

Poems of Prayer 2008-2011

Matthew Pullar

Mountain Storm Prayer

Across mountaintops thick with the wildness of storms,
I have called You, I have called You,
Lord, to reach down Your hand,
To heal the dead branches blown about in the wind,
To hold firm and bind the saplings caught up in its blast.

I have called from the midnight on till the dawn.
Come, please, Lord Jesus, come where we fall
For weakness and fear and lack of You here.
Come when the clouds seem to block out Your shine.
Hear, Lord, our cry – our sick, muted cry.

Come, Lord, we need You.
Come, or we die.

(September 2011)

The Undivided Self (After John Donne)

I am a homeland of warring fractions.
I am a mountain pulled by opposing forces,
a mass on the verge of becoming many islands.
If you have the power,
and the love to overpower my will,
keep me as one –

or, if there is much that must be discarded,
may you leave just the parts attached to your land;
cleave them unto your shelf, your continent,
and may all else cleave away.
If I cannot be one, then make me all None,
and make my nothing All on the land-mass of
your wondrous whole.

(March 2010)

Defiance: An Easter Prayer

If there is yet hope for this flower
(drying, dying, disconnected from its source),
then take it,
attach it once more to
the stem from which it fell.
Let decaying petals be fresh once again.
Give water, give sunlight.
Photo-synthesise: give life.

If there is yet life in this body
(I cling to that hope) –
then take it, blast it, lift it into your light:
then it will not atrophy or die.
Defy the laws that work on
bodies and on soil, the cycles
that drag all flesh to the ground.
Defy them now.

If there is yet breath beyond
the walls of this tomb (I see
a body moving through a gap
by the stone), then roll away
the mammoth rock between
that life and the sun's light.
Let air re-enter that body's tombs;
let graves and passageways respire.
Defy the law that says: *all flesh is grass*.
Let no grass grow over this tomb.

(Easter Sunday, 2010)

Motion Sickness Prayer

Sometimes...
we move in (circles,
Sometimes: up
and
down,
Sometimes: inside out,
and I wish it could be different,
and I wish that I moved forward
every day, and never backward,
*but today I think I'm back
a bit closer to the
start.*

And sometimes, when we think
we've moved so very far,
we find

we're not ahead; we're not
behind;
we're only:
(thereabouts).

And sometimes when we're moving FAST →→→→
we do not take the time to ask
"Where is it that I'm going?" (←?←?→?←)
No, there's simply not the time.
And then we find – surprise surprise –
we've gone behind the starting
line| we've lost the progress
that we'd made. Yes, those days
are the hardest.

And today
I'm not so sure
if I know
just
where
I
am.

.....

Sometimes...

I think I see your face
watching me, just standing by
the side-line, blurry, hard
to read – that look upon your
face: Are you cheering? are you
booing? or timing me, and
saying, "Come on! Hurry up!
What's wrong? You were
twice as fast last week!"

And sometimes, when I'm running hard,
I forget to look for you.
And today I'm looking, but I'm
running, and it's hard
to keep up both.

And yesterday I think I ran
the same track over twice.

And some days, when I look for you,
I'm closer, sometimes far,
and sometimes you are standing still,
and sometimes you're retreating,
and sometimes, when I follow you,
I fear I'm losing time, and falling
further still behind.

*And yesterday I was a little
further ...Somewhere
than today.*

But sometimes, when I think
I'm furthest – sometimes, you're
not far ...

*So today I hope,
I pray, I'll be,
tomorrow, where you are.*

(March 2007)

Untitled Prayer

If my throat and chest seize up with
the violence of my coughing,

if my eyes can hardly keep open
and I am heavy burdened, frayed and
sagging:

let this be the moment when
the kernel hits the soil.

If I heave for breath, let
every breath, in each
outward-reaching motion of
lung and lips, find the
air that defies
the grime and dirt of now.

And, if from where you stand, you see
my heart and back can't make
a straight line to you,
let your hand align me; let
your skyward ladder define my trajectory.

Take hold of my
every weakly half-attempt
to rise and live. Take
the wheat and the dross.
Let your scythe divide.

Yet take me –
hands empty, heart screaming –
take me into you.

(April 2010)

Locust Prayer

I will repay you for the years the locusts have eaten...
(Joel 2:25)

The locusts have eaten up my years.
They have eaten my heart.
They've eaten my tears.
They have eaten my faith
And the hope that's in you.
Give back to me what the locusts now have.

The rivers have dried; the streams and the springs.
The hills are now brown. The grass is now gone.
The locusts are all that the sky can now give.
Give back to us what the sun has killed.
May we fear the sun and the locusts no more.

Our memories – please heal them. They are corrupt.
The moths have got to them – the mould and the rust too.
The hopes of our past have all been eroded.
We have forgotten our love. We have forgotten your food.
Our mind-pictures of your provision:
The locusts have them too.

Give us back the joy, the hope,
The peace of knowing you.
And onto these locusts, may
Your judgment pour. May
Those who have taken you from us
Be filled with fear and shame.

(December 2009)

This side of Jordan

Being made of such violent opposites,
head and feet both extremes, the middle a compromise,
there's no which-way to go, only halfway,
and that an awkward Nothing,
where the sky's too high and the earth too low,
and no alternative but to settle – for what?
Which way do I look? Where do I find
the grid reference, the compass point,
the way to walk, the option that says:
“Yes, this one is right”, the voice,
always behind, the voice that says, “This
is the way; walk in it, pilgrim”; where being a pilgrim,
on foot, or in motion, seems the only choice,
but where movement here, or there, or anywhere
seems a conclusion too soon reached, a
pathway ill-chosen, too limiting, too – clear;

Will you be there, when I arrive at the river,
finally, hopefully, ready to cross?
No, that's not what matters;
Of course you'll be there.
For the other side's your home;
you wait for me there.
What I need, what I long for,
this side of Jordan,
is to find you here, there, wherever I am,
and to take me there, wherever I go,
to bring me there, to bring me home.
For wherever you are, there'll be no extremes,
no middle, no compromise, no *if-only* or *but*, only –
but that's not for me to say. Not now, not here, not –
this side of Jordan.

(June 2008)

Anxiety Prayer

The waves crash upon me.
I do not move with the motions of the waves.
I move within the rocks, beaten about,
Stuck in whirlpools and chasms.
(Anemone-like, my breath will shut off if you stand too near.
Please, breathe in me, but not so close. I may not live.)

Teach me the movement of your waves.
Teach me the ebb and flow of your grace.
I crash my head on the rocks.
I do not see the white of the sand.
I do not smell the salt of the sea.
I lose sight and sense with the crush of the rocks.

(Give me sight. Give me strength to stand
and move beyond the rocks. Give me a new motion
to something else.)

Lift me out, I pray; lift me beyond these waves.
Or, if you choose, teach me to float, to flow,
to move with every up-and-down jolt and jerk;
teach me to find poetry in motion.

(December 2009)

As I Live

Show me how to live
as I live; I do not know
how to live. I cry
and writhe when
I feel pain; I scream
when life does not
pan out as I wish.
I roll about in dirt
and do not know
how to clean myself.
Show me how to live;
show me how to walk
through mud and stay clean.
Show me how to live.

(September 2008)

Invocation

Come like the long-awaited wind
Sweeping over wheat-fields and hay,
The coolness of an evening kept too long in the wings
Of a wilting, overheated day.

Come like the breeze,
Come with surprises in these pockets of wind.
Come as the change
In our day's bored direction.
Come and rearrange.
Let your wind be our re-maker.

Come like the rising waters on our parched, cracked soil.
Come like the hope of the reservoirs,
The heaven's drenching, torrent gift.
Come like lightning, come with the skyboards
Quaking in thunderous rapture.
Come like the heralds of the air proclaim.
Come like swift-falling storm waters.
Our brittle, broken earth needs you.

Come with majesty! Come with sudden glory
Such as rainbow-gazing Noah never saw.
Come with olive-branch promises.
Come with justice.
Come with hope.

Come, fully You; no muted impersonation.
Come crowned, the sun your halo,
The galaxies your sceptre,
The vast universe no frame for your endless expanse.
Come to our vision; come burst it open
And give eyes to see
Your earth-defying, sense-exploding
Majesty.

(June 2011)