



Lent

DAILY DEVOTIONALS

**A Demanding Long-Term Miracle**

From A Way Other Than Our Own

By Walter Brueggemann

*Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed, and said to himself, “Can a child be born to a man who is a hundred years old? Can Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear a child?” – Genesis 17:17*

There is a dialogue set up in our faith. One voice says, “Can you imagine!” The other voice answers, “Yes, but.” Yes, but I am very old. Yes, but she is not pregnant. Yes, but we only have Ishmael. It is the naked voice of the gospel that counters his tiredness. Can you imagine a new son born right then? Can you image a covenant kept to countless generations to come? Can you imagine land given to landless people? Not; can you implement it, can you plant it, can you achieve it? – only: can you entrust possibilities to God that go beyond your own capacity for control and fabrication?

God brings into existence that which does not exist. Did you know that the Bible never uses the word create with a human subject? We may “make” or “form” or “fabricate,” but only God creates, only God works a genuine new possibility, a new thing beyond our expectations and our extrapolations. It belongs to the mystery and holiness of God to call to be that which is not yet. Because this is God’s world, the world is not closed, either by our hopes or by our fears.

Those of us who gather around these texts and these powerful memories keep alive in our lives the terrible unsettling transaction between “Yes, but” and “Can you imagine?” Most of the time, “Yes, but” wins. But by God’s powerful grace, the “Yes, but” of our resistance is broken. Newness appears; we can sing songs, unembarrassed, songs about miracles.

No one could have foreseen how long-term and how demanding was the birth of Isaac. That single birth is long-term even until now. It is demanding because its newness requires many relinquishments-economic, intellectual, religious, political. It requires especially relinquishing that “yes, but” that hinders our singing. What it demands, however, is more than matched by what it gives-newness, things that to no yet exist. We would not have thought that this birth would lead to such possibility and such demand. But then, Isaac is not ordinary miracle. And the God who birthed Isaac is not conventional God. This God intends us not conventional life.

*Deliver us from the shackles of “Yes, but” and free us to sing sings of miracles. Open our hears andminds to your creative word, which calls into being things that don’t yet exist and brings life that is extraordinary and new. Amen.*