

Wandering Heart: "*Teach me*"

Teach Me

Teach me about the ways of the wind,
about the ways of the world,
about the ways of the heart.

Teach me about the soft crook of my lover's arm,
and the way two souls can hold each other close.

Teach me about forgiveness, about the language of *I'm sorry*
and the softness of sincerity.

Teach me about abundance, about *seventy-times-seven*
and *all the days of my life*.

Teach me about joy, about its contagious weaving
and its soul-healing.

Teach me about mercy, about open hands and deep breaths.

Teach me about the dawn of time and the stars in the sky.

Teach me what matters most.

Teach me what is mine to do.

Teach this achingly curious heart
until I run out of questions
or I run out of days.

Teach me some melodious sonnet, and I will have a life well-lived.

Written by: Rev. Sarah Speed | sanctifiedart.org

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Seventy-seven Times

by Lauren Wright Pittman
Inspired by Matthew 18:15-22
Digital painting

When I'm creating a mandala inspired by a text, I'm able to zoom out and see the bigger picture, and the image itself ends up looking like a bird's eye view, which I think is a helpful perspective sometimes. In this mandala, I wanted to follow a person through the process of reproof, forgiveness, reconciliation, and restoration as Jesus describes in Matthew 18. In the center, a person is standing alone, isolated, with their arms crossed in a closed-off posture. If you're sinned against, Jesus says to go and "point out the fault when the two

of you are alone" (Matthew 18:15). When you move to the second ring of the mandala, there are pairs of people shaking hands, finding common ground, or at least attempting to. If this doesn't work, then you are to bring more people (one or two more) together to provide counsel and witness. In the third ring of the mandala, two people are engaging with the closed-off person, sharing a way forward. In the next ring hyacinth flowers—which represent sorrow, regret, and forgiveness—stretch, bloom, and grow, bringing beauty into the now open arms of the people in the last ring of the mandala, who are embraced and woven into the community. The person from the center goes from being alone and closed-off to embraced and open.

When I was drawing the figures from the center out, it began to look like a dance. Is this the picture that grace paints? Forgiveness cannot happen in isolation and certainly neither can reconciliation nor restoration. The movement toward wholeness is the movement toward one another.

Perhaps craving more tangibility and practicality, Peter asks how many times he should forgive someone who has wronged him, and Jesus says, "Not seven times, but I tell you, seventy-seven times" (Matthew 18:22). This piece contains seventy-seven people and flowers to represent the abundance of grace that Jesus calls us into. The gold represents the divine presence of empathy, compassion, grace, and love throughout this dance from isolation toward community, from brokenness toward wholeness, and from guilt and shame toward freedom.