

Welcome: Dan Mendelsohn

Prelude: *Toccata* by Leonardo Leo, Linda Hoover, Pianist

CHALICE LIGHTING

“There’s a regular blaze of light begun not far away - hundreds of torches and many fires must have been lit suddenly and by magic. And hark to the singing and the harps!” - J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Hobbit*

OPENING WORDS

#540 The Peace of Autumn

Today the peace of autumn pervades the world.

In the radiant noon, silent and motionless, the wide stillness rests like a tired bird.

Spreading over the deserted fields to all horizons its wings of golden green.

Today the thin thread of the river flows without song, leaving no mark on its sandy banks.

The many distant villages bask in the sun with eyes closed in idle and languid slumber.

In the stillness I hear in every blade of grass.

In every speck of dust, in every part of my own body, in the visible and invisible worlds,

In the planets, the sun, and the stars, the joyous dance of the atoms through endless time.

OPENING HYMN: #52 In Sweet Fields of Autumn

HOMILY: Thresholds, Gateways, and Crossroads

We've been reading *The Hobbit* together and I hope everyone is enjoying it.

In the first half of the novel, our main character Bilbo Baggins goes through quite a number of changes. I thought that in this week before Hallowe'en, we could talk about changes.

Do you have a Baggins side and a Took side? When do you change between them? Why? How?

Stretch

Look at your dominant hand - see your main personality, what might be your Baggins side - hold that.

Look at your non-dominant hand - see your secret side.

Shake dominant hand, place it in front of you where you can easily see it

Now bring your non-dominant hand up behind it, not completely hidden, but glimpses of it peeking between.

Move your hands - watch how the different sides shadow and reflect each other.

Turn so you see one and now the other. We're telling our Took sides that we see them, we're not going to shut them away.

sonal threshold point?

A really first-class and legendary burglar would at this point have picked the trolls' pockets ... pinched the very mutton off the spit, purloined the beer, and walked off without their noticing him. ...

Bilbo knew it. ...he wished himself a hundred miles away, and yet - and yet somehow he could not go straight back to Thorin and Company empty handed. So he stood and hesitated in the shadows. Of the various burglarious proceedings he had heard of picking the the trolls' pockets seemed the least difficult so at last he crept behind a tree just behind William.

Bert and Tom went off to the barrel. William was having another drink. Then Bilbo plucked up courage and put his little hand in William's enormous pocket. There was a purse in it, as big as a bag to Bilbo. "Ha!" thought he warming to his new work as he lifted it carefully out, "this is a beginning!" *from The Hobbit*

Think of one of your beginnings, a personal threshold point, shape the thought into a ring in front of you, slip the ring on your finger.

Which hand did you put the ring on? Baggins or Took?

not. A Gateway may be outdoors and have a broader view. Both of them invite us onward, yes or no, to see what may be seen. I have ideas to share about Crossroads, too, decision points with more than one choice, like Bilbo had during the Riddles in the Dark game. But I think that's too much for this morning. Let's stick with Thresholds, like Hallowe'en.

Are you going to show your secret side on Hallowe'en? I like to think of it as a "come as you really are" party. Can you for one evening transform yourself - whether into your inner self or just a daydream you have or just a bit of glamour? Leaves transform, the weather transforms, let's take a cue.

Hands out again - balanced, wearing your lovely threshold ring - make circles - put on your mask... Transform yourself for a moment into something mysterious. Does it change how you see? Does it change how other people seem to you?

Ghosties and Ghoulies parading down the road with our blessings and our candles and our treats for the road. Why? To approach and pass through the threshold of death and be transformed into memories - ancestors. We'll even walk with them a little way, in our masks and fancy dress. We celebrate their change. Happy Hallowe'en!

The change could happen any day

So says the whippoorwill

She hangs around for the seeds I leave

Out on the windowsill

“Be-free-you-fool, be-free-you-fool”

She sings all afternoon

Then, as if to show me how it's done,

She leaps into the blue

And a change could happen any day

So say all the guards

In the prison I have built around

My solitary heart

I tell myself that I'm all right

That it's not so bad a place

Truth is that I'm just scared to death

Of walking through that gate.

So say my true love's eyes

They see into my shadows

With their sweet, forgiving light

She smiles and says, Come on - let's go

Let's stroll the boulevard

It's such a shame to waste the night

Just sitting in the dark

The change could happen any day

Or so says Father Brown

I listen for that still small voice

But I just can't make it out

Beneath the constant whispering

Of the devil that I know

But who would I be if I believed?

Who am I if I don't?

So said the mountaineer
Before he turned to face his cliff
Without a trace of fear
Yodel-ay-hee-hoo, yodel-ay-hee-hoo
He sang right up until
He caught sight of the open blue
And became a whippoorwill
He caught sight of the open blue
And became a whippoorwill

OFFERTORY: Remembrance (op 71, No. 7) by Edvard Grieg

The offering which supports the work of this congregation will be gratefully received.

ship service, so of course I will read a bit of Robert Frost on
the topic of choosing roads.

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveler, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Then took the other, as just as fair,
And having perhaps the better claim,
For it was grassy and wanted wear;
Though as for that the passing there
Had worn them really about the same,

And both that morning equally lay
In leaves no step had trodden black.
Oh, I kept the first for another day!
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,
I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I--
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.

Often our joys are too great for one heart to hold. This is a time and place for sharing that joy.

Often our sorrows are too great for one heart to bear. This is a time and place for sharing that burden. A few words about this table: sometimes we call it an *offrenda* - using that word from Mexican tradition for the board or altar on which to put mementos of loved ones and foods which they enjoyed in life-time. It's a beautiful tradition - and using the word can be respectfully learning and using this tradition to further our own spiritual journeys. It can, however, feel like a strange word on our tongues. Not many of us have been so at-home in that culture to understand all the allusions and connotations of an *offrenda* or a *Día de los Muertos* celebration. Similarly, an altar is a good word, but it might carry with it ideas or memories that we're not comfortable with. UU religious educators - not me - have found a name for "that special place where we put things to evoke feelings and memories." It's the "Table of Wonder and Beauty". It's OK to approach the Table of Wonder and Beauty. The only baggage is your own.

Some people have brought mementos this morning, objects symbolic of people they have loved who have died. I can make bread in this bowl, store ap-

But this is my great grandmother's bread bowl. By placing it - or by you placing your mementos - on our table, in sacred time, in a reverent manner, we change ourselves and open ourselves to communicate through the veil with our loved ones. The gesture says, "I remember *this* about you. I honor you. I love you." Our altar will remain in place during coffee hour; you can privately retrieve your memento at that time, or let it be a spark of conversation between you and a friend over coffee.

You have found colored leaf squares at your seats, I hope, and eensy pencils? Even if you've not brought a memento this morning, you can write a message to the ancestors, a memory, a poem, and place them in the bread bowl. These messages will be burned on Hallowe'en, sending your messages up to heaven or the ancestors or the clouds.

Take a deep breath. When you're ready, we'll move in a clockwise manner, each of us adding to the Table of Wonder and Beauty or just looking

This last leaf will represent those joyful memories and sorrowful missings which remain unexpressed.

CHORAL BLESSING: Deep Peace by Gwyneth Walker

congregation have some work to do - a crossroads choice to make. It's a tough choice, so the chalice burns as a reminder of big patterns at work.

BENEDICTION - will you please join me in the benediction

Hymn #100 *"I've Got Peace Like a River"*