforms us, both inwardly and outwardly. We learn that wholeness is a state of being, that life can have meaning and purpose under many different circumstances.

Unlike Jan Schumacher, Virginia wasn't able to engage the skills of radical resilience after she fell and broke her hip. Virginia was my first boss right after my college graduation. She was the director of education in a large, urban congregation and she loved her job. She was my mentor during a one-year apprenticeship program before I started my seminary training to be a lay director of religious education. A widow in her mid-fifties, Virginia had abundant energy and enthusiasm for life. She not only had a friendly and engaging personality, she seemed like a human dynamo. She moved fast, talked fast, and could do more visits in a day than anyone else on the staff. People of all ages, including me, loved and admired her.

For many years I thought of Virginia as a model of resilience.

She simply refused to be held down by any adversity that came her way. When one senior living arrangement didn't work out the way she expected it to, she left and found a different one. When her shoulder became a problem, she had surgery to fix it and was back to her former activities in record time. She handled other challenges the same way, always getting back to where she'd left off. Yet in retrospect, I see now that Virginia never learned how to move through those challenges toward a deeper understanding of herself. She didn't look for meaning in her new realities; instead, she refused to live in them, and she endured the passage of time in recovery or discontent as best she could until she could get back to living life as she used to. Then she broke her hip.

I visited Virginia several years ago when I was in her city for a meeting. Although we'd corresponded through occasional letters, I hadn't seen her in more than ten years. She was living in the same retirement community as on my last visit, though she now had a live-in caregiver who greeted me at the door. Virginia reclined on the sofa the whole time of my visit. A walker was visible across the room but not handy for immediate use. It seems that Virginia hated to use the walker, and so she did as little walking as possible.

Soon into our conversation, I learned that several months into recovery from hip surgery, when Virginia didn't get back on her feet as easily as before, she realized that she probably would never move as well as she wanted to. So she stopped going anywhere at all. She wouldn't leave her apartment except for medical appointments. Rather than go to the dining room for meals, she paid extra for meals to be brought to her apartment. She didn't want to go to any of the interesting lectures or discussion groups that she'd previously loved. I was surprised and asked why she didn't want to do those things anymore. "I'm not depressed," she told me vehemently. "This is just not the way I want to be seen."

A number of years before, I'd learned that Virginia had been very pleased and proud to be part of a long-term research study on aging. In this study, participants were interviewed every few years from the time they joined the study, around age fifty, through to the end of their lives.

Over the years, Virginia had enthusiastically told me about going for the study interviews and about the various brainteaser tests and other measures that were part of the data collection. So I

asked her about it. “Oh, I dropped out,” she said. “You dropped out?” I said. “I thought the purpose of the study was to learn about what real aging is like for real people, from the time you’re in until you die.” “I know,” Virginia said, “but I’m not good at getting old, so I decided to drop out.”

As our conversation continued, I mentioned to her that she was still able to think well and that she still had her ready wit and sense of humor. She smiled and said she was glad I thought so. I asked her to think about going to an occasional lecture or discussion group in her building because it would be invigorating and give her back some energy. I even encouraged her to consider getting back into the study so she could express honestly how she felt about her experience with aging. But she wasn’t interested in talking further about any of these things. We spent the rest of our time together sharing memories of the past.

I left the visit sad and discouraged. Virginia had always been my model for resilience, and suddenly she was not. I wonder now if that experience wasn’t my first awareness that there’s a different kind of resilience than the bounce-back kind, the kind of resilience that gets us through not being able to do what we used to do—the radical resilience that empowers us to find meaning and purpose in our lives when our life’s journey takes a new turn, and our familiar ways of being and doing suddenly become obsolete.

### **Five Important Conditions for Radical Resilience**

To make the best use of the ten resilience skills, there are some other things we’ll want to focus on. These are **self-awareness, supportive relationships, openness, reflection, and humor.** Self-awareness. It’s important that we stay in touch with—and expand if we need to—our capacity for self-awareness. In order to respond with resilience to changes in our lives, especially the changes that require radical resilience, we must be able to face the truths (both positive and negative) about ourselves and see ourselves as others see us. This includes awareness of our attitudes that are judgmental or biased, awareness of how well we communicate with others, and awareness of how well we listen.

It also includes awareness of experiences in our lives that might influence how we interpret situations, how we behave in response to confrontation or criticism, how we view people who are different from us, and how we handle disappointment and

loss. All of these, unless acknowledged and understood, may limit our capacity to engage in the work of radical resilience.

**Supportive relationships.** It's hard to do the work of radical resilience alone. Whatever the circumstances of our adversity, we'll do much better if we have people to whom we can talk, with whom we can share our thoughts, and from whom we can request specific assistance or support. Sometimes the people who serve in those roles are not our closest friends or family members.

Often they'll be professionals who have specific training to help us come through our adversity. Or they may be organizations and support groups specifically formed to help people who have experienced similar adversities. It's important to avoid isolation and to find acceptance through a group or a trusted confidante.

Having at least one trusted person with whom we can share our deepest concerns and with whom we can be completely honest is central to our sense of wellbeing not only when we're recovering from adversity, but also throughout our life. That person may be a counselor or a spiritual leader. Or he or she may be a close friend and confidante.

**Openness.** Openness is being willing to hear honest feedback from people we trust. However, openness also includes being willing to express our thoughts, feelings, doubts, fears, and truths to those people or others we trust. Sharing the stories we're ashamed to tell about ourselves with someone who will accept us as we are, respect our stories, and hold our stories in confidence liberates us from the bonds of secrecy and embarrassment. Sharing our stories with trusted others is a step forward in the healing process of radical resilience.

**Reflection.** This is the capacity to think about our experiences and learn from them. Reflection is not simply going over and over an experience in our minds. Rather, it is contemplating the experience in order to gain insight from it. Reflection includes naming the emotions we felt before, during, and after the experience, and asking ourselves what the experience has to teach us.

Sometimes reflecting on a current experience will call to mind an experience from the past that links to it, leading us to a deeper understanding of ourselves and how we process some of the things that happen to us. Insights that result from reflection broaden our awareness not only of ourselves but of possibilities, and they help us to see multiple ways that we can

understand or do things differently.

**Humor.** A gentle sense of humor and an ability to take ourselves lightly when we are stressed increase our capacity for radical resilience. Both gentle laughter and spontaneous guffaws help dissolve inner tension. They help us relax, and that in itself can give us a refreshed perspective on life.

Years ago, when I was hospitalized for several weeks with severe back pain and pregnancy complications, a friend brought me books that made me laugh in spite of myself. This surprised and confused my elderly roommate, who asked me, "How can you laugh when you hurt so much?" I was surprised by her question. "Because this is really funny," I said. I was very glad to have something lighthearted that drew me into a different world and took my mind off my pain.

### **Moving Forward**

When change strikes us hard and there is no going back to what was before, self-awareness, supportive relationships, openness, the ability to reflect and to learn from our experience, and a sense of humor become a framework for our capacity to respond to life's changes with radical resilience.

The people and stories of resilience here continue to inspire and encourage me. From them, and from my own experience using these resilience skills, I've learned that we don't have to lose hope when we find ourselves in an undesirable new reality. We don't have to despair when limitations cut us off from doing the things we love to do, the things that give us energy, that help us be ourselves, that give us a sense of meaning and purpose in our lives.

Resilience skills bring us to a place where we can see a positive future for ourselves even in a different, unplanned reality. Resilience skills teach us how to explore ways to create that future. Practicing them as we respond to changes and challenges in our daily life makes them readily available to us when we face the challenges of adversity and the challenges of growing old.

Although the resilience skills work together well, they are also independent. We can start practicing them in any order to build or strengthen our capacity for resilience. May the following chapters be a catalyst and a guide to move you forward toward building your own set of radical resilience skills.

**From: BUILDING RESILIENCE: When There's No Going Back to the Way Things Were;**  
By Alice Updike Scannell / Foreword by Stephanie Spellers; Morehouse Publishing.

**Songfile / Playlist:****Refugee (Tom Petty)**

We did somethin' we both know it  
We don't talk too much about it  
Ain't no real big secret all the same  
Somehow we get around it...

Listen it don't really matter to me baby  
You believe what you want to believe  
You see you don't have to live like a refugee (don't have to live like a refugee)

Somewhere, somehow somebody  
Must have kicked you around some  
Tell me why you want to lay there  
Revel in your abandon

Honey, it don't make no difference to me baby  
Everybody's had to fight to be free  
You see you don't have to live like a refugee (don't have to live like a refugee)  
Now baby you don't have to live like a refugee (don't have to live like a refugee) No

Baby we ain't the first  
I'm sure a lot of other lover's been burned  
Right now this seems real to you  
But it's one of those things  
You gotta feel to be true

Somewhere, somehow somebody  
Must have kicked you around some  
Who knows, maybe you were kidnapped  
Tied up, taken away and held for ransom, honey  
It don't really matter to me baby  
Everybody's had to fight to be free  
You see you don't have to live like a refugee (don't have to live like a refugee)  
No you don't have to live like a refugee (don't have to live like a refugee)



## Slow Turning (John Hiatt)

When I was a boy  
 I thought it just came to you  
 But I never could tell what's mine  
 So it didn't matter anyway  
 My only pride and joy  
 Was this racket down here  
 Bangin' on an old guitar  
 And singin' what I had to say

I always thought our house was haunted  
 'Cause nobody said "boo" to me  
 I never did get what I wanted  
 But now I get what I need  
 It's been a slow turnin' / From the inside out  
 A slow turnin', baby / But you come about  
 A slow learnin' / But you learn to sway  
 A slow turnin', baby  
 Not fade away, not fade away, not fade away

Now I'm in my car  
 Ooh, I got the radio down  
 Now I'm yellin' at the kids in the back  
 'Cause they're bangin' like Charlie Watts  
 You think you've come so far  
 In this one horse town  
 Then she's laughin' that crazy laugh  
 'Cause you haven't left the parking lot

Time is short and here's the damn thing about it  
 You're gonna die, gonna die for sure  
 And you can learn to live with love or without it  
 But there ain't no cure  
 It's just a slow turnin' / From the inside out  
 A slow turnin' / But you come about, ya  
 A slow learnin', baby / But you learn to sway  
 A slow turnin'  
 Not fade away, not fade away, not fade away  
 Not fade away, not fade away  
 A slow turnin'... A slow turnin'...



## Let the Day Begin (The Call)

Here's to the babies in a brand new world  
Here's to the beauty of the stars  
Here's to the travelers on the open road  
Here's to the dreamers in the bars

Here's to the teachers in the crowded rooms  
Here's to the workers in the fields  
Here's to the preachers of the sacred words  
Here's to the drivers at the wheel

Here's to you my little loves with blessings from above  
Now let the day begin  
Here's to you my little loves with blessings from above  
Now let the day begin, let the day begin

Here's to the winners of the human race  
Here's to the losers in the game  
Here's to the soldiers of the bitter war  
Here's to the wall that bears their names

Here's to you my little loves with blessings from above  
Now let the day begin  
Here's to you my little loves with blessings from above  
Let the day begin, let the day begin, let the day start

Here's to the doctors and their healing work  
Here's to the loved ones in their care  
Here's to the strangers on the streets tonight  
Here's to the lonely everywhere

Here's to the wisdom from the mouths of babes  
Here's to the lions in the cage  
Here's to the struggles of the silent war  
Here's to the closing of the age

Here's to you my little loves with blessings from above  
Now let the day begin  
Here's to you my little loves with blessings from above  
Let the day begin  
Here's to you my little loves with blessings from above  
Now let the day begin, let the day begin, let the day start

## Listening to Old Voices (John Hiatt)

They have come to haunt the children  
 They have come to walk the wind  
 I can hear them as they rustle through the trees  
 Looking for the love that killed them  
 So that they might live again  
 It's a simple prayer that brings me to my knees

With drums and bells and rattles  
 They have caught us in our time  
 To watch the eagle rise up from the fire  
 Now is it true we are possessed  
 By all the ones we leave behind  
 Or is it by their lives we are inspired

It's a new light, new day  
 Listening for new meaning learning how to say  
 It's a new place but you've always been here  
 You're just listening to old voices with a new ear

It's the livin' and the dyin'  
 Well it scares the young ones so  
 They can hardly catch their breath before too long  
 They see the tears we're crying  
 And they watch the river flow  
 And they follow on the banks until it's gone...

I surrender to the mountains  
 I surrender to the sea  
 I surrender to the one who calls my name  
 I surrender to my lover and to my enemy  
 I surrender to the face that holds no shame...

It's a new light, new day  
 Listening for new meaning learning how to say  
 It's a new place but you've always been here  
 You're just listening to old voices with a new ear

There's a spider at my window  
 And she spins a web of truth  
 More beautiful than all those memories  
 And she surely is God's artist

As she's caught the morning dew  
 It's a simple prayer that brings me to my knees  
 It's a new light, new day  
 Listening for new meaning learning how to say  
 It's a new place but you've always been here  
 You're just listening to old voices with a new ear...

Songwriters: John Hiatt; Listening to Old Voices lyrics  
 © Universal Music

**Did Ye get Healed? (Van Morrison)**

I wanna know did you get the feelin'?  
 Did you get it down in your soul?  
 I wanna know did you get the feelin'?  
 And did the feelin' grow?

Sometimes, when the spirit moves me  
 I can do many wondrous things  
 I wanna know when the spirit moves you  
 Did ye get healed?

I begin to realize  
 It manifest in my life  
 In oh, so many ways  
 Every day I wanna talk about it  
 And walk about it  
 Everyday I wanna be closer

I wanna know did you get the feelin'?  
 Did you get it down in your soul?  
 I wanna know did you get the feelin'?  
 Did ye get healed?

I begin to realize  
 Magic in my life  
 See it manifest in oh, so many ways  
 Every day is gettin' better and better  
 I wanna be daily walking close

It gets stronger when you get the feelin'  
 When you get it down in your soul  
 And it makes you feel good  
 And it makes you feel whole

When the spirit moves you  
 And it fills you through and through  
 Every morning and at the break of day  
 Did ye get healed?

**I Forgot That Love Existed (Van Morrison)**

I forgot that Love existed troubled in my mind.  
 Heartache after heartache, worried all the time.  
 I forgot that Love existed  
 Then I saw the Light  
 Everyone around me make everything alright.

Oh, oh Socrates and Plato they  
 Praised it to the skies.  
 Anyone who's ever loved  
 Everyone who's ever tried.

If my heart could do my thinking  
 And my head begin to feel  
 I would look upon the world anew  
 And know what's truly real.

**Breathe (2am) Acoustic version (Anna Nalick)**

Two am, and she calls me 'cause I'm still awake  
 Can you help me unravel my latest mistake?  
 I don't love him, winter just wasn't my season  
 Yeah, we walk through the doors, so accusing  
 their eyes  
 Like they have any right at all to criticize  
 Hypocrites, you're all here for the very same  
 reason

'Cause you can't jump the track, we're like cars  
 on a cable  
 And life's like an hourglass glued to the table  
 No one can find the rewind button, girl  
 So cradle your head in your hands  
 And breathe, just breathe  
 Oh, breathe, just breathe

May he turn twenty-one on the base at Fort  
 Bliss  
 Just today he sat down to the flask in his fist  
 Ain't been sober since maybe October of last  
 year  
 Here in town you can tell he's been down for a  
 while  
 But, my God, it's so beautiful when the boy  
 smiles  
 Want to hold him, maybe I'll just sing about it

'Cause you can't jump the track, we're like cars  
 on a cable  
 And life's like an hourglass glued to the table  
 No one can find the rewind button, boys  
 So cradle your head in your hands  
 And breathe, just breathe  
 Oh, breathe, just breathe

There's a light at each end of this tunnel, you  
 shout  
 'Cause you're just as far in as you'll ever be out  
 And these mistakes you've made, you'll just  
 make them again  
 If you only try turning around

Two am, and I'm still awake, writing a song  
 If I get it all down on paper, it's no longer  
 Inside of me, threatening the life it belongs to  
 And I feel like I'm naked in front of the crowd  
 'Cause these words are my diary, screaming out  
 loud  
 And I know that you'll use them, however you  
 want to

But you can't jump the track, we're like cars on a  
 cable  
 And life's like an hourglass glued to the table  
 No one can find the rewind button now  
 Yeah, sing it if you'll understand  
 And breathe, just breathe  
 Oh, breathe, just breathe  
 Oh, breathe, just breathe  
 Oh, breathe, just breathe

Songwriters: Anna Nalick © Concord Music Publishing LLC

## People Help the People (Birdy)

God knows what is hiding in those weak and  
drunken hearts  
Guess you kissed the girls and made them cry  
Those hard-faced Queens of misadventure  
God knows what is hiding in those weak and  
sunken eyes  
Fiery throngs of muted angels  
Giving love but getting nothing back, oh

People help the people  
And if your homesick,  
give me your hand and I'll hold it  
People help the people  
Nothing will drag you down

Oh, and if I had a brain, oh, and if I had a brain  
I'd be cold as a stone and rich as the fool  
That turned all those good hearts away  
God knows what is hiding in this world of little  
consequence

Behind the tears, inside the lies  
A thousand slowly dying sunsets  
God knows what is hiding in those weak and  
drunken hearts  
Guess the loneliness came knocking  
No one needs to be alone or sinking

People help the people  
And if your homesick,  
give me your hand and I'll hold it  
People help the people  
Nothing will drag you down  
Oh, and if I had a brain, Oh, and if I had a brain  
I'd be cold as a stone and rich as the fool  
That turned, all those good hearts away

Nah, nah, nah, nah, nah, ooh  
People help the people  
And if your homesick,  
give me your hand and I'll hold it

Songwriters: Simon Aldred; © Kobalt Music Publishing Ltd.

## Shine (Anna Nalick)

Oh, the night makes you a star  
And it holds you cold in its arms  
You're the one to whom nobody verses I love you  
Unless you say it first  
So you lie there holding your breath  
And it's strange how soon you forget  
That you're like stars  
They only show up when it's dark  
Cause they don't know their worth

And I think you need  
To stop following misery's lead  
Shine away, shine away, shine away

Isn't it time you got over  
How fragile you are  
We're all wait-  
Waiting on your supernova  
Cause that's who you are  
And you've only begun to shine

There are times when  
The poets and porn stars align and  
You won't know who to believe in  
Well that's a good time to be leavin'  
And the past, it knocks on your door  
And throws stones at your window at 4 in the  
morning  
Well maybe he thinks it's romantic  
He's crazy but you knew that before

And I think you need  
To stop following misery's lead  
Shine away, shine away, shine away  
Isn't it time you got over  
How fragile you are  
We're all wait- Waiting on your supernova  
Cause that's who you are  
And you've only begun to shine

Songwriters: Cecil Mack / Ford Dabney / Lew Brown  
Shine lyrics © Reservoir Media Management Inc

**Desire (Ryan Adams)**

Two hearts fading, like a flower  
 And all this waiting for the power  
 For some answer to this fire  
 Sinking slowly, the water's higher... mmm

Desire... Desire...

With no secrets, no obsession  
 This time I'm speeding with no direction  
 Without a reason, what is this fire?  
 Burning slowly, my one and only... mmm

Desire... Desire... Desire... Desire...

You know me, You know my way  
 You just can't show me, but God I'm praying  
 That You'll find me, and that you'll see me  
 That You'll run and never tire... mmm

Desire... Desire... Desire... Desire...

Songwriters: Ryan Adams © Bug Music, Barland Music

**Flood (Jars of Clay)**

Rain rain on my face  
 It hasn't stopped  
 Raining for days  
 My world is a flood  
 Slowly I become  
 One with the mud

But if I can't swim after 40 days  
 And my mind is crushed  
 By the crashing waves  
 Lift me up so high  
 That I cannot fall  
 Lift me up  
 Lift me up when I'm falling  
 Lift me up I'm weak and I'm dying  
 Lift me up I need You to hold me  
 Lift me up and keep me from drowning again

Down pour on my soul  
 Splashing in the ocean  
 I'm losing control  
 Dark sky all around  
 Can't feel my feet  
 Touching the ground

But if I can't swim after 40 days  
 And my mind is crushed  
 By the crashing waves  
 Lift me up so high  
 That I cannot fall  
 Lift me up  
 Lift me up when I'm falling  
 Lift me up I'm weak and I'm dying  
 Lift me up I need You to hold me  
 Lift me up and keep me from drowning again

Calm the storms that drench my eyes  
 And dry the streams still flowing  
 Casting down all waves of sin  
 And guilt that overthrow me

But if I can't swim after 40 days  
 And my mind is crushed  
 By the crashing waves  
 Lift me up so high  
 That I cannot fall  
 Lift me up  
 Lift me up when I'm falling  
 Lift me up I'm weak and I'm dying  
 Lift me up I need You to hold me  
 Lift me up and keep me from drowning again  
 Lift me up, when I'm falling  
 Lift me up, I'm weak and I'm dying  
 Lift me up, I need You to hold me  
 Lift me up, and keep me from drowning again

Songwriters: Charlie Lowell / Dan Haseltine / Matt Odmark /  
 Stephen Daniel Mason  
 Flood lyrics © Capitol Christian Music Group, Capitol CMG  
 Publishing

## Way Back Home (Dawes)

A ballerina in Phoenix  
The pines up north  
The sunrise from a highway  
That was not there before

If I can place it all together  
Make out the nature of the call  
I start to feel the love and the silence  
That was always at the root of it all

And in my constant quest for truth  
I am condemned to facts alone  
And though my dreams all lead me nowhere  
I won't forget my way back home

From the corner of a coffee shop  
Or from the center of a stage  
From the words used in a love note  
Or from an empty page

While I struggle with these beauties  
And my renditions end up dry  
I'm like a bird that crashes into the window  
That was drawn to the reflection of the sky

And the more I try to speak  
The more I lose that earthly tone  
And before heaven proves me hopeless  
I won't forget my way back home

Oh oh oh oh oh oh

I admit that these answers that I seek  
Are all to questions I've never known  
But I pray to keep on looking for as long as I can roam  
And when the world finally fulfills me  
I will not forget my way back home

Songwriters: Taylor Goldsmith  
My Way Back Home lyrics © Kobalt Music Publishing Ltd

## Doin' Fine (Lauren Alaina)

Daddy got sober, mama got his best friend  
I've cut down crying to every other weekend  
Thanks for asking how I've been  
I've gotten too good at hiding it within  
I'm okay, things are great but the truth is  
Yeah, the truth is

I'm doing fine enough to know that everyone's a  
little broken  
Fine enough to learn that hearts are best when  
they're wide open  
I still got fear inside of me  
I'm not okay, but I'm gonna be alright  
For the first time in a long time, I'm doing fine  
I'm doing fine

Daddy signed the papers the day I turned 19  
Mama drove north to find a new beginning  
I blamed God, I blamed myself  
Then I fell on my knees and prayed like hell  
It's funny how a touch of grace gives you healing  
Yeah, I'm healing

I'm doing fine enough to know that everyone's a  
little broken  
Fine enough to learn that hearts are best when  
they're wide open  
I still got fear inside of me  
I'm not okay, but I'm gonna be alright  
For the first time in a long time, I'm doing fine

Oh, I'm doing fine / Ooh, ooh  
Oh, these growing pains, well I wish they'd go  
away  
But I guess you can't be free without a fight

I'm not okay, but I'm gonna be alright  
For the first time in a long time, I'm doing fine

Songwriters: Michael Ford Busbee / Emily Shackelton / Lauren  
Alaina; Doin' Fine lyrics © Warner-tamerlane Publishing Corp.,  
Emi Blackwood Music Inc., Jflo Music, Better Boat Music, Lylas  
Music