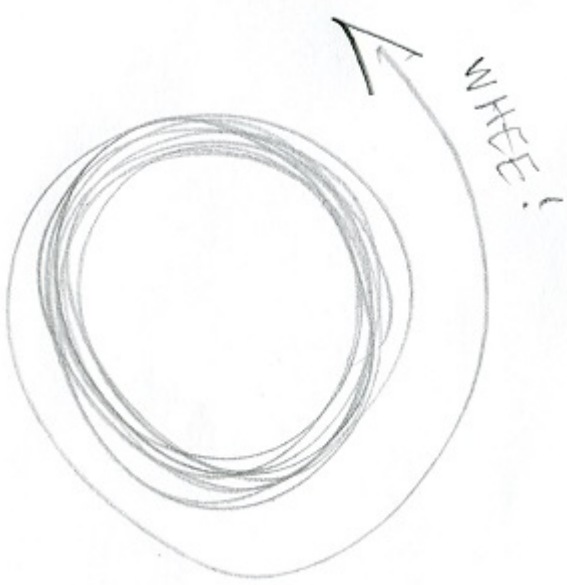


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by Pat Marrin

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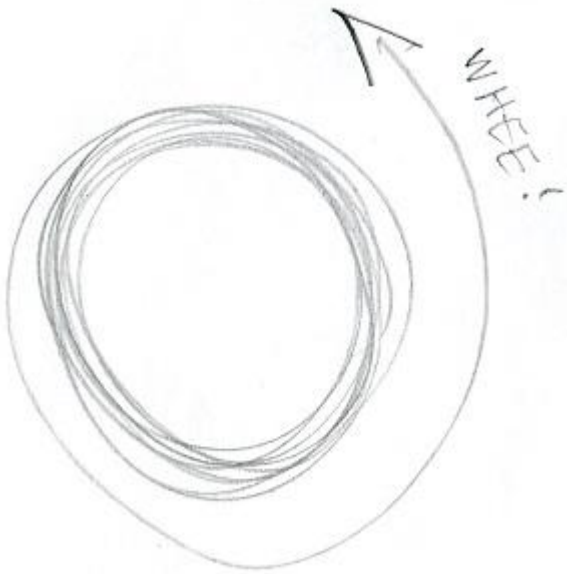
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"The measure that you measure by will be measured out to you" (Luke 6:38).

Dan 9:4b-10; Luke 6:36-38

The Gospels are filled with sayings that represent the wisdom of common experience, and Jesus draws on these to support his preaching about love and forgiveness: *You will reap what you sow; Good trees produce good fruit; Live by the sword and you will die by the sword; The measure you measure by will be measured out to you.* We have modern equivalents: *What goes around comes around. To find a friend be a friend.*

These truisms describe basic flow patterns and a cyclical generosity that underlies nature. Season by season, nature rests, then replenishes itself, water rising in evaporation becomes rain, sunlight fuels green growth, producing harvests, decay fertilizes the soil for sowing. Where human actions imitate nature, communities flourish; when humans ignore nature, conflict interrupts cycles, destroys patterns, throws creation off balance.

Jesus tells his disciples that the positive patterns describe God. "Be merciful as your heavenly Father is merciful." It is not a moral imperative, but an invitation to enter the generosity of God, and it makes sense, because what we give is what we will get: "Forgive and you will be forgiven." He is also describing his own inner balance and freedom. To go with the flow is effortless because it is natural. He invited those struggling under the Law to step into the harness with him, because his burden was light and his yoke was sweet. He rejoiced that little ones knew God, whereas the

wise and clever imposed their complicated ideas on what was obvious and turned religion into a joyless duty.

Lent does not impose burdens; it urges us to travel light, to unload the high expectations and serious rituals that slow us down and complicate our lives. Stop recycling yesterday's mistakes. Don't nurse slights and hurts or carry undelivered comebacks and self-justifications. Let go and move forward with today's graces, open to surprises and fresh encounters, buoyed by God's limitless mercy and affirming love.

We walk with Christ in the sufficiency and balance of the "Our Father," letting heaven come to earth in our thoughts, words and actions, at peace with ourselves and others because there is always love enough to go around, pressed down, shaken together and overflowing, like seed for sowing and bread for sharing. This is the joy of the Gospel.

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