

## An Invitation to Come and Learn How to Fly

Reflection by The Rev. Cathy Tibbetts, Rector at Christ Church in Luray

It was back in the summer of 2008, about ten years ago, a time in my life when I was freshly ordained into a brand new season of life and ministry as a member of the clergy of the Diocese of Virginia.

I had been invited that summer to be a part of the team leading Family Conference at Shrine Mont. A key part of my role was the leading of a morning time of spiritual enrichment. My chosen topic was on Christian Discipleship, as an experience of fresh and unexpected adventure for all who travel the way with Jesus.

As I was preparing in the weeks leading up to the conference I came across the inspiring works of Danaan Parry. There was one particular parable written by Danaan: *'The Fear of the Trapeze'* which grabbed my heart so tightly, its prose continues to call out to me.

Perhaps one of the reasons this little parable has held such a strong hold within me is the way it seems to transport me across 4 decades of life and journey back to a time of my childhood. This was a time when child's play became unexpectedly rich and transforming. I spent hours that summer learning to use a DYI set of backyard trapeze swings made by my friends' father. He had them hung high above a large net. At first I only wanted to watch. I had a huge fear of heights, and the bars, even with the net, were hung far too high for me. But as time progressed, and I stood by as my friends learned to use the bars, my fear began to melt and in its place came a longing to be able to fly with them. Before I knew it, there I was, up off the ground, flying right alongside them, having one of the most terrifying, one of the most exhilarating experiences that I never wanted to come to an end.

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**Proper 22 | Matthew 22: 1-14**  
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In Parry's parable he writes from the perspective of the trapeze artist. In the parable he reflects about the experience of swinging along so contentedly, enjoying each anticipated moment of the ride. But then, the moment comes when he sees something coming his way, and he knows in that moment that what is coming is meant for him, it's an invitation, to turn loose of the bar and ride he has come to know so well.

And just so is our way of journeying with Jesus. For all who follow after Him, it's a journey of invitation and opportunity and decision. Time and time again that moment arrives when we too see God's new thing coming our way. And just like someone flying high on a trapeze bar, we also must decide what we will do. If we say "yes" to God's invitation we know we must turn loose of what we have been accustomed, so that our hands are free to grab the new bar coming our way and in doing so, discover God's new direction and our destination.

In my life, and I believe in all of our lives, God's invitation is one which comes with the opportunity for spiritual growth and adventure.

Sometimes we fly solo, at other times the new trapeze bar comes with someone already riding upon it, someone sent to us by God with arms outstretched for us. Sometimes the new thing calls us to make more of our self, or more of what God has placed into our hands available to his purpose.

Whatever it may be we have to turn loose in order to join with him in this next step along the way. Our life of journeying with Jesus always is about moving onward with Him, of seeing and hearing his call, and then acting as we need in order to take the next part of our journey.

Perry refers to the time and space which lies between trapeze bars as the "no-thing" space, a mystical and holy space, in which our hearts so open that we experience the life transforming power of God's work within us. And whenever this happens we become like children again who so delight at our experience that want it to happen again and again and again. We want to capture as much of God's goodness as our time will allow.

So while sometimes you might still be sorely tempted to remain on the ground you know so well, while others fly high above. I hope you too will know the joy that comes whenever you come out to soar with God.

Happy flying!

