

REV. GREGORY DELL

Gregory Dell
extra thanks
and new music!

Jesus speaks: "I thirst."

"I'm sorry. It turns out I do not have what is needed to complete the journey. I thirst. I thought – you thought – we all thought that it would go on forever: the fullness, the refreshment, the vitality. It doesn't turn out to be that way. I thirst."

In July of 2006 I was diagnosed with stage two Parkinson's disease. When that diagnosis became known, someone sent this story to me...

It seems that Itzhak Perlman, the world renowned violinist, was to give a concert on stage at Lincoln Center in New York City. Such performances were not rare for the accomplished musician. But on this occasion, something went wrong. Just as he finished the first few bars, one of the strings on his violin broke with a loud retort. Of course, anyone knows that it is impossible to play a major violin concerto with just three strings. But that night Itzhak Perlman refused to know that. You could see him modulating, changing, re-composing the piece in his head; getting from those three strings music they had never made before. When he finished, there was an awesome silence in the room. And then from every corner of the auditorium the people were on their feet, applauding and cheering. Perlman smiled, wiped the sweat from his face, raised his bow to quiet the crowd, and said – not boastfully, but in a quiet, pensive, almost reverent tone – "You know, sometimes it is the artist's task to find out how much music you can still make with what you have left."

A string breaks. *I thirst.*

A diagnosis of a chronic or terminal disease is given. *I thirst.*

A job disappears. *I thirst.*

A home is lost to foreclosure. *I thirst.*

A gay marriage and the loving relationship behind it is declared invalid. *I thirst.*

A racist remark is passed off as humor. *I thirst.*

One more war breaks out, one more killing is done in the name of faithfulness to God, one more child dies of hunger in a world of plenty, one more injustice is swept under a rug. *I thirst.*

"Sometimes it is the artist's task to find out how much music can still be made with what you have left."

The story does not end with thirst. Not for Jesus, not for Itzhak Perlman, not for *any* violinist, not for me or for any of us gathered here today. Thirst of one sort or another will do its best to bring destruction and emptiness, but it will not finally prevail. God's commitment to life, to the water of life means that *life* will have the last word.

Three violin strings will play a work of beauty. An injured, hurting, thirsty people will rise up – rise up against suffering, rise up against injustice, and yes, rise up even against thirst. They will rise up with new music, new hope, new Life. That is God's promise, that is our reality – even on Good Friday.

May it ever be so!