

2/12/19 Conversation in the Valley of Baca

A lamb, spindly and staggering
stumbles after her patient shepherd
in a dry and weary land
where there is
no
water.

Over scree, over boulders.

Feet slip. Knees jar.

Head lifts – heart bursts – how far?

Falling,
struggling upright,
one step,
two steps,
another
stumble.

Breath snatched.

Eyes swim, salt burns,
tears
fall,
each desperate drop
darkening the dust.

Father,

what is the use of tears?

Water bearing death not life,

drenches skin yet dries tongue,

eyes sting,

head

aches.

Bitter, not sweet.

Who could suffer like this, and not weep?

Yet, what is the use of tears?

Meaningless wails, that mean what words dare not.

Sighs that empty the lungs,

and stop the heart.

Blinded, I cannot even see the stones I stumble over.

Whether sunlight glares or shadows glower,

the ground

is blurred.

Winded,
every breath fought for
as if it were my first
or
my last.

Lord,
what is the use?

Silence...

save for my own ragged breaths
my stuttering heart....

and

Footsteps. The thud of a staff on earth and stone.

I have trodden this path before,

time after time,

shepherding other lost ones home.

I even walked it once

alone.

Through the tears all I can see,

His footmarks in the path ahead,

all I can hear,

His patient tread,

feel,

His hand on my head.

You are loved.

Stumble on,

tears sinking into dust and rock

so many I have lost count –

But I have not.

Look up, sweetheart, look up.

Look back.

The valley of weeping has become a place of springs.

Where every tear fell, something miraculous has grown:

a rose in the desert,

a daffodil in winter,

a peach on a thornbush.

The next lost lamb to walk this way will find

– everywhere my tears fell –

beauty to give them hope,

food to sustain their soul,

a stream of water welling up to eternal life.

See, I am making everything new,

and this is my covenant with you –

a covenant of salt, and water.

For as long as you follow in my footsteps,

every tear you shed,

every drop of your sweat

will sow life

not

death.

I have made a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert.

Come, drink – and live.