

**David G. Truemper Memorial Concert**  
**April 13, 2010**

**All of Us Go Down to the Dust: A hymn and choral festival**  
**Commentary by Susan Cherwien**

I.

Eventually, so soon, too soon, the journey through childhood, hopefully to maturity, brings us to what seems, from a distance, an ending, a dark nothingness.

We learn from physics that nothing disappears without a trace.  
The ratio of matter to energy is in constant flux  
but the quantity of the total of both remains the same.  
What has been matter metamorphoses back into energy.  
Energy coalesces into substance.  
Nothing disappears without a trace.

Life is changed, not taken away, sings the Sarum liturgy for the dead.  
Life is changed, not taken away.

Primary stars explode, and from the stellar gases, secondary stars are formed.

Black holes, whose immense gravitational pull is so strong not even light can escape, may be but feeders for white holes pouring forth new creation into another universe.

Leaves grow, color, fade, fall, and become part of the soil nourishing the tree, drawn up again into the tree in new form.

All rivers run to the sea.  
What is from God returns to God.

Life is changed, not taken away.  
Nothing disappears without a trace.

O God, Thou art Master of All.

Excerpted and amended from "Life Journey", in *Crossings* by Susan Palo Cherwien (Fenton, MO; MorningStar Music Publishers, 2003), p. 89. (MSM-90-31) Used by permission.

## II.

The Lakota  
among other plains tribes  
kept a pictorial record  
of the passing of years  
called a  
winter count.  
Painted on a buffalo hide  
the pictures spiraled inward  
each representing  
one year  
one major event  
that characterized that particular year.  
Perhaps  
we should all  
keep a winter count,  
a winter count  
of people -  
people who have significantly  
colored a year of our life  
or, by a kind word or attention  
changed our journey.  
perhaps  
we could draw a picture  
or compose a melody  
like Elgar's Enigma variations  
or write just a couplet  
to re-member and name.  
Think of all the people  
we have encountered  
and how they are in our bones  
and how their voices are in our ears  
and how their kindness or wisdom  
broadened our center.  
Perhaps  
we should keep a winter count  
a winter count  
of people  
all the blessed generations  
that God has woven  
overlapping  
meandering  
into our journey.

Excerpted from "To Everything A Season", in *From Glory Into Glory* by Susan Palo Cherwien (Fenton, MO; MorningStar Music Publishers, 2009), p. 278. (MSM-90-42) Used by permission.

### III.

The Talmud says  
"Every blade of grass  
has its angel  
that bends over it  
and whispers  
"Grow, grow".  
Every unique part of creation  
is precious to God.  
Every blade of grass,  
every tree frog,  
every daffodil,  
every human,  
precious to God.  
(and angels whisper  
"grow, grow")  
Every strand of DNA  
is formed of four elements:  
carbon, hydrogen, nitrogen, oxygen -  
that combine into four different molecules  
of which every unique  
and unrepeatable individual  
is formed -  
And what is being transmitted to us  
in these DNA spirals?  
Our ancestors.  
The communion of saints.  
The cloud of witnesses -  
a spiral procession -  
their stories, their songs,  
their strengths, their tears -  
the Anthonys, the Cecilians, the Martins  
all individuals with unique, precious bodies  
transmitted to our unique, precious bodies

Every precious human  
every blade of grass  
created by God, loved by the wounded Christ  
shaped by the communion of saints,  
is a never-to-be-repeated  
song that rises in the universe.  
Each death is a death to all.  
Each grief is a grief to all.  
(and the angels whisper "grow, grow" ...)

Excerpted and amended from "Wonder Love Praise", in *From Glory Into Glory* by Susan Palo Cherwien (Fenton, MO; MorningStar Music Publishers, 2009), p. 30. (MSM-90-42) Used by permission.

IV.

The saints.

Some have seen the types of things we have seen.

Some have lived through the types of things we will live through:

Perhaps they went to college or worked the docks.

Found a life-partner or remained alone.

Raised children or dedicated their lives to other service.

If they reached old age, they were young and vibrant  
then, experienced and doubtful  
then, old and tolerant.

They watched children grow to adults.

Watched their own youthful faces age.

Watched parents die.

They delighted in friendships.

Saw their skin become like parchment.

Saw friends die.

And those that grew old

(the same vibrant people,

in bodies smaller now, and slow),

it seemed they were the congregation for all the funerals.

And we have watched *them* die.

And we know that someday we will be the congregation at all the funerals.

And the young will watch us die.

And they will become the congregation at all the funerals...

+ + +

The cycle of life is relentless,

but precious.

For God is also relentless and flows like a river through the midst of earthly life.

It seems that time bears us all away,

But it is the great and gentle Spirit of God

that carries us through life

through death

through the portal

V.

Astrophysicists are searching space  
for a universal constant  
a suspected  
but as yet unproven  
underlayment  
of the visible universe.  
Atomic physicists search subatomic space  
for evidence of gluons,  
the actions of which  
are responsible for forces  
such as electromagnetic fields  
(In God we live and move and have our being)  
Physicist David Bohm experimented  
to show that there are two orders to the universe  
the explicate - that which can be seen, touched, sensed  
the implicate - that which is enfolded in  
and underlies  
the universe we see.  
(How lovely is thy dwelling place, O God of Hosts!)  
Humans are always  
earnestly in search  
for that which underlies the universe.

There is an ancient definition of God:  
God is an intelligible circle  
whose center is  
everywhere  
and whose circumference, nowhere.  
In baptism our center is placed  
in God's center - everywhere.  
In baptism, our awareness and being expands.  
and we discover,  
like the branches to the vine,  
our profound  
and deep  
abiding connection  
to all things -  
*ta panta* - all things.  
and to the evermore  
presence of God  
(The dwelling place of God is among mortals)

Excerpted and amended from "Image of the Invisible God", in *From Glory Into Glory* by Susan Palo Cherwien (Fenton, MO; MorningStar Music Publishers, 2009), p. 218. (MSM-90-42) Used by permission.

VI.

All the seasons  
in truth,  
overlap.  
There is not one day  
suddenly - poof -  
all green  
and no grey  
all blossom  
and no mud  
all autumn  
and no bloom  
all snow  
and no green.  
we have seen the summer  
concealed in spring  
and spring alive under  
winter white  
Why should death surprise us?  
we have seen its signs  
woven in all the seasons  
why should it startle?  
we have watched the leaves  
turn and fall  
why should death frighten?  
we have seen the new buds  
beneath brown leaf  
and frost.  
Through this  
woven landscape  
a river flows  
meandering  
a river  
whose name is called  
Holy  
Holy  
Holy

Excerpted and amended from "To Everything a Season", in *From Glory Into Glory* by Susan Palo Cherwien (Fenton, MO; MorningStar Music Publishers, 2009), p. 270. (MSM-90-42) Used by permission.

VII.

Fear not.

The journey itself  
is home.

The journey through life  
through death  
the journey itself  
is home.

Here in this spiral procession  
deeper and deeper  
broader and broader

God is the path

God is the companion

(Whither shall I flee from your presence?)

God, the lighted window in the night

God, the guiding stars overhead

God, the opening door

God, the welcoming voice

God, the waiting meal.

There is no place where God is not.

in lonely haunts

in dark mine tunnels

in desperate days

in pain,

in death

Fear not.

We are never alone.

We process

from home

through home

to home.

There is no place

Where God is not.

## Prayer

O God, Great River of Life, Source of All Good Things,  
blessed are you  
for the creating of the worlds  
the shaping of clay  
the breathing in of life

blessed are you  
for the Christly body  
the patient guiding  
the relentless compassion

blessed are you  
for the Spirit's attention  
the whispering angels  
the waiting embrace

blessed are you  
for each unique life  
each precious journey  
each song rising from earth;

Grant that we may take our place  
in the spiral procession,  
singing aloud with all the blades of grass  
with all life  
and all heaven:  
Holy, holy, holy!  
thine is the greatness,  
thine the power,  
the glory, the victory  
thine the majesty, with Christ and the Holy Spirit,  
One God,  
now and through all age of ages.  
Amen.