

2022 Lenten Study  
Tattered and Mended  
Chapter 5—Tapestry Restoration: Beauty in the Ragged  
Created by Beth Vanoli

**4:00pm Welcome & Centering**

- Candle Lighting
- Centering
- Prayer

*Holy Ageless Weaver, we welcome you into this sacred space. We come from different cities, different states, different time zones to gather to share our life journeys and learn together. May we be drawn into each other's stories so that our assumptions are challenged and our compassion is expanded. Move us to take new actions in our own lives as we inspire each other to take courage and live love moment by moment. In all the holy names of God, Amen.*

**4:15pm Beauty in the Ragged**

Cynthia Ruchti opens this chapter with the story of what appeared to be a 16th century altar cloth. At closer look, the restorers discovered that what they were looking at was a crude attempt to mend a frayed altar cloth that actually dated back to the 1200's. To get to the original work, they had to remove the repair job, thread by thread. It was tedious work. But what was revealed was a rare 13th century artifact of delicate design, faded and thin. Colored threads were gone in some places leaving only an outline of where the design had been. As the team mended the cloth, they decided to leave the outlines untouched.

I believe the point the author was making by telling us about this altar cloth is things are not always as they seem and that often the story is in the imperfections or as she subtitles the chapter...Beauty is in the Ragged.

Like the tattered altar cloth, the years make their marks on our bodies and life can take a toll on our souls. But these wounds and scars tell a story about our lives. The author writes, "No scar is inherently beautiful. But it can be perceived as beautiful because of what it represents. 'I lived through that!' 'That happened to me and I'm still here to tell about it?'"

As I was preparing for this session, I ran across this poem by Betty Ann Greenbaum Miller called *Tapestry*. With it came an explanation of how she came to write the poem. During a very difficult surgical experience, Betty Ann experienced a vision of life and community as a tapestry or prayer shawl of intertwined threads. This gave her tremendous comfort and strength to live with the challenges of chronic illness. She struggled for years to express the vision in writing; the result being this poem that I sent out to you in the mailing this past week. I hope that you spent some time with it as you prepared for this week's session. We will be using it as our focus in our first breakout.

Before we go to our breakout rooms, we are going to read the poem for us. As they read, I invite you to close your eyes and just listen. (See attachment)

When you get to your breakout rooms, after introducing yourselves, your discussion can begin around the following questions:

What did this reading stir up in you?

What memories, thoughts, concerns, fears, joys, questions does it bring to mind?

Breakout Rooms  
3-4 per room  
10 minutes

#### **4:30pm Reporting Out**

#### **4:35pm Restoring Tapestries**

The inspiration for this chapter is the restoration of tapestries. And because of my passion for medieval history and art, this chapter called to me. Tapestries during this time period were designed to decorate and insulate but they also depicted narratives inspired by real and imaginary events such as battles, lives of saints, Bible stories, and scenes from daily life. Many of these old tapestries from our medieval past have been restored and still hang in museums after centuries. The Bayeux Tapestry, for example, details the story of William the Conqueror and the Battle of Hastings and was commissioned in 1070 almost 1000 years ago. Another famous tapestry was commissioned by Henry VIII in the 1500s and tells the Bible story of Abraham.

We are going to take a moment now to watch a video of the restoration of another famous tapestry called the Valois tapestry. It was commissioned by Catherine de Medici in 1575. The video takes us through the process and intricacy of this kind of restoration.

Video: <https://youtu.be/iLTHJ0Paslc>

#### **4:45pm Scripture**

From this video we can see that mending doesn't mean to just repair a tear. It means to restore, fix, equip, perfect, complete, and frame together. It is the work done that actually restores. During Jesus' ministry, it was the work he did that restored and healed. And before his work was done, he left those he touched fixed, equipped, perfected, completed and framed together. Let's look at one of his last acts. As you listen to this passage, notice how Jesus mends his followers through his work.

John 13:1-19

This is a culmination and summation of Jesus' life. Think of other stories of Jesus' ministry. As Ruchti points out, "His healings always affect more than the individual in the epicenter of distress. Concentric circles of mending radiate out from that center,

touching—sometimes— a whole community. Our serving others while in the process shows others that mending is possible.“

We are going to go back into breakout rooms. As you do, consider the stories of Jesus. How do these stories weave together Jesus' work, healing, and service? Discuss how he affected more than just the individual. How did he restore and mend whole communities with his actions? And how do we, as United Women in Faith serve others to make mending possible? How does our work affect not just the individuals we touch but also whole communities? Are there new things we can also do to change people and communities?

Breakout Rooms  
12 minutes

**5:00pm**      **Report Out and Sum Up**

**5:10pm**      **Closing Song: The Blessing (<https://youtu.be/uiWZXLsdE9w>)**

# Attachment

## Tapestry

By Betty Ann Greenbaum Miller

*During a very difficult surgical procedure over 20 years ago, Betty Ann experienced a vision. It was a vision of life and community as a tapestry or prayer shawl of the intertwined threads of our lives. This vision gave her tremendous comfort and strength to live with the challenges of chronic illness. She struggled for years to express this vision in writing; the result ultimately being this poem. I have read it countless times in the year since her passing. I have shared it with family and friends. It has given all of us a great deal of comfort in knowing Betty Ann is indeed still here with us, still connected to us through time and space.*

---

I see each individual life represented by a single thread. Each thread is tied on and woven into the other threads that were there before and that come after. The varieties of threads create a beautiful pattern that flow through the fabric as if on the breath of life itself.

When I am closest to the image of the tapestry, all I can see is my own thread and the few threads directly around me. When I stand back and look at as much as I am able, I see that my life thread is but a fragment of a whole whose beginning and end is out of my view. I also notice other things. I notice that the pattern of the tapestry changes and yet feels familiar. I notice there are knots, and frays and warped areas throughout the shawl. I notice vibrant colors, and even deadly colors. Colors that make me weep with joy, and colors that cause my retreat.

I notice holes, tears, rips, and uneven weave. I notice patches, and darning, and do-overs. When I look very closely, I see my thread has many frays and knots and pulls. I see places where it seems that the thread is even broken and then resumes its weave farther on in the pattern. I see when my thread has been ripped. Other times, I can see my thread blowing in a breeze, barely connected with any will and no strength....that is when the other threads around me hold my space in the tapestry.

Even as they weave their own definition of color and texture, they remind me of my place. They share mending materials; they make suggestions for knots. They show me different and new directions of weave, maybe stronger ones and simpler ones. They even might share a piece of their own thread, which can be very close to breaking too. They always pull me back in, when my broken thread is beginning to float away...

This is when the real healing begins and the tapestry repairs its holes. This is when the threads of the many separate lives take on an inexplicable iridescent gold aura. This is when I am no longer afraid and alone because someone has held onto my thread for me with his or her own life. They hold on, while

I mend my own thread. The whole tapestry is once again salvaged and strengthened. Its beauty is calming and comforting. It seems to be life itself, or maybe life's companions, love and compassion. The golden thread is woven so gently into so many of the single threads. In and out, all over every perfect and imperfect thread of the tapestry, it continues its elegant journey, floating effortlessly and endlessly through time and space with our frayed and broken... and golden threads in it.

## **Tapestry**

By Carol King

My life has been a tapestry  
Of rich and royal hue  
An everlasting vision  
Of the ever-changing view  
A wond'rous woven magic  
In bits of blue and gold  
A tapestry to feel and see  
Impossible to hold