

When It Feels Like God Is Asking Too Much

I am driving home from a memorial service for a longed-for baby boy. He had red hair. I can only hold back that lung-deep cry for so long before I know it's time to simply pull over my minivan, so littered with library books and coffee cups and one lonely shoe. Simply lay my forehead on the steering wheel, keening at the side of the road.

What is there to say? What can we do but huddle into rows of chairs and clutch our hearts and sob into our shredded, balled-up tissues? What can we do but stand around and drink juice, red-eyed and hiccuping?

We'll sign up for a few meals when what we really want to do is lay out on the floor beside you and cry until we're empty because what else? There aren't old stories to tell, no laughter breaking through the sorrow.

This is lamentation. I am fumbling for hope. Is there really comfort in the idea of a baby in the arms of Jesus when all we want is for that baby to be in the arms of his broken mama?

Psalms, you failed to capture this kind of despair. Mothers, fathers, grandparents, friends, weeping for their children, little boys without a brother, babies who are no more. And I want to dig a hole with my bare hands and stay there in a field and in the damp cold and tell the world that I am so angry, so sad, so longing, I can hardly breathe.

God has asked too much of us.

But I drive home through the remaining thunderstorms, east toward the darkness, the light behind me. I am wearing black for my friend's baby son, unbearable. Can anyone face the sight of a soft baby blanket carefully laid out on the altar? *This is not the end, this is not the end*, I am singing over and over through the hot tears and the white anger and my

aching longing for mercy for us all, God.

The illuminated rainbow arches impossibly bright above my head before dropping into the wet green forests, and the rain is still falling through the fading deep golden light, and the sun is breaking through somewhere behind me, but right now, it's not enough. So I pull over the minivan, open the windows, breathe in and out: Too much, too much, it's too much. You're asking too much.

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