

Easter in the Very Belly of Nothingness

Walter Brueggemann
Cincinnati, Ohio

Death will be all right for us when it comes.
But dying is another matter—
 so slow,
 so painful,
 so humiliating.

Death will be a quick turn,
 the winking of an eye
but dying turns and twists and waits and teases.

We have not died,
but we know about dying:
 We watch the inching pain of cancer,
 the oozing ache of alienation,
 the tears of stored-up hurt.

We can smell the dying
 of bombs and shells
 of direct hit and collateral damage
 of napalm spread thin and even of cities turned craters
 of Agent Orange that waits years to show,
 and lives turned to empty stare.

We watch close or distant;
we brace and stiffen
 and grow cynical or uncaring.

And death wins—
we, robbed of vitality, brought low by failed hope,
 lost innocence,
 emptied childhood,
 and stillness.

We keep going, but barely;
we gather at the grave,
 watching the sting and
 the victory of dread.

But you stir late Saturday;
we gather early Sunday with balm and embalming,
close to the body.
waiting for the smell but not;
dreading the withered site . . . but not;
cringing before love lost . . .but not here.

Not here . . . but risen,
gone,
awakened,
alive!

The new creation stirs beyond the weeping women;
O death . . . no sting!
O grave . . . no victory!
O silence . . . new song!
O dread . . . new dance!
O tribulation . . . now overcome!

O Friday God—Easter the failed city,
Sunday the killing fields.
And we, we shall dance and sing,
thank and praise,
into the night that holds no more darkness.

Used by permission: *Prayers for a Privileged People*, Walter Brueggemann, Abingdon Press, 2008.