

Order in the Chaos



illustration by April Bending

THROUGHOUT THE WEEK THEY descend, plummeting down the chute, collecting into an untidy pile in the plastic basket nestled in the corner of the laundry room. And every Monday morning the one large, amorphous mound is converted into several smaller mounds scattered across the floor. Each smaller mound is then, in its turn, passed through the wash/dry cycle, its component parts emerging as another (albeit cleaner and fresher-smelling) mound. Those parts are neatly folded, stacked, and, later in the day, returned to their respective drawers or closets.

Behold, these are the wicked;
And always at ease,
they have increased in wealth.
Surely in vain I have kept my heart pure
And washed my hands in innocence;
For I have been stricken all day long
And chastened every morning.

Psalms 73:12-14

Lying there, flattened beneath the crushing weight of dirty laundry, our gut twisted over the frustrating unfairness of it all, it is easy to let despair have its way.

When I pondered to understand this,
It was troublesome in my sight...

Psalms 73:16

Not infrequently we feel like that pile of dirty laundry. Disheveled, chaotically arranged, a little ripe around the edges. Worse, on some days we feel like the first pair of dirty socks in the pile, pressed down, buried under an avalanche of similarly soiled brethren. We begin the week already overwhelmed by the incessant cascade falling upon our aching noggin.

Sadly, the trappings of modernity do not relieve, but intensify the chaos. Laptop computers, iPads, cell phones, 24-hour cable news—all heap more (and more, and more) upon our already brittle sensibilities. We begin each morning with a vague quivering panic over what lies—or even what *may* lie—ahead. And ever the sainted media reminds us that all is lost, that we are well past hope, that the world is headed for hell and we all are just along for the ride.

As if that weren't sufficient to tip us over the edge, heaped upon the chaos is the most stupefying realization of all: The bad guys are winning. We scratch our heads, bewildered that evil seems to repeatedly win out over good. Things have now, officially, ceased making sense.

But God never meant for us to live buried under a pile of dirty laundry. He meant for us to live in the fresh, rarefied air of His presence and grace.

Until I came into the sanctuary of God;
Then I perceived their end.
When my heart was embittered
And I was pierced within,
Then I was senseless and ignorant;
I was like a beast before You.
Nevertheless I am continually with You;
You have taken hold of my right hand.
With Your counsel You will guide me,
And afterward receive me to glory.

Psalms 73:17,21-24

In this world, "order" is only a vague, unrealized theory. In truth, the natural state of this world is chaos. Only in God's sanctuary—less a building than a spiritual state of closeness to God—do we discover His perspective. Only there can we throw off the ungainly, suffocating weight of the pile.

Only there do we find order in the chaos.

Whom have I in
heaven but You?
And besides You, I
desire nothing
on earth.
My flesh and my
heart may fail,
But God is the
strength of my
heart and my
portion forever.

Psalms 73:25-26

