Voices of Sisters
Spirituality



The everlasting sky stretches above us all, stretches wide and eternal. Like always. (Unsplash/Rodion Kutsaev)



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"*I, John (Joan), had a vision of an open door to heaven*" (*Revelation 4:1*)

— in other words, a hole in the roof

There are three of them, my favorite men in all of the Gospels, (aside from Joseph, of course). None of them are apostles. None disciples. There are no tax collectors, no good-hearted pharisees among my favorites. Not even that short man scampering up a tree to get a good view, although he comes close (Luke 19:1-10).

My favorite men are two husky no-names, carrying their friend who is comatose, dead weight, out like a light and very heavy. The two know exactly where they are headed.

The little house, hut, lean-to, whatever shelter typical of the time, is jammed to the rafters, because Christ is inside, and a long line of needs outside the only door. That leaves the back of the house free.

Two of the men gently lay the third on the ground. Then one clasps his hands and heave-ho's his friend up onto the roof. Then he gently picks up the sick friend, lifts him onto his shoulder like a sack of potatoes, and lays him flat on the roof, until his friend takes hold and slides him gently to safety. Then he gives his companion a hand up. After which, the three make their slow way towards the spot on the roof where they can hear the voice of Christ down below.

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Then my favorite men in all of the Gospels make a hole in the roof — how — I have no idea, but large enough, noisily enough, so those in the crowded room below look up, as does Christ, because he knows what's coming. And who.

The two men grab hold of their friend, one on either side, and lower him gently through the hole in the roof, down, slowly down, until their arms run out and they let go of their friend, plop into the lap of Jesus.

Up on the roof, my favorite men in all of the Gospels smile ear to ear and take a seat with a bird's eye view of the miracle happening down below, their friend in the lap of Christ.

And lo and behold, the everlasting sky shines above them.

Sometimes the Gospel story gets up close and personal.

I stand with my two brothers next to our mother, dying in a makeshift section of a nursing home rec room. I hold onto my mother's feet in her favorite Kmart shoes, hold on for dear life, while my brothers stare out a window. They should be staring at the ceiling.

There is a hole in the roof and a hole in my heart. I do not want to see my mother rising up out of that makeshift bed, up and through the hole in the roof even though I know that Christ is waiting for her there, which doesn't say much for my faith, now does it?

Somehow things are in reverse. I am the daughter holding her mother and Christ is up on the roof, smiling, as my mother rises, landing not in his lap, but in his arms.

Nor is that the end of it. First one, then another — family, friends, those dearly loved — one by one they hold onto my mother's shoes, those simple Kmarts, and rise with her into the waiting arms of Christ.

Nor am I alone. Countless come with armloads of misery to the Savior's door. All over the world and next door, people carry the sick, cradle them in their arms, lift them up on their shoulders and bring them to the heart of Mercy.

And yes, the everlasting sky stretches above us all, stretches wide and eternal. Like always.