

Disturbed and pondering it (Easter 3B) (Psalm 4)

Psalm 4:4 as practical wisdom

by [Jessica Mesman](#)

April 16, 2021

To receive these posts by email each Monday, [sign up](#).

For more commentary on this week's readings, see the [Reflections on the Lectionary](#) page. For full-text access to all articles, [subscribe](#) to the Century.

I hear a lot of chatter about the unhealthy coping mechanisms many of us have developed during the pandemic and how we'll break those habits as we emerge from lockdown. But I'm here to tell you I developed my bad habits long before Covid was a household word.

Since having my first child 15 years ago it seems like I've been white-knuckling from one emergency to the next, treating my stress with prescription medications and self-medications, punctuated by the occasional burst of self-improvement during which I force myself to take a walk or go to the gym or make a turmeric latte instead of opening a bottle of wine at the end of another stressful day, scrolling Instagram until my eyes cross.

Reading the Psalms today, I wondered if the self-imposed pressure to replace my "bad" behaviors with better behaviors is sometimes what drives me right back into the arms of my old favorites. When the pressure mounts and becomes unbearable, I always feel I have to do *something*. What if, instead, I replaced something with nothing? "When you are disturbed, do not sin; ponder it on your beds, and be silent," goes this week's psalm. What if I can simply notice when I am disturbed, and not frantically try to fix it?

Today I was feeling quite disturbed, between homeschooling, working from home, planning an out-of-town move, and attempting to buy a house with a tiny budget in a seller's market, and I felt that familiar yearning for anything that would bring relief

from this current state of overwhelm. I'm not one who reads scripture as instructive, and I fear cherry picking wisdom out of context. But in this particular moment, heart and thoughts racing, I read the psalm as a very simple command: just go and lie down.

So I did. I got up from my desk, walked the two steps to my bed (a classic pandemic-era office set-up), and lay down on top of the covers. I took a breath, and instead of doing something, anything, to distract me from my mounting worries, I did nothing. I let my brain be silent a while.

The psalm also says to "put your trust in the Lord," and such a bromide does not typically inspire me. I don't trust easily in anything or anyone besides myself, which is why I'm always hustling, scheming, fixing, and tired. How does one put something as abstract as trust anywhere, anyway? I get hung up on the semantics.

Still, I figured if I could not yet wrap my head around how to put my trust in the Lord, I could try to trust just this one scripture for a moment. And I found, as I lay on my bed, that the words held. My problems didn't go away. Nothing changed. But for a moment I felt relieved of the need to fix them. There was a little more room in my distress. When I got up, I felt a bit steadier and went back to work.

Tonight, I'll try it again—doing nothing. I'll lie down in peace and trust the word to hold me.