

## SPRING



Somewhere  
a black bear  
has just risen from sleep  
and is staring

down the mountain.  
All night  
in the brisk and shallow restlessness  
of early spring.

I think of her,  
her four black fists  
flicking the gravel,  
her tongue

like a red fire  
touching the grass,  
the cold water.  
There is only one question:

how to love this world.  
I think of her  
rising  
like a bland and leafy ledge

to sharpen her claws against  
the silence  
of the trees.  
Whatever else

my life is  
with its poems  
and its music  
and its glass cities,

it is also this dazzling darkness  
coming  
down the mountain  
breathing and tasting;

all day I think of her –  
her white teeth,  
her wordlessness,  
her perfect love.



by Mary Oliver



In this season of Lent, literally this season of ‘lengthening days’, *‘there is only one question: how to love this world’*. In this world of post 9-11, *‘there is only one question: how to love this world’*. In this time in the HIV/AIDS pandemic, *‘there is only one question: how to love this world’*. In this sitting of our Parliament, debating who can marry, *‘there is only one question: how to love this world’*. In this age when 20% of the global population consumes 80% of the world’s resources, *‘there is only one question: how to love this world’*. In this time when 130 thousand people die every week in Africa of preventable diseases, *‘there is only one question: how to love this world’*.

It seems to me that for Jesus of Nazareth, there was only one question. He spent his life and his death answering this one question, *‘how to love this world’*. In his living and in his dying I see that the world is loved as we love its creator. The world is loved as we love our neighbors. The world is loved as we love ourselves. The world is loved as we love our enemies. The world is loved as we bless those who curse us. The world is loved as we forgive those who condemn us. The world is loved as we feed the hungry, shelter the homeless, heal the sick, comfort the grieving, free the captives, restore sight to the blind and give vision to the sighted. The world is loved when God is love and love is God. May we journey in the company of this great question as we travel again the road from the safety of Galilee to the vulnerability of Judea. May we love as we have learned in the life of the radical rabbi from Nazareth.

Blessed be the Lenten journey,

Nancy

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be the name 'Nancy' written in a cursive, flowing style.