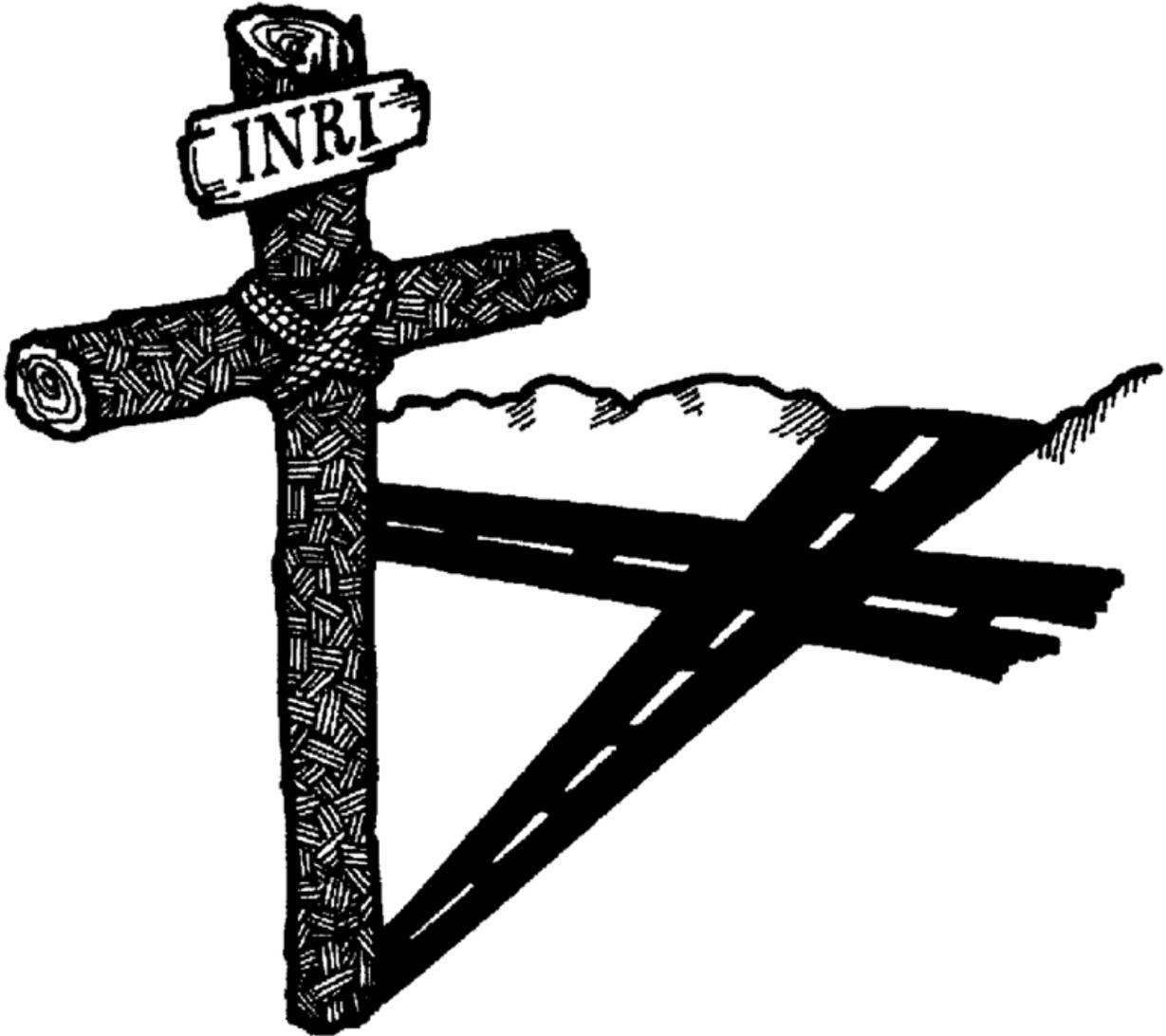


CrossRoads



a worship packet for Lent
and Eastertide

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Sacred Seasons

from

Seeds of Hope Publishers

These unique worship packets are available for the liturgical year, four packets a year for \$120 (\$135 for non-US subscriptions), one packet for \$50 (\$60 outside of the US).

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Statement of Purpose

Seeds of Hope, Inc., is a private, independent group of believers responding to a common burden for the poor and hungry of God's world, and acting on the strong belief that biblical mandates to feed the poor were not intended to be optional. The group intends to seek out people of faith who feel called to care for the poor; and to affirm, enable, and empower a variety of responses to the problems of poverty.

Editorial Address

Seeds of Hope is housed by the community of faith at Seventh and James Baptist Church. The mailing address is 602 James, Waco, Texas 76706; Phone: 254/ 755-7745; Fax: 254/753-1909; E-mail: SeedsHope@aol.com.

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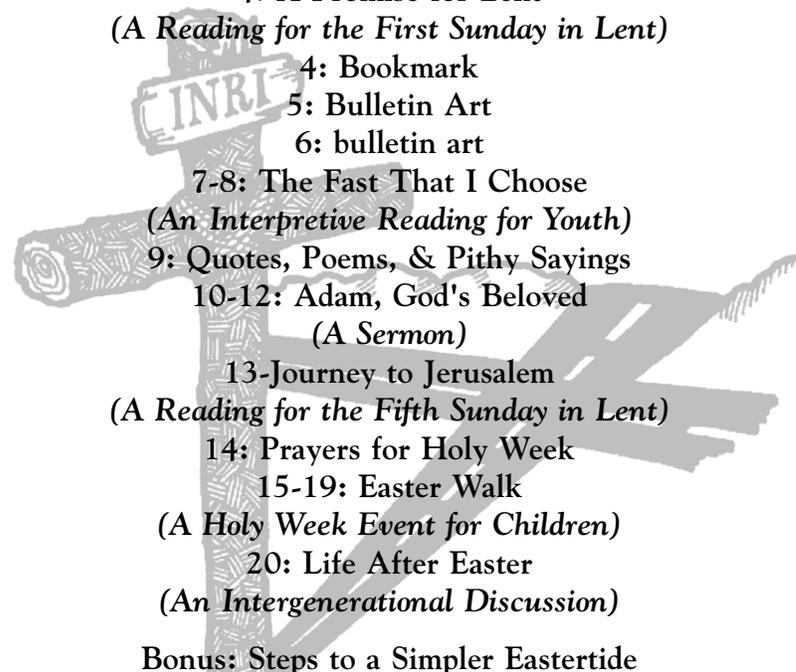
Material in this packet is for the use of the purchasing faith community to enhance worship and increase awareness in economic justice issues.

ISSN 0194-4495

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a word about this packet

These materials are offered to you on clean, unattached pages so that you can more easily photocopy anything you wish to duplicate. Feel free to copy any of this, including art, and adapt these tools to your needs.

The art on the cover is by Peter Yuichi Clark, a chaplain in San Francisco and a long-time Seeds artist. Much of the art in this packet was done especially by Peter for your 2000 Lenten season. Another artist featured in this packet is Lenora Mathis, a senior at Midway High School in Woodway, Texas.

The material in this packet is your congregation's to use freely. We have tried to pull together creative and inspiring resources that can be used during Lent and Eastertide. We have included a litany for Earth Day, which will be in April. We chose to include different kinds of dramas, including the Easter Walk for children, instead of another service of ashes. For Ash Wednesday services, please see the 1998 and 1999 Lenten packets.

We have tried to provide these tools to you in a user-friendly, yet attractive presentation. We endeavored to choose a variety of age groups, worship areas, events, and angles, so that you would have a potpourri of art and ideas from which to choose.

We make a conscious effort to maintain a balance between the apostolic and the contemplative—on the one hand, the dynamic challenge to stay true to God's mandate to feed the poor and see to the struggle for justice, and on the other hand, our own compelling need for nurture and healing while we work toward those dreams.

We prayerfully hope that these aids will enhance your congregation's spring worship experiences and, at the same time, help you to creatively raise awareness of the needs of God's people.

Thoughts for Early Lent

by Allison Stone



While in high school, my youth minister was the first to tell me about the season of Lent. We discussed what Lent was and how we could respond. As a youth group, we often decided that each of us should make some sort of sacrifice for the 40-day period. The list usually included soda, chocolate, watching TV, or some other negative habit to which we had become accustomed.

While the items sacrificed might not seem such a hardship to me now, the foundation was laid for a continuing fascination with the concept of Lent.

Now, my prayer is that the Lenten season will become much more than a mere fascination. We live in a culture that is rich beyond measure—one in which living without cable TV is often considered a hardship. The call of Jesus during Lent is for us to pack our bags and journey with him towards Jerusalem. Or rather, we should probably leave our baggage at home and trust God on the journey.

The time of Lent calls us to cut the thongs of the yoke—let go of our personal baggage—and face and embrace a radical type of fasting which calls us to not just worry about our personal yoke. If we choose to come on this Lenten journey—we must beware—we just might return transformed.

We might also, if all goes well, see the lesson of Lent, Holy Week and Easter as a pattern in our daily lives. The transformation might not be one that everyone at the office notices right away. The transformation might not even be one that we notice right away. Indeed the journey does promise a change.

If we are willing to place our lives, during Lent, into the hands of one who suffered persecution for his beliefs, who was betrayed, and ultimately crucified, we cannot help being

transformed. For Christ came as the One who made the word become flesh—to dwell among us.

If we would be willing, during Lent,
To put ourselves in a new situation
in which we might not feel comfortable,

If we would be willing, during Lent,

To look through someone's eyes
who makes less money than we do,

If we would be willing, during Lent,

To spend time listening to someone

who has been excluded because of their race,

If we would be willing, during Lent,

To choose to seek out a different lens
through which to view our culture,

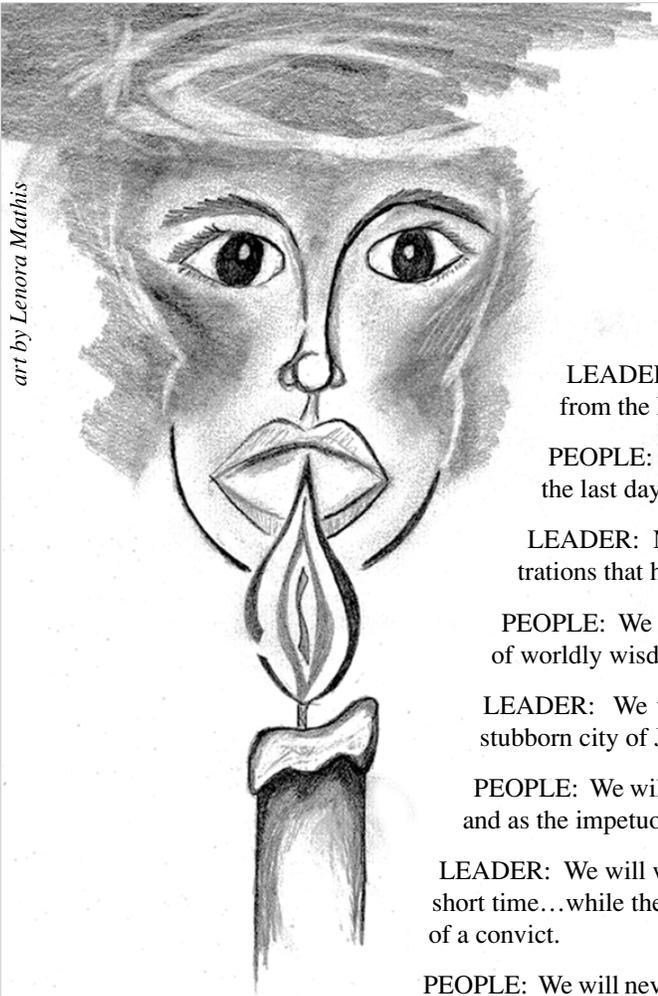
If we would be willing, during Lent,

To give up making assumptions
about someone based on their appearance...

Then, maybe, we would begin to be in touch with the fast that God chooses: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke. These words seem ideal and perhaps lofty, but the journey to wholeness begins with fleshing out what these truths can look like in our daily lives.

Let Lent call us to think about the way in which the choices we make and the way we live affect all of God's children. Then, maybe, being touched by God's wholeness, we will joyfully respond to the fast, not being encumbered by the challenges or afraid of the outcome, but being set free to live in the laughter and embrace of a God who cries out for the redemption of all.
—Allison Stone is a social worker in Baltimore, Maryland.

art by Lenora Mathis



A Promise for Lent

A Reading for the First Sunday in Lent

by Katie Cook

LEADER: Now the time has begun in which we turn our thoughts away from the Bethlehem manger, away from the carpenter shop in Nazareth;

PEOPLE: Now is the time in which we look toward Jerusalem, toward the last days of our Savior.

LEADER: Now we remember the difficult decisions, the sorrow, the frustrations that he experienced.

PEOPLE: We will see the hatred in the faces of the religious folk, the anxiety of worldly wisdom in the faces of the Romans.

LEADER: We will see the anguish in Jesus' own face as he weeps over the stubborn city of Jerusalem.

PEOPLE: We will watch as Judas plants his kiss of betrayal on the face of Jesus, and as the impetuous Peter tries to mend the situation with a sword.

LEADER: We will watch the angels cease their songs, and the miracles cease for a short time...while the Maker of the heavens and the earth chooses the painful death of a convict.

PEOPLE: We will never know the utter agony that the friends of Jesus suffered at this time, because we know what happened on that Sunday.

LEADER: But let us promise for Lent this year that we will try to remember, try to understand, all that Jesus suffered, all that the followers suffered.

ALL: Let us promise that we will not take the gift of Easter for granted.

take up your cross and follow
me

CROSS
PAIN
FEAR
DARK
DEATH
FAIL

In him was LIFE
and that LIFE was the LIGHT
of humanity.

The LIGHT shines
in the darkness
but the darkness
has not understood it

JESUS
FREE
JOY
LIGHT
LIFE
CONQUER!!

I am the RESURRECTION
and the LIFE.

—Dawn Grosser Richardson

art by Peter Yuichi Clark

bulletin art



art by Peter Yuichi Clark

Editor's note: Since Lent has traditionally been a season of fasting for the Church, we offer the bulletin art below as perhaps a different interpretation of the kind of fasting in which we normally engage during this time.

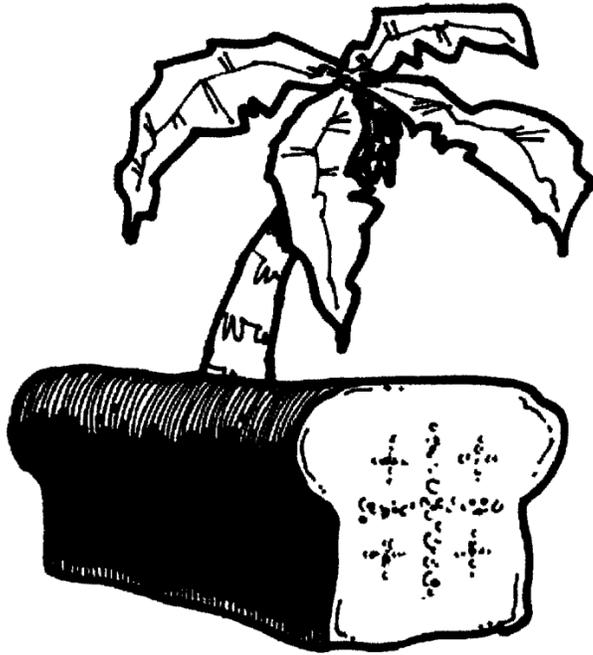
Is not this the fast that I choose:



*to loose the bonds of injustice,
to undo the thongs of the yoke,
to let the oppressed go free
and to break every yoke?
Is it not to share your bread
with the hungry,
and to bring the homeless poor
into your house;
when you see the naked to cover them,
and not to hide yourself
from your own kin?
—Isaiah 58:6-7*

art by Peter Yuichi Clark

art by Peter Yuichi Clark



The Fast That I Choose

An Interpretive Reading for Youth

by John Garland and Katie Cook

Authors' note: The following is an interpretive reading for two people. It is written with youth in mind, but could also be done by adults. The reading should begin with the playing of an audio or video tape of a bustling, brightly lit downtown scene (Times Square or Las Vegas would be appropriate). The noise plays for perhaps a minute and then is slowly lowered in volume as the first reader begins. You may want to allow the tape (perhaps ten minutes) to continue in the background; if you do so, make sure it stops by the time the Second Reader begins with "This is the fast I choose." You might want to replace the noise with the instrumental version of a familiar hymn or sacred song, also played softly. Please feel free to adapt this to your congregation's needs—or do without the music altogether. (Scripture references are included for your convenience and are not meant to be read aloud.)

FIRST READER: I find myself, feeble person that I am, prone. I find myself bound fast to the swollen, swaying belly of downtown. It's a loud world downtown, but the music can be pleasant, soothing, even enticing. The music of this world can draw me in with its undulating rhythms; it can blind me and make me feel whole and happy, content with my bonds.

SECOND READER: Is not this the fast that I choose, to loose the bonds... (Isaiah 58: 9)

the spirit is willing, but the flesh, the flesh is weak.

FIRST READER: So an evening of indifference oozes into my veins and seeds of injustice are sown, seeds that my drowsy senses never notice taking root. Pitifully, I don't recognize my effect on the world, the crushing effect of my ignorant sleep-walking. Then, in a nightmarish flash, I hear an eerie voice...

SECOND READER: You—yes, you—are my servant, in whom I will be glorified. (Isaiah 49:3)

FIRST READER: What a ruinous, startling, uncomfortable voice! *I've* got responsibility?! "What do you want from me?" I shout. I want to scream it out over and over.

SECOND READER: You have been told what the Lord desires. What does the Lord require of you, but to do justice...

FIRST READER: I *want* to do justice, if I only knew how.

SECOND READER: ...and to love mercy...

FIRST READER: I *want* to love mercy, if I could recognize it.

SECOND READER: ...and to walk humbly with your God? (Micah 6:8)

FIRST READER: I *want* to walk with God, if I could keep up. But I'm bound, a slave lying prone on filthy, sun-scorched asphalt, longing for a break in the relentless heat.

FIRST READER: Bonds can be so comfortable, a snug part of my arms and legs, and dusk is so pleasing to my eyes. So my eyes get heavy, my arms grow weary, and sleep seeps into my heart because that is how I want it to be. It all seems so untroubled.

SECOND READER: And God saw everything that God had made, and indeed, it was very good. (Genesis 1:31a)

FIRST READER: It's *overwhelmingly* good, almost too beautiful to behold. So I sleep. It is a deep, soothing sleep with a firm, sterile pillow of marble, sheets of artificial realities, blanket upon blanket of furry, fuzzy luxury.

SECOND READER: [Jesus] came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy. (Mark 14:40)

FIRST READER: And that swollen belly of a world sways and rocks so that my dreams come quickly, filled with visions and tastes of success, productivity, effectiveness, brilliance, legacy, love, religion. My dreams are hazy, my god is hazy, like a faded memory.

SECOND READER: Will no one stay awake with me? Peter? John? James? Truly,

SECOND READER: God will make you to lie down in green pastures and lead you beside still waters. (Psalm 23:2)

FIRST READER: But I feel exposed, bound to the belly of the marketplace, longing for a covering, a protection from the elements.

SECOND READER: Put on justice like a breastplate, and a helmet of salvation on your head. (Isaiah 59:17)

FIRST READER: I long to hear a voice declaring:

FIRST AND SECOND READERS: For yours is the Commonwealth of God!

FIRST READER: I want the prophet to come to me on his knees, drawing revelations for me in the dirt, because the world is scary and I'm unsure, unsure half to death, that I've done it all in vain, that all of my strength, all of my being, has been devoted to a shadow, that I've been enacting the wrong story, that my story is not God's story. I hunger for God's story.

SECOND READER: Seek first the Reign of God, and God's righteousness. (Matthew 6:23)

FIRST READER: But I'm afraid. I'm afraid of loneliness, of not being effective, of being wrong about all of this. Sometimes I'm even afraid that I'm a goat, and not a sheep.

SECOND READER: God has not given you a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of sound mind.

FIRST READER: But I'm still afraid. And I'm afraid to let go of my fears. I'm afraid of not being in control. But am I really in control? I'm afraid of finding out. I'm afraid to even think about all of this.

SECOND READER: My grace is sufficient for you; for my strength is made perfect in your weakness. (2 Corinthians 12:9)

FIRST READER: Okay; I know all of that. I've memorized those verses. But I can't do this on my own. I can't make it to where you are. You have to meet me here. In the underbelly. Where my bonds are.

SECOND READER: Jesus took the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And so the Word became flesh and lived with us. (Philippians 2:5-8; John 1:14)

FIRST READER: My story—it seems, sometimes, so fixed, so moldy—molding me. I'm standing on a plot, a theme, a premise that seeks, is bound to, cultural gods...

Sometimes I feel the mortality of those gods. Sometimes I feel my own mortality. Sometimes I feel like I'm walking through a life, a valley, of dry bones—dry, windswept, chalky bones.

SECOND READER: These bones—these dry, chalky bones—can these bones live again? (Ezekiel 37:3a)

FIRST READER: O Lord, God, you know whether they can live again. (Ezekiel 37:3b) Only you know. You do know...don't you?

SECOND READER: I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. I will lay sinews on you, and will cause flesh to come upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live. (Ezekiel 37:5-6)

FIRST READER: Live? Life? Yes, life in the womb of God, where all I can hear is my Mother's heartbeat, the rhythm of Truth and Grace. That's what I'm hungry for.

SECOND READER: Choose that fast.

FIRST READER: What do you require of me? How can I hear that heartbeat? How can I loose my bonds?

SECOND READER: This is the fast I choose, says God: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke.

FIRST READER: Not only their yoke—but also *my* yoke. Not only their bonds—my bonds as well.

SECOND READER: To let the oppressed go free—

FIRST READER: Let them go free. Let *me* be free. (Isaiah 58:6)

SECOND READER: Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up quickly...your light shall rise in the darkness and your gloom shall be like the noonday. (Isaiah 58: 8,10)

FIRST READER: The light, our light, my light, shall rise in the darkness. The gloom shall be dispelled. The light shall shine, and the darkness will never overcome it. (John 1:5)

FIRST AND SECOND READERS: This is the fast I choose...

—*John Garland is a first-year student at Baylor University in Waco, Texas. Katie Cook is the Seeds of Hope editor.*

*Suddenly they saw him the way he was,
the way he really was all the time,
although they had never seen it before,
the glory which blinds the everyday eye
and so becomes invisible. This is how
he was radiant, brilliant, carrying joy
like a flaming sun in his hands.*

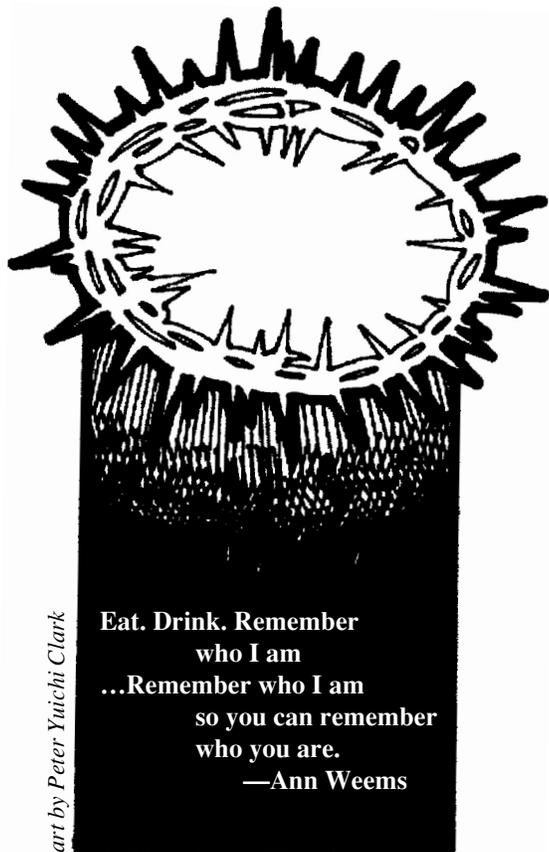
*This is the way he was—is—
from the beginning,
and we cannot bear it.
So he manned himself,
came to manifest to us;
and there on the mountain
they saw him, really saw him,
saw his light.*

*We all know that
if we really see him we die.
But isn't that what is required of us?
Then, perhaps, we will see
each other, too.*

—*Madeleine L'Engle*



Quotes, Poems, & Pithy Sayings



Eat. Drink. Remember
who I am
...Remember who I am
so you can remember
who you are.
—Ann Weems

West Side Prayer

by Nadine Doughty

God of papered storefronts,
Of gaping paneless windows,
Of littered lots and shattered dreams,
Help those who gave up, who left,
who wander,
who curse—
Help them to find new homes,
new prospects,
new hope.
Inspire us who drive past to notice,
to care,
to work for change.

—Dee Doughty has worked in soup
kitchens and ministries for the poor in
Evanston, Illinois for many years.

art by Peter Yutichi Clark

The Latin word *Lente* means, literally, to slow down. We all need to be reminded to slow down and take a look at ourselves...and to take a look around us. Let us not overlook the budding trees and the new flowers all around us. These hold the promise of spring, of new life, of resurrection.

—from a bulletin of the Bible Methodist Church, Shamrock, Texas

The words from the 23rd psalm take on a whole new meaning as we discover that the shepherd has become one of the sheep, able to speak to us and touch us as we are because he had been as we are: “Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil because you are with me.” As the rainbow symbolizes God’s mercy, the cross symbolizes his presence in our pain.

—Tim Wilson, a college student in the early 1980s

Our worst enemy is the thought that we are hopeless.

—Barbara Bishop, pastor of Woodbine Heights Baptist Church in Toronto, Ontario

The forest stands tall, green, and spacious.
Tall, towering, teasing trees dancing in the wind.
The sky where birds fly, clouds of all shapes and sizes
Glide, and the sun shines its light, its warmth, and fun
On the forest.

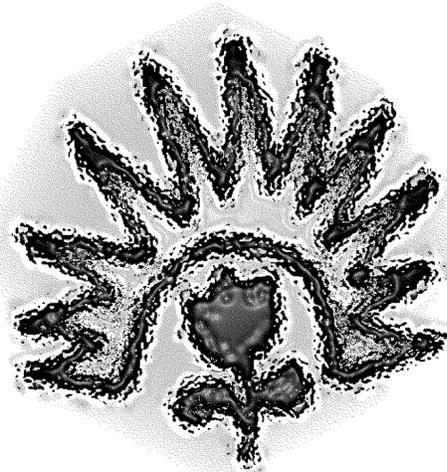
The breeze dances with all that frolic fantastically
In the wonder of the woods.
It whispers secrets, laughter, love, and truth
To the core of creation that is in all.
In fun it tickles, teases, and torments, the trees, squirrels.
Deer, beavers, bunnies, birds...

It flies, whips, blows, breezes through the breathtaking
Beauty of a forest, fast.
Then faster, and fastest, the wind swirls, whirling,
Swooping, picking up all in its path.
The sky changes from light blue to dark.
No sun, no clouds—nothing—just dark.
The wind, the sky took the breathtaking beauty
And turned it into dreadful destruction.

The sun shone after the wind was no longer
fierce,
But calm.

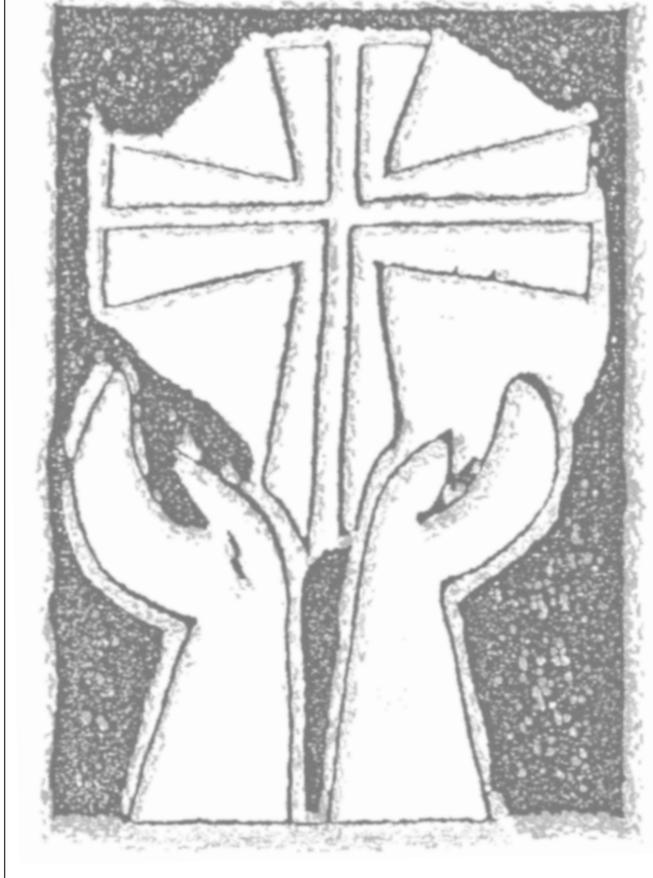
It shone on the sad scene
which was lying beneath
A scene of all the disaste
destruction and
Skated pieces of debris,
But then the sunlight
shone upon one root,
Shone upon hope.

—Heather Heschap, a
native of Laredo,
Texas, is a psychology
student at Baylor
University.



Adam, God's Beloved

A sermon by Poul Guttesen



Editor's note: The following sermon was first proclaimed at Grandview Calvary Baptist Church in Vancouver, British Columbia, as a part of a series of sermons about "heroes of the faith," presented by different members of the church. Poul's hero was a little different from the kind of person most people would expect in a series such as this.

I want to begin by telling you about the day my dad decided to become a Lutheran priest. It must have been in the late 1930s, just before the war. My dad was about six years old. He was sitting on a neighbor's doorstep, looking out on the gravel road at a woman named Constanca and a few boys. Constanca was a grown woman, but her mind was like a young child's. And she was afraid of many things, especially dogs.

There was Constanca in the middle of the road and a crowd of teasing boys around her. My dad never told me exactly what they said. Was it silly jingles? Were they threatening to sic the dogs on her? Or were they simply stirring up the fear unresting in her soul? I don't know. But there was Constanca, standing in the middle of the road, weak and hurt, frightened and alone, as thoughtless youth reveled in her pain. And my dad thought to himself, "Why did God create a woman like Constanca?"

My Dad pondered—and, as the breath of the wind blew, he concluded, "I think God created Constanca to test us; to see if we would be good to her just as she is." And in his boyish mind he added, "When I grow up I want to be a priest." My dad never had the paperwork done for the priesthood but, as a devout believer, he does care deeply for people like Constanca. But was my dad right? Did God create people like Constanca to see if we would love them as they are?

We will not seek an answer to that question now but will return to it at the end. But as we consider, for the next fifteen minutes or so, the life of a truly great Christian man, let this question brew in your head. Let it inform your listening. I will attempt an answer at the end, but that will be my answer; yours will probably be different. *Did God create people like Constanca to see whether we would love them as they are?*

Before we hear today's text, let me just briefly annotate how Adam Arnett, the man we will consider today, influenced some of those he came to know.

Henri Nouwen, one of the greatest Christian writers of our time, lived the last years of his life in the same community with Adam Arnett. Nouwen said, "He was the one who more than any book or professor led me to the person of Jesus...who connected me with my inner self, my community, and my God."

A leading businessman who knew Adam said that he was the one who helped him break his pretensions and defenses, who helped him to see his weaknesses, and even how he had failed his family. A rich and famous woman described how Adam helped her break through her depression and see that her achievements didn't make her who she was. An abbot who had been the spiritual leader for many monks for 18 years testified, "In Adam's heart, I have touched a fullness of divine love." And those who lived with Adam in a small Christian community in Toronto, Ontario, said that he was the one who held the community together.

Who then was this remarkable man who became a guide and helper to both the unknown and the famous, the poor and the rich, those who had no achievements and those who excelled in their respective fields.

But how can this severely disabled man, who could not talk—who never wrote a book or did any of those things we associate with great Christian leaders—be an example of the theme the church has chosen for this series of sermons: "a life well lived?"

Before we answer that, let us listen to Scripture.

Read Isaiah 53:1ff.

Adam was born to Jeanne and Rex Arnett on November 17, 1961. He was epileptic, as well as mentally and physically disabled. Adam eventually learned to walk but he never learned to speak. Since he could not function like other children, he was increasingly isolated—no birthday parties to go to, no friends to

play with and no sports to excel in. But at home he was the soul of the family, delighting his parents with his presence and minor mischiefs.

When Adam was 13 years old, he hurt himself badly in an epileptic seizure. After a thorough check in the hospital, the doctors prescribed new medicine to him, but Adam did not respond well. At the hospital they told his parents to take him home; they could do no more. A few days later a public health nurse discovered what was wrong: the doctors had forgotten to cancel the old medicine. Adam had been overdosed for several days. He was never the same again. His energy was gone, he had to be carried frequently, and he was often sick.

His parents wanted to keep Adam and his brother, Michael, who also was disabled, at home, but as the boys grew older, it became too much for them, and their health started to fail. The time had come to let others take care of them. They were able to place Michael in a Christian community, Daybreak, a L'Arche community* in Toronto, Ontario, but Adam was too handicapped for their capacity.

Adam ended up in an understaffed chronic care hospital. According to Henri Nouwen, in the impersonal environment of a hospital ward with others in need of long-term care, Adam responded by losing weight, as well as his ability to stand, walk, or move around on his own. When Adam was 23, after five years in the hospital, the Daybreak community was able to take him in. There he lived the next 11 years in a loving environment, but he could not do anything by himself. He had to be assisted in everything, from the time he got up till he went to sleep at night. Adam died in February of 1996, only 34 years old.

But how can this severely disabled man, who could not talk—who never wrote a book or did any of those things we

“Precisely in not being able to make stones into bread, jump from high buildings, or acquire great wealth, Adam was able to lead people to the calm center of his existence, making his belovedness known deep in their heart.”

associate with great Christian leaders—be an example of the theme the church has chosen for this series of sermons: “a life well lived?”

This seems impossible in a society that assesses people by functions, what we can do and how we perform. In such a society, people like Adam are necessarily a burden—to family, community, and society. Henri Nouwen, who left a prestigious position at Harvard and moved into the Daybreak community where Adam lived, told of a friend who was mortified by Nouwen's “career change.”

This friend told Nouwen what he thought of L'Arche communities in no uncertain terms: “Why should such people be allowed to take time and energy which should be given to solving the real problems humanity is facing?”

Although Nouwen did not share this sentiment, he too could only see Adam's handicaps when he first became respon-

sible for Adam's care. He had to wake him up at 7:00 AM, walk him to the bathroom, wash him, dress him, walk him to the kitchen, feed him breakfast, brush his teeth, put him in his wheelchair, and take him to the day care center. At first, he never thought about Adam but about all the things that might go wrong. When he asked why he was given this job, since he was so underqualified to take care of the most disabled person in the community, the answer was only “So you can get to know Adam.”

As time went by, these times became the most precious hours of Nouwen's day. Slowly, as he came to know the routine, he started to know Adam. And as he got to know him, he realized that, in many ways, Adam was the strong one in the relationship—the one who possessed steady inward peace, the one who was grounded in God's love.

Nouwen had never had to face his deepest fears before; everywhere else he had gone, he was injected with people's admiration for his spirituality, his thoughts and deeds. But when he came to Daybreak all that was stripped away. Nouwen realized he was just like Adam. He had nothing he could take pride in. He was empty and needed attention and help. But while Adam embraced this, resting peacefully in God's love, Nouwen resisted it. He wrote, “The tables were turning, Adam was becoming my teacher, taking me by the hand, walking with me in my confusion through the wilderness of my life...Adam was the one who was helping me to become rooted not just in Daybreak but in my own self...He was becoming a friend and a trustworthy companion, explaining to me by his very presence what I should have known all along.”

Although he had been tremendously successful and had been a spiritual guide for many, Nouwen had, throughout his life, a fundamental restlessness within, never feeling quite at home within himself. It was precisely in this fundamental disposition of the heart that he realized Adam towered as a mighty saint over him. “[Adam became the] silent, peaceful presence in the center of my life,” Nouwen wrote, the one who gave him the gift of peace.

Nouwen wrote a book about Adam, structured around the life of Jesus, mainly for two reasons: the life of his friend reminded him of the life of Jesus; and, because he knew the story of Jesus, he could see beauty and power in Adam's life. As I read about Adam, and was thinking about the Scripture for this morning's service, my mind landed on the well-known text about the Suffering Servant in Isaiah 53.

The truth of this text is most profoundly revealed in the life of Jesus, who chose to become weak and smitten to bring us, who are weak and without hope, back to God. It is in Christ that the mission of the suffering servant is fulfilled, but it is also through people like Adam Arnett that it is profoundly revealed.

Adam was like the Suffering Servant we read about in the text, in that he had nothing to show the world, nothing to impress the world with, nothing that would help him climb the social ladder. He was “like a tender shoot...like a root out of the dry ground. He had...nothing in his appearance that we should desire him.”

And yet those who have eyes of faith, and can see beyond the functional glitter of the world, saw his beauty. Those who

gave of themselves to him—who could not give them anything of material value—found that he gave them the much richer gifts of rest and acceptance. He healed their wounds.

Adam offered to those he met a presence and a safe space to recognize and accept their own, often invisible disabilities, saying to them in his silent way, “Don’t be afraid. You don’t have to run away from your pain. Look at me, be close to me, and you will discover that you are God’s beloved.”

My main hope in telling you the story of this man, one of the greatest Christians I have ever read about, is not to give you something that you can apply, to put to use in your own life, to improve yourself. That would run counter to everything Adam



They are our prophets when we neglect them, when we refuse to give to them because we do not think they are worthy. When they are forgotten in big, impersonal mental institutions or on the streets of our cities, they carry the pain and the alienation which we have inflicted, and in doing this they prophetically tell us what we have done with our own souls.

has to teach us. But I hope that his life has touched you, as it has touched me—gently calling me away from the race toward popularity and success I trap myself in, gently calling me to find rest in the loving heart of God. With this in mind, let me just mention a couple of things I think Adam can teach us, here, today.

1) Adam teaches us who we are. One of the deepest fears humans experience goes like this: “Maybe I am nothing; maybe I have no worth just as I am.” Deep inside of us is this deep, dark fear. Many of the “great” achievers of this world are driven by this fear. Standing at the abyss which is deep with the fear of our own worthlessness, we strive to accomplish things in order to be accepted, to conquer, to win. But underneath, our fear always whispers: “Am I loved just as I am?” To this Adam answers an affirming and resounding “yes.”

2) Adam teaches us the fundamental passivity of our lives. We have the illusion that where we are in our lives, our education, our careers, our money, our houses, our reputation, are all what we have achieved. The truth is that we would be nothing without the love of those around us. Although we have been actively involved in and are responsible for where we are at in our lives—if not for the nurture of our parents, the encouragement of role models, the support of friends, the instruction of good teachers, and so on—we would not have or be what we are. Where we are is gift. It is precisely because of this reality that people like Adam are among our greatest priests and prophets.

They are our prophets when we neglect them, when we refuse to give to them because we do not think they are worthy. When they are forgotten in big, impersonal mental institutions or on the streets of our cities, they carry the pain and the alienation which we have inflicted, and in doing this they prophetically tell us what we have done with our own souls.

They are our priests when we lay down the madness of our selfish pursuits and give them the care, the community, and the love they need. For in this act the tables are turned. As Adam shows us his beauty, his intrinsic grandeur, his belovedness, he extends it to us, becomes our priest, through whom the love of God flows, through whom comes the healing for the deepest fears of our souls. Precisely in not being able to make stones into bread, jump from high buildings, or acquire great wealth, Adam was able to lead people to the calm center of his existence, making his belovedness known deep in their heart.

3) Adam teaches us what ought to be at the core of our ministry. In our youth work we speak about developing future leaders, we seek to empower people for life in society and in their contribution to the kingdom. We want to help people find their potential in Christ, and so on. All these things are well and good. But if they are all we are about, they are evil. If this is the only thing we are about, there is no place for people like Adam.

The core of our ministry must not be to simply develop people’s potential—not to develop leaders but to develop saints. To bring people to God and nourish one another in becoming the children of God. And then, and only then, can we do anything for God and other people. In this we all need each other, here we all are disabled in ourselves but enabled through one another by the love of the God who does not need us but loves us passionately as we are.

Before we sing, let me return to the question I began with. Was my dad right when he said, “I think God created Constanca to test us, to see whether we loved her as he had created her?” Did God create people like Constanca and Adam Arnett to see if we would love them as they were? Yes, I think so. God created those who are disabled in relation to how we function in our world and society, to see whether we would love as God loves.

But I think that is only part of the answer. Yes, God created Adam to see whether we would love him as he was, but he also created him because he loved him, because Adam was one created in his image, beautiful, only a little lower than the angels, the crown of creation. God created Adam as a prophet and a priest, to bring a message that we need to hear, to bring grace and healing.

Let me leave you with a challenge and a blessing. Henri Nouwen would ask, “Who is your Adam who speaks to you about God?”

And now, may the Spirit that dwelt in Adam, the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Christ, dwell in us richly, and as we move into this week, into the busy-ness of our life, of all that we do, may He form in us a heart like that of Adam Arnett. Amen.

—Poul Guttesson is a divinity student at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver.

*L’Arche communities aim at providing a good life for the mentally disabled.



Journey to Jerusalem

A Reading for the Fifth Sunday in Lent

by Katie Cook

LEADER: It is near the end of Jesus' three-year ministry. We watch as Jesus speaks with his disciples about his coming death.

PEOPLE: We listen as he tells them that he plans to go to Jerusalem. We know that he will be betrayed, arrested, abandoned, and crucified.

LEADER: But the twelve do not seem to understand. Peter exclaims that no one can harm the Messiah. We listen, and we know what Peter will do before the end.

PEOPLE: We nod to ourselves. We know the story. We know what it meant for Jesus to set his face toward Jerusalem.

LEADER: But we often live as though we did not know the story. We live as if we believe that God's kingdom is of this present world.

PEOPLE: We say with our lives that we want what Peter wanted—that we want Jesus to be immune from pain, and that we want ourselves to be immune from pain.

LEADER: When we refuse the road of costly discipleship, when we choose the easy road, then we refuse to take up our crosses—and we refuse to accept the cross of our Savior.

PEOPLE: O God, whose commonwealth, we know, is of another world, we ask that you would help us to accept the harsh things that will face us in this world, if we truly serve you.

LEADER: We know in our minds that you will give us the strength to take the rough road, but much of the time we are like the twelve were during those last days.

PEOPLE: Much of the time we are bewildered, frightened, and useless to you.

LEADER: Help us, instead, to be like the twelve were after Pentecost. Give us the boldness, the wisdom, and the power that they had then, to follow the difficult road.

ALL: Help us today to see Jesus as he sets his face toward the place of his suffering. Help us to set our faces toward our Jerusalem, no matter what pain that may bring. Through Jesus Christ, who chose the bitter way, we ask these things. Amen.

A Confession for Holy Week

by Allison Stone

God, we must confess that we rush through Holy Week straining to feel and see glimpses of Easter—living entirely for the familiar joy of Easter morning. Forgive us. For we know that the joyous Easter morning contains a hollow ring if the path to the cross has not been weathered. Our concept of the abundant life is indeed skewed if we fail to include the darkness in our wholeness.



In our desire to thwart the pain we sometimes deny that it is a real part of our existence. If we have not stopped to examine our pain and the pain of our brothers and sisters, then rejoicing is merely an empty exercise.

For the cross is the very point at which our joy and pain intersect. The cross represents the place where despair and doubt don't have to be ignored—can't be ignored—but rather the depths of human hurt are embraced and celebrated as part of the whole person. The whole, alive person that God desires each of us to be. Alive to celebration and defeat, but ALIVE to the wonders of the abundant life through Christ. Alive to the hurts of our sisters and brothers and how we can be an instrument of healing. Ready to respond to their hurts in a spirit of reconciliation and justice.

In this Easter season, may we each continue to develop the ability to weave all our experiences into the rich tapestry of our existence—embracing both joy and pain with Christ's life as our model. Therein lies the true impact of the resurrection. May it be so.

—Allison Stone is a social worker in Baltimore, Maryland.

Pastoral Prayer for Holy Week

by Katie Cook

God, we know that for some reason
you put each of us in this world,
a world where sometimes bad things happen
and people that we love sometimes die,
and we ourselves live in constant pain.

We cry to you out of the darkness
and confusion
that so often surround us.

We ask that you would open our eyes
to the light,
to your presence that is with us in our pain.

We ask for your healing.

We ask for wholeness.

We ask the same for others in our community
who cry out at this time.

We know that you can turn the sadness into joy;
we've seen you do it.

Today we offer our broken lives and hearts and bodies
once again to you for healing.

In the name of the Christ,
whose body was broken that we might be whole,
Amen.

art by Lenora Mathis

The following is a drama to be enacted for children during Holy Week. Seventh and James Baptist Church, the community of faith that houses the Seeds of Hope ministry, presented a drama similar to this on Maundy Thursday under the leadership of youth and children's minister Susan Shearer Ballenger. Here's how we did it:

Susan tapped seven people from the congregation, of varying ages, to play the parts of people who might have come into contact with Jesus during the last week of his life on earth. She gave each person a scripture reference and allowed each to create a character based on the events in the passage.

We are deviating slightly here from the original outline used at Seventh. The characters below are a boy whose donkey was borrowed for the triumphal entry, a woman who saw the overturning of the tables in the Temple, a disciple who stayed behind after the last supper, a woman in the Garden of Gethsemene, Pilate's scribe after Jesus' encounter with the governor, Barabbas, and the three women who found the tomb empty on Sunday morning.

The seven scenes were set up in different rooms in the church buildings and outside on the church grounds. We borrowed costumes from the Baylor University theater department—mostly rough or loosely woven tunics. Outer garments were created by wrapping lengths, of various woolens and woven fabrics with ethnic stripes, around the body. We also borrowed a few props, such as Roman columns, from the theater. Mostly, however, the props were improvised from furniture that was already in the church.

On the evening of the Walk, the children went from place to place (with at least two adult sponsors) to hear the monologues that the characters had prepared. After each presentation, the children were invited to ask questions. The players answered questions and interacted with the children in character.

Easter Walk

A Holy Week Event for Children

by Sally Askins, John Ballenger, Susan Shearer Ballenger, Katie Cook,
Michael Long, Kelli Martin, and Ann McGlashan

Scene 1. Boy with a Donkey

Scripture: Matthew 21:1-11, Mark 11:1-11, Luke 19:29-44

Setting: Outside, out of sight of any of the other settings. A real donkey would enhance the interest of the piece, but is not necessary. At Seventh and James there was a live donkey, and the children were encouraged to pet it before the young man—a high school youth—began his story. He was dressed simply, in peasant garb, barefoot.

I am a peasant. There has never been anything very fascinating about my life. I've never been outside of the city walls and never owned anything fancy or expensive—in fact, I've never owned anything! I work hard just to be able to eat every day and sleep indoors.

I was busy at my work—my master is a stable keeper. I was standing beside a donkey that was tied to the door of my master's house. Suddenly these two men came up to me and began untying the donkey. I wanted to stop them, but I didn't know what to do.

"What are you doing, untying that donkey?" I asked them. "That donkey belongs to my master, and I will not let you have it!" I wanted to sound firm, but to myself I sounded very small. I thought the men would laugh at me, but they just turned and smiled kindly.

"Our master has sent us for this donkey. He needs it and will send it back very soon."

Well, I decided, for some reason, to trust them. I allowed them to take the donkey. After they had walked off, I ran around the corner of the house to my older brothers.

"You won't believe what just happened," I cried. They just looked down at me uninterested.

"Ahh, go on," they sneered. "Leave us alone."

I tried to explain to them what happened, but they turned their backs to me, like they always do. So I walked back to the front of the house. I decided to walk into town to see if I could find the men with my master's donkey.

As I got closer to the city, I heard great, joyful shouts coming from the main street. I ran the rest of the way, wondering what was happening. All I could see when I got there was hundreds of people waving palm branches and crying out, "Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the coming kingdom of our ancestor David! Hosanna in highest heaven!"

I hopped up and down trying to catch a glimpse of the person they were shouting about. Suddenly the crowd parted for a moment, and to my surprise I saw my donkey with a man sitting on it! My mouth dropped open as I watched this man



art by Peter Yuichi Clark

enter into Jerusalem. Suddenly I thought to myself, “He is more than those two men’s master. There is something very special about him. Maybe this really is the Messiah, the long-expected one, the one who is supposed to come and save my people.”

Man, I wished my brothers could have been there to see it. Somehow, though, I knew that it didn’t matter to me if they believed me or not. All that mattered is that I felt that I had been of service to my true master, the master of us all—the chosen one of God.

Scene 2. Woman in the Temple

Scripture: Matthew 21:12-17, Mark 11:15-19, Luke 19: 45-48
Setting: A foyer, strewn with baskets, bamboo bird cages, feathers, plastic coins, overturned tables. The woman is dressed in a tunic with fabric wound around her shoulders and head, creating a hooded shawl, and rope sandals. She is sitting on the floor in the middle of the mess.

You are not going to *believe* what just happened here. Look at all this! It was amazing. You see this money everywhere on the ground? There are always an awful lot of foreigners here for Passover week, and they need local currency. So there are always money-changers right outside the Temple during holy days like this.

You see these bird cages? You see these feathers? People were buying birds and animals to take into the Temple for their sacrifice. There was buying and selling going on all around—it was like a carnival!

And then this man that they’re all talking about—this teacher, this carpenter from Nazareth that everybody is saying is the Messiah—came in to the courtyard with his followers. And he just stood there, looking around. And then—this is the incredible part—do you know what he did? He got really angry. He got a *whip*, and started running everybody off and turning over tables! It was chaos! He didn’t stop until all of the merchants and money-changers were gone.

I heard him thundering something like, “My temple should be a house of prayer! But you have turned it into a robber’s den!” I’m telling you, I couldn’t believe my eyes and ears. I’d seen this man before, when he was teaching. He was so nice, so loving. They even say he healed some people. But here he was, in a fit of rage. I just don’t know what to think about it. Why do you suppose he did that? What do you think made him so angry?

Okay, everybody knows that these merchants and money-changers charge a little more than they should. And they do take advantage of the foreigners sometimes. But everybody does that. Nobody thinks anything about it. I just don’t get it. Can you help me figure this out?

Scene 3. Man in the Upper Room

Scripture: Matthew 26: 17-35, Mark 14: 12-31, Luke 22:7-38
Setting: An interior room with a long rustic table, set for a simple meal. (We used a regular banquet table with a long piece of fabric. We didn’t put chairs around it, so that the children could gather around it more easily. We set the table with wooden bowls and goblets, basket-type bowls, and earthenware pitchers. We poured a little bit of grape juice into some of the gob-

lets and arranged torn pieces of pita bread on some of the plates.) A man is there, dressed a little better than a peasant, but not extravagantly, in a tunic of slightly finer striped fabric, leather sandals and belt, and a full-length vest. Jesus and the other disciples have just left the room.

You just missed them. Jesus and the twelve just left to go and pray. They ate here at my home tonight. I offered them my upper room so they could have some privacy. Man, you all missed something big!

While Jesus and His disciples were eating, I came in and out of the room to check on them. In the middle of the meal, Jesus stood up to speak. I stood in the doorway of the room so I could hear.

“I tell you the truth,” He said, “one of you in this very room will betray me in just a few hours.”

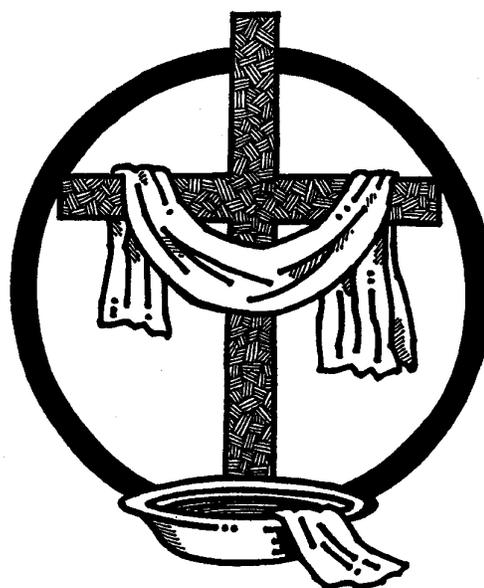
I was shocked when I heard those words—everyone was! The disciples were outraged and saddened at Jesus’ accusation. Each one said over and over again that he had no intention of betraying the Savior. I looked at Jesus, wishing I knew what He might be thinking. All I could see was that his eyes were filled with tenderness, love, and sorrow all at the same time. I felt both frightened and comforted by what was in his eyes. He held up his hand to silence the men, and he continued to speak.

“It is the one of you who is dipping the bread into the bowl with me. That man will betray me.”

All of them quickly dropped their bread on the floor and looked at one another. All except Judas—the one they call Iscariot. (He’s a Zealot, one of those people who want to overthrow the Roman government.) He held his bread tightly and looked down at the table. That seemed kind of strange to me.

Once more Jesus spoke. “Woe to the one who betrays the Son of Man! It would have been better if that man had not been born.”

Once again, the disciples began talking loudly, each defending himself to the others. But I continued to look at Jesus. I wish you all could have seen his face! Everyone was so busy



art by Peter Yuichi Clark

talking about themselves that they didn't notice Jesus. As I watched him, I saw such sadness fill his eyes.

Then he held up a piece of bread and cleared his throat. After blessing it, Jesus passed the bread around the table. Someone leaned over and handed me a piece as well.

"This is my body," Jesus said, "Do this and remember me." Jesus put a piece of the bread into his mouth. As I raised mine to my lips, he caught my eye and smiled sadly at me. I knew what that look meant. He wanted me to remember him after he died. After that, he took up the wine and poured it into a cup.

"This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood. Do this and remember me." We each took a sip from the cup. The room was very silent. The men finished their meals quickly and got up to leave. Judas walked off quickly, before anyone could speak to him. The rest of the men followed Jesus to the garden.

So here I am, left to clean up and think about what happened. I wish you all could have been here. I don't know what will happen now. I have a bad feeling about all of this. My rabbi, my master—my friend—may have eaten his last meal in this very room. I will never forget this night.

Scene 4. Woman in the Garden of Gethsemane

Scripture: Matthew 26:36-56, Mark 14:32-50, Luke 22:39-53

Setting: *Outside, an area with foliage. (We used the children's playground area. Since our Walk was at night, the swings and slides were not visible.) The woman has overheard Jesus and the three who came into the garden with him. She is dressed in the same style as the woman in the Temple foyer. As the children enter the playground area, the woman is seen sitting on a bench, her head in her hands. Seeing the children, she runs to greet them.*

Oh, am I glad to see you! I've been so worried. Did you see the crowd? Do you know what's happened to Jesus? (*Shaking her head*) I'm sorry. You probably don't know what I'm talking about. Well, gather round and I'll quickly tell you what happened here.

I was serving tonight in the house where Jesus and his friends were dining. After such a fine meal, it was only natural that everyone would want a nap, so I was the only one awake when Jesus slipped out, followed by three of his friends. I didn't think anything of it, until I saw another of his friends, the one they called Judas, leave the house looking very guilty.

I had a strange feeling that something bad was going to happen, so I sneaked out and followed Jesus up here and hid under that bush. See that piece of grass over there? (*She points to a piece of grass that has been flattened beforehand. If this is not possible, have a blanket laid out ready.*) That's where the three friends laid themselves down to sleep. Jesus asked them to stay awake with him, but they didn't. They just let him suffer alone while they slept.

But I wasn't asleep. Oh no! I saw Jesus go right over there (*pointing to the far corner*) and kneel down. I knew he was praying, and praying hard, because the sweat was just pouring off his forehead. I heard him pray to his Father in heaven, and ask him to take away some cup, so that he needn't drink from

it. I think he meant he was afraid of what was going to happen to him, like any one would be.

But then you'll never guess what happened. A bright light appeared in front of him and I had to hide my eyes. What could it have been but an angel from heaven, and when I could look again, a great peace seemed to have settled upon Jesus. I have never seen anyone so changed in such a short time, as if all his fear had been taken away.

And it was a good thing too, because suddenly there was a great commotion and a huge crowd of soldiers and townspeople and priests hurried up the hill towards us. At the head was the one they call Judas Iscariot, and he went right up to Jesus and took his hands and kissed them. That must have been a sign, because the soldiers then grabbed Jesus and began to drag him away.

What a friend—to betray someone with the kiss of friendship! Anyway, there was a scuffle and Jesus' friends even drew their swords, ready to fight for his freedom, but Jesus stopped the fight before it had really begun. "Put away your swords," he said, and went off with the soldiers and the priests.

And that's all I know. Would you go and find out what's happened and come back and tell me? I don't think I can stand the suspense. (*She waves the children off from the center of the garden.*)

Scene 5. Pilate's Scribe

Scripture: Matthew 27:1-31, Mark 15:1-20, Luke 23:1-25

Setting: *Outside, a large patio-like area. If you can create the effect of Roman columns, that would be effective. (We also used a large, throne-like chair from the dais in the sanctuary and draped it with a length of rich red cloth.) There should be pieces of a large, broken bowl on the floor near a wall. The scribe is dressed in Romanesque clothing—a short, belted linen tunic and leather sandals would work. You might want to add a quill pen and scroll to the props. The scribe is seated at a small table when the children arrive. When the narrative begins, he stands and begins pacing. Jesus has just been taken away to be crucified.*

(*groan*) What am I going to do? I cannot find the words. (*groan, heavy sigh*) How can I write down what just happened here? Maybe you can help me find the words. You see, I am the governor's scribe. It's my job to faithfully write down, to make a written record, of everything that takes place here. And usually that's not a problem for me. I am an experienced scribe, trained in the art of turning phrases and choosing the right words. But this is different. This time the words escape me. I don't know how to describe what I witnessed here just now.



art by Peter Yuichi Clark

Most of the time I can detach myself from what's happening and just write. But this time I became too involved and now my judgment has become clouded. I cannot put my pen to the parchment without remembering that man—his face, his humility, his pain.

You see...they brought him to Pilate, the governor, for a hearing. You know the one I mean, the Galilean, the one they call Jesus. Pilate had to decide what was to be done with this man...this Jesus. Many of the Jews wanted to have him crucified. Others wanted him to go free. Pilate could not understand the hatred of some of the Jewish leaders toward Jesus.

What he had done did not seem to be such a horrible crime that he deserved to be crucified. In fact, we really couldn't find anything he had done wrong according to Roman laws, except maybe to have too many followers! Pilate tried find a way out. He really didn't want to send Jesus to his death. I think that the governor even secretly admired this Jesus. Pilate was so upset by all the turmoil that, whatever happened, he didn't want to be the one to condemn Jesus to death.

And you know what he did? He went to the balcony, turn around and look, yes, that balcony right there. The square below was filled with people shouting. And Pilate turned to the crowd and asked them, "What is to be done with this man Jesus?"

And the crowd shouted, "Crucify him! Crucify him!"

The shouts were deafening, and the crowd was becoming more and more angry.

And Pilate said to them, "One prisoner shall be released today, in honor of your Passover, according to custom. You can have Jesus, the Galilean, or Barabbas, the murderer and revolutionary."

And the people shouted, "Give us Barabbas. Barabbas! Barabbas!"

Pilate turned back toward me, shaking his head. He was completely bewildered. But he knew that if he didn't do what the people asked, there would be more difficulties for him later.

He turned back to the crowd and asked again, "Whom shall I give you?"

And the crowd answered even more loudly, "Barabbas! Barabbas! Barabbas!"

Pilate finally answered, "You shall have Barabbas." And the crowd cheered.

When Pilate came back into the room, he had the strangest look on his face, and he was as pale as a sheep. He didn't say a word for the longest time. When he finally recovered his thoughts, he had me write the order to have Barabbas released from prison. I could scarcely write the order, because my hand was shaking so badly. Then Pilate had the guards take Jesus away and prepared for crucifixion.

Then the governor did something I have never before seen him do. He ordered a servant to bring him a basin of water. And he washed his hands in it. As he washed, he kept shaking his head and mumbling. And finally he turned to me and said, "The blood of this man Jesus shall not be on my hands." Then he threw the basin against the wall. See, look there, those are the pieces of the basin still on the floor. And then Pilate ran to his chambers.

And now I am left. Now I must write about what happened here. But the words fail me and my hand is shaking.

Scene 6. Barabbas After Jesus' Death

Scripture: Matthew 27:15-31, Mark 15:6-20, Luke 23:18-25 —also Matthew 27:32-34, Mark 15:21-24, Luke 23:26-34

Setting: Outside. There should be an empty cross above where Barabbas sits to tell his story. (We draped a thin white cloth on the cross. Since he has just been released from prison, Barabbas should be dressed in worn, dirty clothes, of highly textured fabric, with signs of rough repair, and rope sandals.

I wasn't always an evil man. When I was young, my parents hoped that I would be very successful, and I tried to please them. But all of that ended when the Romans killed my father.

I remember the day it happened. I was young, but I remember it well. I made up my mind that day to avenge my father's death. I soon lost control of myself. I no longer longed only for revenge, but I began to thirst for Roman blood. I hated all Romans. I shouted for the overthrow of their government, and I took it upon myself to bring it about. I got other people involved—and brought about their ruin as well. Our little "revolution" was soon crushed. The whole thing was ghastly and bloody, and I had asked for it.

I found myself sitting in a dirty, wet prison. I was to be killed by crucifixion on a cross, just like this one behind me. I have never been so scared in my entire life. I had led a violent life, but I wanted to make changes, to become a good man. My time was up, though. I had blown my chance.

As I sat, chained to the wall, so many thoughts went through my head. I knew how painful this death would be. I had watched crucifixions before. It was a shameful and horrible way to die, and I knew it.

When I heard the guards approach my cell, I felt my stomach drop and my mouth went dry. I swallowed hard. I wouldn't let them see my fear, I wouldn't give them that satisfaction. Two guards walked into my cell and stood in front of me. They didn't try to hide their hostility from me—nor I from them. As I looked up at them, I laughed, mostly to hide my fear. When they unlocked the chains that held me down, for a short moment I thought about trying to run, but decided it was no use. I waited for them to tie my hands and lead me out.

Well, you can imagine my surprise when the guards pulled me up to my feet and told me I was free to go!

"What?!" I replied looking at them with wide eyes. I thought they were joking.

"You're free to go," they mumbled again, clearly disgusted with the way things had turned out.

I didn't know what to think. How could this happen! I had killed a Roman soldier, started an insurrection, and they were going to set me free?!

"Another man has been tried and is going to die in your place. You have been pardoned because there are those who want him to die," one guard explained. He would not look me in the face.

Well, I didn't wait for them to change their minds. I ran out of the room and up the dark steps, stumbling into the bright street. Tears of joy flooded my eyes and streamed down my

face as I looked up at the sun that I had not seen in weeks.

"I'm free," I shouted, laughing and crying at the same time.

That's when I noticed the crowd of people rushing past me. They were headed up a long narrow road, which led to Golgotha.

"No way," I said to myself. "The last thing I want to see right now is a crucifixion."

When I turned to walk away, though, I was overwhelmed by a desire to see the man who was to be killed in my place. What could he have possibly done to deserve that death more than I did? I turned down a side street and took a short cut up the road. When I came out, I entered into a vicious, angry crowd. They were shouting over and over, "Crucify him!" I couldn't see what was going on so I climbed some nearby stairs and leaned over to catch a glimpse of this hated man.

What I saw made me sick to my stomach. The man walking up the street was so badly beaten that he could hardly walk.

"He must truly be evil," I thought, "to have deserved such a beating first."

I leaned over to a man standing beside me and asked him why this man was being killed.

"They say his name is Jesus. He's supposed to be some kind of Messiah. He claims to be the King of the Jews; the Son of God." The man sneered and shouted at this Jesus along with everyone else.

When Jesus and the soldiers reached the place where I stood, he stumbled and fell to the ground. He looked up and caught my eye. What I saw in his face was not evil, nor anger. There was no sign of hatred. I saw only love and forgiveness. This man was innocent—more innocent than anybody I had ever known. He had done nothing wrong. But why, then, was he dying in my place?

As Jesus struggled to get up, the guard reached over and pulled a man from the street, commanding him to carry the cross. Jesus looked up at me one more time. I had to lower my eyes. I didn't deserve to look into that face. I couldn't watch him die. I had to leave. But I came back right after they took the body away.

I should not be alive! I don't deserve to be free, but I am. I'm free only because he died for me. (Looks up at cross and reaches out to touch it. Whispers.) For me.

Scene 7. Three Women at the Tomb

Scripture: Matthew 28:1-10, Mark 16:1-8 (9-11), Luke 24:1-12

Setting: The entrance to a tomb. (We set this up by using an empty corner area under a stairwell. The area should be any isolated area that is not well-traveled; it should be a space with which the children are not familiar. And outdoor tool shed would also work. We draped the area with fabric to create the tomb. We used papier-mache rocks at the entrance, with a stool covered in fabric for one sturdier rock.) The women are simple peasant women, and are dressed like the women at the Temple and in the garden. When the children arrive, they are standing around the entrance. One could be sitting on the sturdy "rock." As they talk, they interrupt one another, and they nod their heads at what one another is saying. They are clearly agitated.

First Woman: We came here, where they buried our friend and master, to anoint his body with spices, as is our custom of treating the dead. But, well...it's amazing! As we were walking to the tomb, we had been worried about how we would move the stone that covered the entrance to the tomb. We knew that it was very heavy—too heavy for us to move, and we were hoping that someone would be there to help us. But, as we walked up the path toward the tomb, we saw...

Second Woman: We saw that the stone had already been moved! We were nervous and a little frightened, so we slowed down a little and we looked all around. "Who would roll away the stone from the door of the tomb?" We asked each other. These two pushed me in front and made me go into the tomb first!

Third Woman: Oh, but you should have seen what we saw! There was a young man sitting on the right side of the tomb...

First Woman: Wearing a white robe!

Third Woman: Yes. And it was the most beautiful white I have ever seen. It almost sparkled! Well, as you can imagine, we were amazed and speechless. After a few moments, we dropped to our knees, out of fear and respect, and bowed to this radiant man.

Second Woman: Then he spoke! "Don't be amazed," he said, "you seek Jesus, the Nazarene, who has been crucified. He is risen; he is not here."

First Woman: When we heard these words, we all began to cry. He is what?! Risen?! What was that supposed to mean?

Second Woman: But the angel went on. "Come, look at the place where they laid him!" We all got up slowly and walked toward where they had laid Jesus. His garments were there, but his body was gone! It was...

Third Woman: Incredible, amazing, wonderful! Then the angel spoke to us again! "Go quickly, and tell his disciples he is risen from the dead. He goes before you into Galilee; it is there that you will see him." See him!! We were going to see him alive again!

First Woman: Well, we were so excited, we couldn't run fast enough!

Second Woman: The guys didn't believe us at first. They thought we were crazy! Well, all except for Peter, who got up and ran to the tomb to see for himself.

Third Woman: And we don't blame them, not really. We hardly believe it ourselves. That's why we came back to look again. But it's true! We just went back inside and He is gone! He is alive!



Note: During our Walk at Seventh and James, we gave the children several things to remember some of the scenes. For instance, we allowed them to each take a feather and a coin from the "torn up" Temple, as well as cinnamon sticks (fashioned into crosses) from the empty tomb. You might choose to give each child something from each of the scenes, and later use these "souvenirs" to help the children remember what they have seen and heard.

art by Peter Yuichi Clark

Overturning Tables

or

Life After Easter

(an intergenerational discussion)

by Katie Cook and David Lane



So Easter's over now. The lilies are starting to droop, and the eggs hidden in the yard are going to start smelling pretty soon. Now what?

What do you mean, "now what?"

I mean, is there life after Easter? What are we supposed to do now?

Okay. I guess it's time for one of our long talks.

So. Where do we start?

At the beginning.

And where do we stop?

At the end, I guess. Or maybe that's the point. The end is really the beginning.

So the start: Bethlehem, shepherds, the starry spotlight, etc, etc...

Let's start a little later than that.

How about Passover? That's already the end, sort of. Because what is done is done; Caiaphas knows what's happening and Jesus is gonna get busted.

Let's start with the money changers in the Temple.

Nice action shots of the doves flying out of their cages, angry forty-somethings—
What do you mean, fortysomethings!?

Nothing personal. Business persons, you know—shouting about lost inventories ("you break, you buy"). And the crowd circling, closing in, tightening around Jesus.

Okay. I think this may be the event that defines the whole week.

Because after that he runs away. The police put out an APB, the disciples constantly look over their shoulders. And the "wanted" posters on the Temple walls, showing his face and a list of known associates—John bar Zebedee, Simon Peter, Mary of Magdala, Salome, et al—

with Judas Iscariot noticeably absent... "If you have any information about this fugitive, contact any member of the Sanhedrin; cash reward provided; callers do not have to reveal their identity."

Yes, but why did this upset them so much—Caiaphas, Annas, the Sanhedrin?

THEY are supposed to be running the show—passing out the matzah, reciting the prayers, controlling the people...but Jesus is changing the meaning.

So what is he changing it to? (Yes, I know that's grammatically incorrect. Just answer the question.) What does this all mean to him?

He's adding another layer: the Last Supper painted on top of the ancient Seder. There he is in a stranger's attic, reciting the prayers as always, but somehow it's different in his voice...

How? How is it different?

Because...because it...it's God. And stuff.

Okay. So what does his last supper have to say to us? Especially about what we do now that Easter is over?

Easter?! We haven't even put him in the tomb yet, and he's already up and walking around again? He's got to die first. Darkness has got to cover the face of the deep before the light can be called into being.

Yes, but we have to look at it from where WE are. We know what happened on Sunday morning.

It's logical; it's linear: Friday, Saturday, Sunday morning. THEY didn't know. A quick crucifixion and it's over. The end. Scene fades out. And this should be the end of our discussion. Because for everyone else, death IS the end. It's time to leave the theater. The movie is over; there's nothing left but spilt soft drinks and stale

popcorn.

But it's not. This is the beginning—at least for us. Now that we know that Jesus is alive, so what?

Go to Red Lobster to eat, maybe take a lily home and put it in some water.

NOT!

Oh, you're asking what we SHOULD do, not what we REALLY do.

Yeah. I mean, look at Jesus' followers, even after the resurrection. They stay in hiding. They don't accomplish anything until Pentecost. You know, come to think of it, maybe Pentecost is the formative holy day for the church, not Easter. After Pentecost they go out and face all kinds of dangers and hardships to carry the Good News.

But we aren't exactly Doubting Thomases. We are all-too-willing to believe that Jesus is alive. We come to the tomb and are shocked if it ISN'T empty. Maybe we should take some time to consider what we'd feel if he WERE still there, wrapped up in linens. "He lives" becomes a trite phrase like "Jesus loves you."

Or "I love Jesus." Maybe we should pay attention to that bumper sticker that says "If you love Jesus, follow him. Anyone can honk." But then, we have to ask ourselves, what does it mean to follow him? What does it mean to follow this man?

To give up some time. To honestly be concerned about your community. To resist cynicism and embrace sacrifice. And maybe even overturn some tables.

Hmmm. So that's what life after Easter is about, do you think?

Yes, to act like Christ did before everybody else got involved—Pilate, Caiaphas, the Romans, the Pharisees, the Zealots...

To do what he said to do?

To do what he did. In the beginning.

So the beginning is the end.

And the end is the beginning.

Let's go turn over some tables.

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