

The Irrational David

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The Power of Poetic Leadership

Ken Evers-Hood

Foreword by Jenny Warner



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THE IRRATIONAL DAVID
The Power of Poetic Leadership

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I dedicate this work to pastors and poets—and to all the irrational
fools who, like me, dare to dream of a world in which there lies no
difference between the two.

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Foreword

When I get stuck, I call Ken Evers-Hood. And when you read this book, you'll know why he's on my speed dial of advisers.

Ken and I met as Presbyterian pastors in the same presbytery in Oregon. As a new pastor, serving three hours from the hub of most other churches, I had few true colleagues. Ken invited me to sit in the back row of presbytery meetings with him, included me in the irreverent commentary of the younger pastors (by which I mean, those under 55), all the while sharing with me a great love of the presbytery and its process.

I learned to trust Ken's perspective, and so when he invited me to join him in a yearlong leadership cohort with the poet David Whyte in 2015, I said yes. The experience changed both of us. We found a community and a construct that took us further in ministry, our lives, and our future. Our collective engagement with David's work taught us to bring our whole selves to bear in our vocation. We learned to trust where vulnerability leads us, which is perhaps the most radical move a leader in contemporary America can make, religious or not.

Ken found another companion in this wholehearted journey in David of the Bible—a shepherd, king, musician, poet, friend, lover, and full-throated human. In this book, you will see David with a lens that opens fresh possibilities of being faithful, not perfect.

It's no wonder Ken feels such a kinship with the David of the Bible. He also is a man with many hats (and shoes and suits!)—a respected leader, mentor, scholar, father, husband, preacher, poet, pastor, outdoorsman, fly-fisherman, musician. He seems too good to be true. But I can tell you that Ken is also a welcoming, gracious, humble, and generous friend, and because of that, I forgive him his shining brilliance and am just grateful that he shares himself with me, and now, with you.

In his first book, *The Irrational Jesus*, Ken offered his doctoral research on decision-making and leadership in the church. In this book, *The Irrational David*, Ken dives deep and has “a real conversation,” as David Whyte would say. He brings Scripture, philosophy, theology, poetry, literature, and psychology into a conversation that puts us all at ease because of Ken’s profound vulnerability.

For those who are struggling to articulate a faith that is not either/or in the aftermath of the liberal/fundamentalist battles, Ken masterfully articulates a faith that honors the complexity of postmodern understandings in a way that is grounded and undefended. He doesn’t let either side get away with defended polarities and invites us into faithfulness and wholeness instead.

My copy of this book will be full of underlining and coffee stains as I return over and over to see what Ken has to say about the text I’m preaching on. His words often say what I intuit, but am not yet able to articulate. As a gift to preachers, he brings along references from literature, history, and life that will make Scripture come alive week after week. This book is a trusted dance partner in the rhythm of life with God.

Rev. Jenny Warner
Pastor of Valley Presbyterian Church
Portola Valley, California

Acknowledgments

While poets and their words give shape to the world, even more are poets themselves shaped by the world. So many have influenced the person I have become and the words I offer. Chief among them is David Whyte. I wasn't quite sure what I was getting myself into the first time I crossed the sound from Mukilteo to Whidbey Island to join Invitas, Whyte's Institute for Conversational Leadership. Thankfully, I still don't and am loving the ongoing journey of discovery. David, you awakened aspects of my soul that had fallen dormant, invited me into real conversations, and encouraged me to step into the world, as you say, half a shade braver. Along with David Whyte, I'm grateful for the leadership team of Invitas: Libby (LFW!) Wagner, Craig Fleck, Mitch Saunders, and Maryliz Smith.

Of course, so much of the learning at Invitas happened among the cohort itself. Jenny Warner and Cyndi Wunder, here's to the three Presbyterian musketeers! Thanks also to Angela Bossie, Robin Bryant, Natalie Caine, Jonathan Cook, Sharon Connors, Casey Cummings, Matt Dockerty, Anders Engen, Ann Helmke, Libby Hoffman, Rory Holland, Jim Huling, Catherine Humphrey, Bob Lambert, Lori Lennox, Nicola McDowell, Sarah Steel, Jules Swales, Kate Woodland, and Bob Wright. You all inspired me, encouraged me, and pushed me—and I learned from each one of you.

But where would a poet be without a place to practice and grow? I continue to be head over heels for the great-hearted people of Tualatin Presbyterian Church. You not only allow me to be myself and try new things, but you demand it. So many of these poems were first heard in the sanctuary of TPC. Few places of worship welcome their pastor to experiment like this; few pastors have ever known a more nurturing pulpit.

I'm also incredibly grateful for the 2016 Duke DMin cohort, whom I have had the privilege of mentoring the past couple of years. Every

afternoon together, when the last place you wanted to be was stuck in a classroom, you put up with my relentless onslaught of poetry. Sometimes you yawned. Sometimes you snapped. (OK, just Jennifer.) My hope is that some of it got inside of you and that you remembered to care for your soul while you were renewing your minds. I'm incredibly proud of your class and am thankful for each of you: Chris Aho, Jacob Buchholz, Jason Butler, Santino Cantalupo, Shameka Coleman, Shane Comellas, Fr. Craig Giera, Carol Harston, Julio Hernandez, Sarah Johnson, Uiyeon Kim, Logan Kruck (House Kruck!), Russ Lackey, Lesley McClendon, Amanda Olson, Yvette Pressley, Adam Shoemaker, and Jennifer Strickland.

Many thanks also go to those who took time to read and comment on the manuscript, offering invaluable feedback and suggestions for improvement. You helped me see where I could write more clearly and made the book better in every way. I'm especially grateful to Ashley Goff, Cyndi Wunder, Laura Everett, Sarah Moore-Nokes, and Eric Barreto. And finally, a huge and massive thanks to Jean and John Martin who really didn't need another book to edit and organize, but nevertheless gave tirelessly of their time and talent. This project would not have been possible without you. Thank you!

Introduction

In *The Irrational Jesus: Leading the Fully Human Church*, I made the case that behavioral theology, an interdisciplinary fusion of theology and behavioral economics, helps us to better understand Jesus' full humanity and our own.¹ Leaning on Dan Ariely's notion of people as "predictably irrational" beings, I explored how God created us with brains that perceive the world in two different ways: a fast, emotional system; and a much slower, rational one. We are, as psychologist Jonathan Haidt puts it, something like small, rational riders, sitting astride powerful, emotional elephants. Working through cognitive heuristics, or mental shortcuts, our fast, emotional brains send impressionistic summaries to our reflective, rational awareness. Sometimes these heuristics work well, and we can move quickly through our days, trusting we see the world accurately enough. But other times, especially when swayed by strong emotion or confronted with the specter of loss, these heuristics create blind spots known as cognitive bias, ensuring that for now we see through a very dim mirror indeed.

Cognitive bias, unlike other forms of bias such as motivational bias or racial bias, stems from how God made us through eons of evolution. Just as sighted human beings can't physically see a complete range of 360 degrees, fully human people can't avoid experiencing cognitive bias. But even though we can't avoid having blind spots, we can learn about them. Just as drivers of unfamiliar vehicles adjust their mirrors, we can use our awareness as figurative rear and side view mirrors to help us adjust for these biases. Given that God created us with blind spots, I argued cognitive bias isn't sin just as our inability to see through the back of our head is not sinful. This is simply human finitude, or limitation. It is how God created us to be. Sin, I would

1. Evers-Hood, *Irrational Jesus*, 79.

argue, is arrogantly pretending not to have these blind spots, or defensively refusing to listen to others when they point them out to us. Consider the conversation Jesus has with the Pharisees regarding the man born blind: “Some of the Pharisees near him heard this and said to him, ‘Surely we are not blind, are we?’ Jesus said to them, ‘If you were blind, you would not have sin. But now that you say, “We see,” your sin remains” (John 9:40–41).

Looking back at *The Irrational Jesus*, I largely wrote about our predictable irrationality as something to be handled with great care. While I lifted out what Ariely refers to as the “upside of irrationality” in the sermons I shared and the section I wrote about game theory, Paul, and our irrational desire for fairness and justice, I was mostly cautionary about cognitive bias. To use the language of Harry Potter, I offered a Defense Against the Dark Arts Class, describing the various expressions of cognitive bias and how to ward them off. And this was important work that needed to be done. But learning how to avoid the traps of our irrationality is only one side of the equation for leaders. If we look again at Haidt’s metaphor of the rider and elephant, we see that learning to adjust for our biases is a way of reasoning with our rider. This kind of humbling work, checking ourselves for bias, is incredibly important. But, reasoning with our rational riders is not nearly enough. Leaders must also learn how to sing to our emotional elephants.

Because of the way we are made, our fully human bodies respond to story, poetry, and music in ways prose can never touch. The emotionally cool language of logic and reason helps us tease through complicated, multilayered challenges. But it takes emotionally evocative language to compel us to action once a reasonable course comes into view. In terms of church leadership the difference between these two languages is easy to spot: it’s the difference between delivering a paper about some interesting aspect of Jesus and preaching the good news of the open tomb. The paper might intrigue us, but ultimately, we will move on largely unchanged. A good sermon disturbs, challenges, and inspires us—working on us at a level octaves below the plane of our rational mind. To return to the world of Harry Potter, irrational leaders use language to cast spells to lift up our hearts, something along the lines of Hermione’s levitation charm (Levi-O-sa, not Levi-o-SA!), at the same time as they reason with our minds.

When it comes to a fully human leader who knows how to reason with riders and sing to elephants, no biblical figure embodies this talent more than King David. As Baruch Halpern puts it in the fantastically titled *David’s Secret Demons: Messiah, Murderer, Traitor, King*: “David, in a word, is human, fully, four-dimensionally, recognizably human. . . . He is the first

human being in world literature.”² On the one hand, David could be incredibly calculating. Just as George Washington established the capital in Washington DC as a compromise between Hamilton’s northern hope and Jefferson’s southern dream, David’s choice of Jerusalem pragmatically balanced the desires of the northern and southern tribes. In his love life David’s marriages with Michal, the daughter of Saul, and the wealthy Abigail were as (or more) strategic as they were romantic. David could even be strategic in his religious observance. The second David realized his display of grief and humility would not move God to save the first child he conceived with Bathsheba, he immediately moved on with life.

On the other hand, while David was often shrewd, he is probably most famous (and infamous) for his wild irrationality. Sometimes his deep, passionate nature led the people around David to hate him. When David brought the ark of the covenant into Jerusalem, he paraded before it like Mick Jagger, much to the disgust of his forsaken wife Michal. And in David’s perhaps best known and lowest moment, his inability to control his desire for Bathsheba caused David to betray and murder Uriah, one of his most loyal soldiers—all in an effort to cover his sin.

But David’s powerful emotion inspired deep love and loyalty, too. When David casually expressed his thirst for the waters of a well at Bethlehem, three of his warriors risked their lives to bring him a drink. In disbelief at their loyalty and sacrifice, David poured the water out as a sacrifice before God, unwilling to gratify his own desire at his men’s expense. While today some may wonder if David was not dishonoring the men’s sacrifice by pouring out their gift, Walter Brueggemann rightly notes: “In an act of simple majesty and nobility, David refuses to drink water secured at the risk of his men’s lives, even though they went into risk in utter devotion to him. David’s response is not one of rejection, but of solidarity. His act of pouring water out on the ground could have been read as refusal of the gift. But David’s men knew better. They knew it was a sacramental act because words would fail to speak about the binding between them.”³

And through it all David sings. David sings to Saul to soothe his darkest demons. David sings a lament over Saul upon his death. And while David clearly didn’t write all the psalms (it would have been hard for David to write about the Babylonian exile in Psalm 137 when it didn’t happen for another five hundred years), it does not mean that David didn’t write any of them. I see no good reason not to accept David’s hand in the great song book of the Bible. Yes, David knew how to strategize, but what makes him

2. Halpern, *David’s Secret Demons*, 6.

3. Brueggemann, *David’s Truth*, 116.

the amazing leader we still talk about thousands of years later is that he knew when to think and when to sing.

At the same time I was beginning to connect the Irrational Jesus with the Irrational David, I met another David who also knows how to sing. In the fall of 2015 and spring of 2016, I traveled to Washington's beautiful Whidbey Island off the coast of Seattle to study conversational leadership with poet David Whyte as part of the work of his Invitas institute. Conversational leadership, as I understand it from Whyte, hinges on being robustly vulnerable enough to show up and have real, courageous conversations with the people around us. How many times, Whyte wonders aloud, have you been part of a meeting where everyone talks around and over one another, but no one is brave enough to say what they really feel and think? (Yeah, actually, that's most meetings, isn't it?) The worst meetings, Whyte argues, aren't meetings that go off script or where conflict emerges. The worst gatherings occur when everyone is physically present, but no one actually shows up in any real or honest way.

Now, while David Whyte works with massive organizations like Boeing and NASA, I found myself nodding my head and thinking how relevant actually showing up is to congregational leadership, as well. Whether it's a pastor leading worship or listening to a couple in trouble, a congregational board facing a changing, daunting landscape, or a denominational leader caring for a congregation mired in conflict, all congregational leadership at some point comes down to showing up for real, honest, and sometimes difficult conversations. All congregational leadership comes down to people mustering the courage to show up with all we are and all we are feeling—and then sharing our real and honest selves with love.

One night when our group was gathered at David Whyte's house in the company of the "arrogant cooking pots"⁴ hanging in his kitchen, I asked him why corporations like Boeing would hire a poet. I wasn't trying to be insulting. I was honestly curious. Now, I love poetry, but when I think of multinational corporations, verse doesn't spring to mind. With a presence and intensity only Whyte has, he asked me a series of rhetorical questions in his Irish-tinged lilt: "What's leadership but the ability to see things other people don't? Well, that's poetry, isn't it? What's leadership but putting this vision into language that cuts to the bone? That's poetry. What's leadership but being courageous enough to show up and say what you really think regardless of how you may be perceived? That's poetry."

And he had me.

4. Whyte, "Everything Is Waiting," 359.

I was already impressed with Whyte's presence, the power of his words, and his ability to recite not only his own work but Wordsworth, Dante, and Rilke. (Of course, Whyte recites Dante in Italian and Rilke in German.) Whyte's core conviction—that the poetic imagination isn't merely something nice yet ultimately unnecessary to organizational life, but the very ground for real life together—struck a deep chord in me. How can organizations move into new and more spacious ways of being unless someone first dreams what new and spacious might look like? And how can groups of people begin to negotiate these new pathways unless someone discovers words that are both true and stirring? In ancient Greek, the word *poieo* means to make or create. Through spending time with David Whyte, I understood in a new way how poets are the ones who see and by their seeing help create the conditions for others to walk into a new future.

One of the primary reasons King David captivated so many people was his sense of vision and ability to see things that others did not. David Wolpe, in *David: The Divided Heart*, paints this portrait of King David:

David throughout his life is ever capable of enlarging the image, seeing perspectives that a more blinkered view cannot imagine. When it is clear that Goliath cannot be felled with armor and sword, he envisions another possibility. Later, when Saul's pursuit makes his continued existence in Israel impossible, he flees to the enemy. When Jerusalem is a backwater, he will see it as a capital; when worship in Israel is nomadic, he will envision a Temple. David's reputation as a musician and poet reinforces this quality; he is someone who does not follow the normal paths but brings into being, conjuring solutions and possibilities from the void: In the seventeenth century, English poet Abraham Cowley wrote in his epic *Davideis*, "From the best Poet, the best of Kings did grow."⁵

So, largely because of these two Davids in my life, I started integrating poetry into my own work on Sunday mornings in new and different ways. I have always loved and valued poetry in liturgy and have offered up a poem to open or close a sermon now and then. (Three points and a poem, anybody?) But for the most part I read these pieces rather than reciting them, and they were more garnish than meal. The way I saw King David and David Whyte living with poetry was something new to me. Poetry is not ornamental for them, something beautiful and tasteful to wrap up a sermon with a little literary bow. Poetry is the work itself. Poetry stops aimless conversations we've been having with ourselves for years with a powerful ruthlessness.

5. Wolpe, *David*, 13.

Poetry poses terrible, beautiful questions—questions that, as Whyte puts it “have no right / to go away.”⁶ In poetry, we encounter a presence that in the most subtle of ways slips past our defenses.

As a preacher, I started to see poetry as a way into the biblical text far below the level of the rational. I am grateful for the logical, rational, exegetical training I received in seminary, and of course I agree it is important to study the language, context, history, and scholarship of a lectionary text. But, particularly in my Presbyterian tradition, we are so good at reasoning with our rational riders, we have all but forgotten how to sing to the emotional elephants driving us underneath. In a brilliant and scathing piece advocating “incarnational language,” preacher and poet Kathleen Norris is right when she laments the weak way in which so many church leaders use language.⁷ Norris stands tall among the many voices who have helped me drop down below the level of the intellect over the years. Here are a few other voices who have encouraged me to unleash my emotional intuitions: Craig Barnes, *The Pastor as Minor Poet*; Bob Dykstra, *Personal, Pastoral Preaching*; Anna Carter Florence, *Preaching as Testimony*, and the poetry of J. Barrie Shepherd and Jan Richardson.

Indeed, through the poetic imagination I have learned that eisegesis, reading oneself into the text, is not only acceptable but a vital practice and impossible to avoid. Yep, I said it. I’m defending eisegesis, that most dreaded of homiletical sins. Eisegesis is simply how preachers, honest preachers anyway, begin. Of course, we should also practice exegesis and attempt to gain outside perspectives, but we cannot help but begin with ourselves. Because we are mysteries to ourselves, though, practices like poetry help us discover who and what we really are. To borrow the language of Rilke, in poetry preachers find a way to “go within and scale the depths of your being from which your very life springs forth.”⁸ Or, as David Whyte frames this dialectic in “Start Close In”: “To hear / another’s voice, / follow / your own voice, / wait until / that voice / becomes a / private ear / that can / really listen / to another.”⁹

As a good Presbyterian I was taught to distrust my voice and intuition and rely on objective analysis of the text, lest I impose myself and distract from the Word. But while I value solid exegetical practice and the contributions scholarship offers in understanding the social, historical, and cultural nuances of the text, I long ago stopped believing that preachers should begin with this kind of logical, rational thinking. We should

6. Whyte, “Sometimes,” 53.

7. Norris, “Incarnational Language,” 699.

8. Rilke, *Letters to a Young Poet*, 12.

9. Whyte, “Start Close In,” 360–61.

start, rather, with the irrational, emotional conversation that occurs when our curious, wondrous, imaginative selves encounter the text honestly, unsure where this meeting will lead.

In this book, I share some of the conversations I've been overhearing between the Scriptures and poetry, and some of the exchanges I've been having between the Scriptures and me and between me and the world. These are essays in the truest sense: attempts to find another's voice by listening closely to my own. Every poem collected here stems from a conversation between me and a scriptural passage or biblical narrative. I first offer a poem and then share how this poem intersects with my own life. You may hear something entirely different than I intended, of course, and I welcome your insight. But I have found great meaning in hearing the story of how poets stumble upon their words. Next, I draw out the biblical connection more explicitly and speak to the exegetical points of interest at which the poetry hints. When it's appropriate, I also lift out any theological truth the poetry and Scripture embody that may not be entirely evident upon first blush. Finally, I've structured this work around four aspects of King David's life: David as a believer; David as beloved; David as a beautiful mess; and David as broken-hearted. The first chapters in each of the four sections are short essays, which set up these four themes. For those readers familiar with *The Irrational Jesus*, the structure in *The Irrational David* differs significantly. These four aspects of David provide a thematic architecture that organizes my own poetry and interpretive work but are not always centered on either King David or David Whyte. So, while the essays that open each section focus heavily on King David, think of these pieces as jumping off points for further exploration.

My hope is that you will feel inspired by my irrationality and start writing and exploring the Scriptures in ways that honor your unique self and voice, too. It's not only good for the church, but it's life-giving for those of us with the gift and burden of preaching. It is the best way I have discovered to stay interested and engaged. One of the rules that has guided my preaching is if I'm not interested and passionate about what I'm saying, then why would anyone else be? Once, I heard Bob Dykstra lecture about being riveted by a Nobel prize-winning scientist, Barbara McClintock, give an amazing talk on corn. Corn. From this experience he learned that interesting people are interested people. Interesting people are interested people! Dykstra couldn't care less about corn, but he was carried away by this woman's passion. People in love with something, people who are passionate, engage us naturally. And people in love with something remain vital for the long haul.

SECTION ONE

David the Believer

1

David's Faith through Doubt and Brokenness

For all his massive faults—and they are breathtaking—faith marks the biblical portrayal of David from beginning to end. The most stable relationship in David's life is the one between him and God. Indeed, David Wolpe points out that one of the few sins David appears to avoid is the sin of idolatry, a fundamental betrayal of God. Wolpe writes: “Not only is David free from the stain of idolatry, his relationship with God is steady and assured throughout the story. A staunch believer and a worshiper, David prays, offers thanks, and most importantly, hopes to build the Temple. His being credited with the Psalms solidifies the traditional depiction of David as the most devotional figure in the Bible.”¹

And yet, I bristle at the idea of David being some kind of superhuman, “staunch,” wizard of faith. Part of my bristling is personal, and part of it comes from the faith expressed in the Psalms. While the songs of faith are steadfast and resolute in the Psalms, they aren't devotional in any conventional, stained-glass, Christian bookstore kind of way. They are often dark, raw, and riddled with apparent doubt.

Consider Psalm 22, a great psalm made even more famous by Jesus' later remix: “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from helping me, from the words of my groaning? O my God, I cry

1. Wolpe, *David*, 139.

by day, but you do not answer; and by night, but find no rest" (22:1–2). While it's true that Psalm 22, like other lament psalms, concludes on a note of trust, it's impossible for me to hear David's sense of being forsaken and unheard as a traditional expression of faith. Forsaken? No answers? No help or rest? These words express David's faith, but it is not how most people imagine someone with a staunch, devotional faith should sound.

Part of my seminary education included a stint at Robert Wood Johnson Hospital in New Brunswick, New Jersey, for something called Clinical Pastoral Education, or CPE for short. This unique "joy" entailed, in the first week, heading down to the morgue. While the young physician cut into the corpse on the table, he casually talked to us about his weekend plans. I was feeling okay about this encounter, until he actually lifted the skin from the deceased man's torso and placed it over the man's head like a grotesque form of peekaboo. Of course, he did this to expose the internal organs. "See that?" the doctor said, pointing to some dark yellow clumps. "That fat? That's the kind of fat you'll never get rid of no matter what you do. So anyway, what are you guys doing over the weekend?"

As horrifying as the autopsy was, it was just the beginning. CPE emphasizes listening and verbalizing feelings. One of the supervisors, I'll call him "Bill," would ask class members what they were feeling. After a while it became kind of game. Bill allowed for only four feelings: mad, sad, glad, and afraid. If you didn't come up with one of these words, or something very close, he would yell in his thick Jersey accent: "That's nawt a feeling! Whaddya feeling?" For me, after Bill's relentless accosting, the right answer about my feelings would have been a mix between anger and fear.

The hardest part for me personally was a colleague, a woman I will call "Greta." Greta arrived in America as a refugee from Hungary soon after the communist revolution there. She often led music for us in the chapel in the mornings. I'm not exactly sure what songbook she learned from, but I'm pretty sure the word "dirge" was in the title. They were the darkest, slowest, saddest songs I had ever heard in my life. One time, Greta and I were paired up to do these faith evaluations where we had to listen to one another at a deep level and then report back on how faith seemed to impact the life of our partner. When it came time for Greta to report on me, she proudly announced to the class: "Ken has an *unshakable* faith. He trusts in God and Jesus Christ always. He has no doubts, and his faith is just *unshakable*." Everyone in that group knew me pretty well at that point. And anyone acquainted with me knows unshakable is about the last word one would use to describe my faith. Most days, I have nine doubts before breakfast, and I

am more than happy to share them with you. No, Greta said my faith was unshakable because that's what she believed it was supposed to be and probably what she desired hers to be. But unshakable is not how I experience faith, nor is it how I see David experiencing faith in the biblical account. The faith I know and read about in the Psalms is faith *with* doubt, rather than faith *without* doubt.

I am able now to agree with Wolpe that David's faith can be rightly called staunch, but not because it was unshakable. David knew periods of intense doubt where God felt absent, silent, and dark as night to him. Faith did not solve that experience or make it magically better. Rather, faith enabled David to name this darkness in song. The evidence of David's faith is the singing of the song itself—even singing about God's absence establishes a kind of connection with the Holy. This is the kind of faith I know and hear in David Whyte as well:

FAITH

I want to write about faith,
about the way the moon rises
over cold snow, night after night,

faithful even as it fades from fullness,
slowly becoming that last curving and impossible
sliver of light before the final darkness.

But I have no faith myself,
I refuse it the smallest entry.

Let this then, my small poem,
like a new moon, slender and barely open,
be the first prayer that opens me to faith.²

2. Whyte, "Faith," 94.

2

Resurrection Is Not an Argument

Mark 16:1–8

RESURRECTION IS NOT AN ARGUMENT

For all of us with questions

Resurrection is not an argument
not an idea to which you might agree
or not and move on unchanged.

Resurrection is a weed
her roots cracking into concrete
finding a way where there is no way.
Resurrection is resistance
the thin man, white shirt
facing down four machines of war
vulnerability his only weapon.

Resurrection is the dwarf mountain hemlock
fighting through rime ice
growing sideways
stunted by howling wind
but growing anyway.

And resurrection is you
showing up one more time
to a place you don't understand
to a love you know you don't deserve
but bringing everything you have
hoping she is right
when she says you never disappoint.

Resurrection is not an argument.
It is a song sung in another tongue
that somehow still brings tears to flow
the warm hand finding your shivering shoulder
on the coldest night when you have turned away.
Resurrection is life
when all you know for sure
is the shadow of death.