The Omnibus

Collected Works of Jeff Hood

Volume 2

The Omnibus: Collected Works of Jeff Hood, Volume 2

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This volume collects A Queer Christmas (2014), Drugged: Interstellar Exploration of the Incarnation (2018), Governors Amongst the Racists: A 50th Anniversary Retrospective of the 1970 Alabama Democratic Primary (2020), Sanctuary Hospice: A Practical Study of Disparity and Diversity (2020), The Revised Gospels of Jesus Christ (2020).

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INTRODUCTION

The Word Finds an Address: The Incarnational Theology of Jeff Hood

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Every book in this volume puts God somewhere. A barn behind a hotel in Cooper Creek, Texas. A death row pod. A planet with no name. A runoff election in Alabama. A sixteen-bed hospice on the highway out of Tupelo.

Volume 1 gathered eleven works under three offices: prophet, priest, witness. This volume gathers five under one doctrine. Christians call it the incarnation, the claim that God took a body in a particular town under a particular government. Hood has spent his writing life asking what follows if the claim is true. If God had an address once, God has one now. These five books go looking for it.

A Queer Christmas (2014) finds the address in North Texas. The nativity is told again with two old men in Denton, two women in East Dallas, a hotel manager who will not rent them a room yet opens his barn. The governor is Rick Perry. The shepherds are migrant workers sleeping in a December field. Hood changes the highways. The story holds.

Drugged (2018) leaves the planet. A narrator is knocked out at a loud church service, wakes in a white room with five strangers, then is launched into space. On a world they have come to claim, he meets an ooze that asks him the oldest question in the Gospels: who do you say that I am? The book is short and profane. Its claim is large: the incarnation is a permanent condition, with Christ free to wear a form no creed taught anyone to recognize.

The Revised Gospels of Jesus Christ (2020) does four times what A Queer Christmas did once. Matthew becomes Jesus on Death Row, born in Harris County, calling disciples from the cells across the pod. Mark becomes The Sociopathic Jesus, a gospel told by negation in a Dallas club. Luke becomes Frances, a daughter laid on an old mattress behind a dumpster in Lubbock. John becomes The Queer, who was in Texas already. Hood says in his preface that the revisions came in a single night. They read that way.

Two of the five books carry no parable. Governors Amongst the Racists (2020) is history: the 1970 Democratic runoff in which George Wallace beat Albert Brewer by making race the

only subject. Sanctuary Hospice (2020) is a field study from Tupelo, Mississippi, where Hood asked who was dying in the good beds. They belong beside the gospels. A theology that says God takes flesh has to ask which flesh a state protects, which flesh a hospice admits. Hood is a Southerner. He asks it at home.

None of this is safe doctrine. Hood writes that God is queer. He puts Jesus on death row. He lets Christ be an ooze. The first book invites the fight: "Argue with it if you need to. But let it reach you."

The books run from 2014 to 2020. God keeps turning up in them, never in the same place twice.

— The Editors

BOOK 12

A Queer Christmas

Jeff Hood

2014

On This Book

The year is 2014. Rick Perry is governor of Texas, where two women cannot marry. Hood writes the Christmas story for the people Texas will not license.

The bones are in Luke. An old minister is struck silent when a light tells him a child is coming. A young woman says yes in her kitchen. A registration order sends Josie home to Cooper Creek. Mary, heavily pregnant, goes with her, to a hotel that does not allow lesbians. The manager offers the barn out back. “It wasn't nothing,” Hood writes, which is all the credit the book gives him.

The names stay: Mary, Simeon on the cathedral steps, Josie for Joseph, a girl named John raised by two men in Denton. The places are real: Cooper Creek, Ponder, Laredo at dawn. Herod is the governor. The flight into Egypt is a desert cross ing into Mexico, made twice, the second time on foot with a child of two and a half who has opinions about being carried.

Hood does not soften what the story costs. The governor imprisons the children who look like Jesus. A field worker named Andrés phones with the news, with Mary able to say only that her own child is safe. “But the others aren't,” he answers. The book keeps that line.

The claim underneath is stated before the first chapter: God is queer. Hood says he did not invent it. He said it out loud. Everything after is a nativity built to carry the sentence, with straw in a trough and a baptism in a cold creek.

It ends in Ponder with the star still moving.

A QUEER CHRISTMAS

Jeff Hood

For all who have been told

they are too much,

too loud,

too queer,

too alive.

You were made exactly right.

A Note to the Reader

This is a retelling. The bones are old. The flesh is new.

The gospel stories have always belonged to the outcast, the wanderer, the one whose very existence disrupts the comfort of the powerful. What I have done here is simply put those stories back where they have always lived — in the hands, the hearts, and the lives of queer people. In Texas. In our time.

The names you know, you will know again. The places are real. Cooper Creek is real. Denton is real. The barn is real. The desert crossing is real. What is real is always more miraculous than what is safe.

God is queer. I did not invent this. I only said it out loud.

Read this slowly. Let it sit. Argue with it if you need to. But let it reach you.

— J.H.

Prologue: Before It All Began

In the beginning was the Queer,
and the Queer was with God,
and the Queer was God.

Before the story begins, before the light came for Bob and the angel walked into Mary's kitchen and the migrant workers looked up from their cold earth — before all of it — there was a love so immense and so uncontainable that it could only ex press itself in wildness.

The world calls this wildness a problem. The world has always called the untameable a problem. The wolf, the storm, the child who refuses to be what the room expects — these things frighten people who have organized their entire lives around the avoidance of surprise.

But God is not afraid of surprise. God invented it.

There is a thread running through all of human history, and it is this: the divine keeps showing up in the wrong body, at the wrong time, in the wrong place, wearing the wrong

clothes and saying all the wrong things — and somehow, despite every effort to normalize or silence or crucify it, the love keeps breaking through.

This is the story of one such breaking through. It happens in Texas, in the days of Rick Perry, in a state that had not yet found its way to recognizing that love does not require a license from the government to be real. It happens among ministers and migrant workers, queer women and old dreamers, barn animals and gas stations and county clerks who should have known better.

It is, in every way that matters, the oldest story in the world. And it has never been more urgently new.

Chapter One: Bob and Tommy

There are prayers that take
decades to be heard. The
waiting is not punishment. It is
preparation.

The house on Maplewood had two old men in it and too much quiet.

Bob had lived here for going on thirty years. He'd come to Denton as a young seminary student, full of fire, certain that God was calling him to say things other ministers wouldn't say from pulpits other ministers wouldn't stand in. He had done exactly that, for decades, preaching at the margins of churches that tolerated him and then didn't, and then at the margins of denominations that had once loved him and then didn't, and finally at a small congregation on the north side of town that had been founded specifically because every other church in a forty-mile radius had made clear that

Tommy was not welcome to sit in the front row beside his partner.

Tommy had come along twenty-two years ago and made everything harder and better simultaneously. He was a school counselor, shorter than Bob by half a foot, with a laugh that filled rooms and a memory for names that astonished everyone who encountered it. Tommy could meet a child once at the beginning of September and greet them by name in May and ask about their mother's knee surgery. He was built for love the way some people are built for music — it came out of him involuntarily, constantly, whether he intended it or not.

The one thing Tommy had wanted, for as long as either of them could remember, was a child.

It wasn't desperation. It was something quieter and more persistent than that. It sat in Tommy like a compass needle, always pointing the same direction. He never stopped mentioning it, but he also never turned it into a demand. He mentioned it the way someone mentions a far country they've always wanted to visit — with longing, but without bitterness. Bob loved him for that.

They had looked into adoption years ago. The paperwork had been discouraging. The social workers had been discouraging. The state of Texas, under a succession of governors who regarded Tommy and Bob's relationship as somewhere between unfortunate and sinister, had been comprehensively discouraging. So they had waited.

* * *

It was a Tuesday evening in November when the light came.

Tommy was upstairs grading papers. He did this at the desk by the window that looked out onto the live oak in the side yard, the one they'd planted as a sapling the year they moved in and that was now taller than the house. Bob was in the living room. He had his Bible open on the coffee table, but he wasn't reading it. He was praying — not the structured, ministerial prayer he used on Sundays, but the formless interior conversation he'd had with God since he was eleven years old. The conversation that didn't require words. The one that was mostly just sitting in the presence of something enormous and waiting to see what it would do.

He was not expecting it to do this.

The light came from the far corner of the room, near the bookcase. It was not like a lamp coming on. It was not like sunlight through a window. It was more like the room itself became luminous — as if the air had always contained this brightness and had simply, until now, been holding it in reserve.

Bob stood up. This was, he would later reflect, an entirely un derstandable response, though not a particularly useful one. He took one step toward the bookcase and then two steps back toward the hallway. The light followed him. Not aggressively. The way a tide follows — gently, inevitably, without any malice but with absolute commitment.

Bob pressed himself against the far wall. The light held him there, not violently, but completely. And then it spoke.

"I love you."

Bob had heard a great many things in his years of ministry. He had heard confessions and revelations and breakdowns

and sudden gifts of clarity at hospital bedsides. He had heard things that he suspected were the voice of God and things he was fairly certain were not. This was different from all of it. This was the most ordinary sentence in the English language spoken in a way that made it feel like the first time it had ever been said.

"You do not have to be afraid. I want you to know that you are about to adopt a child and her name will be John. She will bring good news of salvation and liberation to the world. The child will be queer beyond imagination and filled with the Spirit of God."

Bob opened his mouth. He was a minister. He had given thousands of sermons and delivered more eulogies than he could count and spent his entire adult life turning the sacred into language. And he could not find a single word.

After a moment, he said, "How will I know that this is true?"

He paused. "Don't lie to us. We are too old."

He heard himself saying this and was briefly mortified by his own audacity. But the light did not seem offended.

"I am Gabby," the light said. "I stand in the presence of a God that is queer beyond your wildest imagination. I have been sent to tell you that the queerness that flows from our God will fill up your daughter John. To make the situation queerer, I have been told to take away your power to speak until the day these events transpire."

Bob tried to respond. His mouth opened. His lips moved. Nothing came out.

The light began to subside. Not all at once. Gradually, the way the sky after a sunset doesn't go dark in a single instant but retreats by degrees through colors Bob had no names for.

When the room was ordinary again, Bob stood very still against the wall for a long moment. Then he walked to the coffee table, picked up his Bible, set it down again, and went to find Tommy.

* * *

The doors to the living room had slammed shut. Tommy had heard the commotion from upstairs — the sound of furniture moving, the sudden silence, and then a low hum that he couldn't identify as any appliance in the house. He came down the stairs fast.

Neighbors had gathered in the front yard by the time Bob came out. Doris from next door. The young couple from across the street who kept unusual hours and had a kind Ger man shepherd. The Garcias from the end of the block. They had all heard something, though none of them could agree afterward on exactly what it was they had heard.

Bob emerged from the living room door with a really intense tan — as if he had been somewhere with a sun far hotter than Denton's November — and covered, inexplicably, in glitter. Fine silver glitter that caught the hallway light and scattered it in all directions. Tommy took one look at him and said, "Bob. Bob, talk to me."

Bob opened his mouth. Nothing came out. He spread his hands, apologetically.

Tommy, who had been a school counselor for twenty years and had learned never to panic in the face of the unexpected, went to the kitchen and came back with the notepad they kept by the phone and a Sharpie. He held it out.

Bob took it. He wrote, with the careful deliberateness of a man trying to render the enormous in small letters: A DAUGHTER. HER NAME IS JOHN. SHE IS ON HER WAY.

Tommy read it twice. Then he set down the notepad and embraced his partner so fiercely that several of the gathered neighbors later reported that they had to look away, not from discomfort, but because the intimacy of it seemed like something that deserved privacy.

The Garcias shook their heads and went home. The couple across the street went home. Doris stood a moment longer in the doorway, looked at the two old men holding each other in the hallway, both of them laughing and crying in the silent-for-one, soundless way that only Bob could manage just then, and said to no one in particular, "Well. I suppose God does whatever God wants."

Then she went home too.

Chapter Two: The Call from Marina

Faith is not certainty. Faith is
the willingness to act before the
proof arrives.

The months that followed were months of quiet preparation.

Tommy threw himself into it with the energy of a man who had been given something to do with a longing he had carried for decades. He cleared out the spare room. He painted it a warm yellow — not the aggressive yellow of caution tape or school buses, but a soft, golden yellow like the inside of a peach. He found a secondhand crib at a shop on Hickory Street and spent two weekends refinishing it until the wood gleamed. He bought books. Small ones, board books with bright pictures, and stacked them on the windowsill. He bought a mobile with small paper birds. He hung it above the crib and watched it turn in the movement of the air from the vent.

Bob watched all of this in silence — his enforced silence, which had begun to feel less like a punishment and more like a kind of gift. He found that without the option of speech, he paid more attention. He noticed the way Tommy hummed while he worked. He noticed the specific quality of his partner's hope — not frantic, not anxious, but steady, like a pilot light that has been burning so long it has become simply part of the house.

Bob prayed. He prayed in his old formless way, and he prayed with his hands, setting them flat against the yellow wall of the room they were preparing. He wrote notes to Tommy when there was something specific to communicate. Otherwise, he let the silence be what it was: a space in which something was growing.

* * *

The call came on a Wednesday afternoon in early spring.

Tommy was in the kitchen making coffee when his phone rang. He didn't recognize the number — an Austin area code

— and almost let it go to voicemail. Something made him an swer.

"Mr. Alvarez?" The woman's voice was professional, measured, but with something underneath it that Tommy would later identify as cautious optimism.

"Speaking."

"My name is Marina Reyes. I'm a placement specialist with Child Protective Services in Tarrant County. I have a somewhat unusual situation on my hands and I was hoping you might be willing to hear me out."

Tommy sat down at the kitchen table. "I'm listening."

"I have a little girl. Her name is John — yes, that's her name, it was given to her by her birth mother and it's on her paperwork and she responds to it and we're not changing it. She's eight months old. She came to us through circumstances I can't fully discuss, but I can tell you that she is healthy and alert and has the most extraordinary eyes I have ever seen on a child. She doesn't meet the demographic criteria you listed when you first filed your interest form, and I want to be transparent about that upfront. But I've been doing this for

fourteen years and I have learned to trust certain feelings, and I have a feeling about the two of you and this child."

There was a silence.

"Are you interested in hearing more?" Marina asked.

Tommy had not said anything for almost thirty seconds. In the doorway to the kitchen, Bob had appeared — drawn by whatever instinct longtime partners develop, the one that says something is happening in the next room and it matters.

Tommy looked at Bob. Bob's eyes were very bright.

"Yes," Tommy said. And then, more firmly: "Yes. For both of us. We're interested."

Marina exhaled — a small sound, barely audible, but Tommy caught it. She had been holding her breath.

"I have to tell you," she said carefully, "that it's going to be some time before she can be placed with you. There's a process. It won't be quick."

"We'll wait," Tommy said. He was smiling now, broadly, helplessly, the way he smiled when something was simply and irrevocably good. "We'll wait forever on John."

Marina didn't say anything for a moment. Then: "I believe you. I'll be in touch."

Tommy set down the phone. Bob had come fully into the kitchen by now. Tommy held up the notepad — a habit they had developed — and wrote: SHE CALLED. HER NAME IS JOHN. SHE'S REAL.

Bob read it. He put his hands on Tommy's shoulders and pressed his forehead against Tommy's forehead and they stayed that way, in the quiet kitchen, with the coffee beginning to burn on the counter and the spring light coming through the window above the sink, for a long time.

Chapter Three: Mary

She was not afraid of the light.
She was afraid of what the light
would ask of her. She said yes
anyway.

Months before the call from Marina, in a neighborhood in East Dallas where the yards were small and full of things — bicycles and sunflowers and plastic lawn chairs and wind chimes made from spoons — there lived a woman named Mary.

Mary was twenty-four years old. She worked at a community health clinic three days a week and taught ESL classes at the library on Thursdays. She had grown up in Garland, the daughter of immigrants who had made their crossing through desert and faith and arrived with almost nothing and built something anyway, which was the kind of miracle that received no angels and no heavenly choir but was a miracle nonetheless.

Mary was queer. She had known this since she was twelve, in the way that some things are simply known before they are understood — the way you know a piece of music is beautiful before you know anything about music theory. She had come out to her parents at seventeen and it had not gone perfectly and it had not destroyed them either, which was its own kind of grace. Now she lived with her partner Josie in a small house with a half-dead rosebush in the front yard that they kept meaning to replace and somehow never did.

Josie drove a city bus. She was three years older than Mary, compact and competent, with strong hands and a dry sense of humor and a deep commitment to doing things correctly. Josie made lists. Josie believed in following through. Josie had a plan for most contingencies.

What was about to happen to Mary was not on any of Josie's lists.

* * *

It was an afternoon in May when Josie was at work. Mary was at the kitchen table finishing a lesson plan, and the house had the specific quality of quiet that only occupied when one of the two people who lived in it was absent — a quietness slightly more hollow than ordinary quiet, aware of itself.

Mary heard nothing. She felt something. A change in the air. A kind of attention from the room itself, as if the walls had leaned in.

Then the light.

It came differently than it had come for Bob. For Bob, the light had been something separate from the room, something that entered it. For Mary, the light seemed to come from inside things — from the surface of the table, from the pages of her lesson plan, from her own hands resting on the paper. As if everything around her had been waiting for this moment to reveal its real nature.

Mary pushed her chair back from the table.

"Hello," the light said. "God is with you."

Mary said nothing. She was perplexed — the word she would use later, to herself, because she was someone who tried to be precise about her emotional states — not terrified, not ecstatic, but genuinely, deeply perplexed.

"Do not be afraid," the light said. "You are chosen by God to conceive in your womb a child named Jesus. The child will be the child of God who shows the world the power of love."

Mary processed this for a moment. "How can this be," she said, "I only sleep with my partner Josie?"

This was not a theological objection. It was a practical observation made by someone who prided herself on accurate accounting.

"The Spirit of the Queer will come upon you," the light said. "The love of God will overwhelm you. The child will be queer. The child will be the perfect Queer of God."

Mary was quiet.

"And even right now in their old age," the light continued, "your cousin Tommy and his partner Bob have a daughter named John they are going to adopt. Know that nothing is impossible with God."

Mary had heard this construction before — nothing is impos sible with God — had heard it in church growing up, had read it in the texts she'd been assigned in the two theology classes she'd audited at SMU. She had always treated it somewhat abstractly, as a statement about the nature of divinity rather than a direct commentary on her specific situation on a Tues day afternoon in East Dallas.

Now it felt direct.

She slid out of her chair. She lowered herself to her knees on the kitchen floor, which she had mopped three days ago and which was still clean, and she said — quietly, without drama, in the same voice she used when she was absolutely certain about something — "I love the Queer and I will do whatever God asks of me. May your words be accomplished and more."

The light didn't leave dramatically. It just became the ordinary light of the kitchen again — the afternoon sun through the yellow curtains, the small lamp over the stove, the world as it usually was. Except that it wasn't.

Mary stayed on her knees for a moment. Then she got up, went to the sink, washed her hands with the focused attention she gave to ordinary tasks when she needed to think, dried them on the dish towel that hung from the oven handle, and went back to her lesson plan.

She sat there for a long time without writing anything. Then she wrote, in the margin of the lesson plan: something has happened.

Chapter Four: Mary Goes to Denton

When the miracle is new, you
need someone to tell. You need
someone who already knows.

Mary told Josie that evening. She sat Josie down at the kitchen table — Josie had come home to find Mary quiet and intent in a way that registered immediately as significant — and she told her everything. The light. The voice. The name. The baby. Tommy.

Josie listened without interrupting. This was something Josie was good at when she chose to be. She sat with her hands flat on the table and her face careful and still and she did not interrupt.

When Mary finished, there was a long silence.

"Okay," Josie said.

"Okay?"

"I mean — I don't know what okay means here. I'm processing." Josie stood up and walked to the counter and stood with her back to Mary for a moment, looking at nothing. Then she turned around. "You need to go to Denton."

"I know."

"Tommy will understand. He'll believe you."

"I know." Mary paused. "You believe me?"

Josie looked at her for a long moment. "You're the most hon est person I have ever met," she said. "Yes. I believe you." She sat back down. "I'm scared."

"Me too," Mary said. "But I think we're supposed to be."

* * *

Three days later, Mary drove up to Denton.

It was a Friday morning, clear and warm, the kind of North Texas spring that apologizes briefly for winter before the summer comes in like a wall. She took 35 north and got off at

University and drove the familiar route to the house on Maplewood, which she had visited before, at Christmas and once when Tommy was sick, but which she had not seen in almost a year.

Tommy was in the driveway when she pulled up. He came out of the house holding a mug of coffee, and when he saw Mary's car, his face did the thing it did when he was genuinely, unguardedly happy — it opened, simply, like a door.

Mary got out of the car. They embraced. She said his name, he said hers, and then she started to tell him, right there in the driveway, because she could not contain it anymore.

She had gotten perhaps three sentences in when Tommy's phone rang.

He held up a finger — one moment — and answered it.
Mary watched his face.

She watched him hear a sound on the other end of the line. She watched his eyes fill. She watched him press his free hand flat against his chest, against his heart, the gesture he made when something was almost too much to hold.

"Yes," he said into the phone, barely above a whisper. "Yes. That's her."

He lowered the phone. His voice, when he spoke, was thick.

"That was Marina. She let me hear John. On the phone. Just for a moment. She was cooing. She was — she was just there." He shook his head, overwhelmed. "And then you walked up. Right then. At exactly that moment."

He looked at Mary with the full, illuminated attention of a man who has just understood something.

"You brought God into this space," he said. "Who am I, that the carrier of the Queer shall visit me? Did you see that? As soon as you walked up, I got to talk to my little daughter John for the first time. That was no accident."

Mary felt something rising in her. Something she would have been too quiet to say an hour ago. She felt it rising and she let it.

* * *

"My soul rejoices in the queerness that I have found," she said. "For my God has found me. I rejoice in the savior of my life. I rejoice in the Queer."

Tommy was crying openly now. Mary kept going.

"I am so unworthy of a miracle of God, yet God dwells in me. From this day forth generations will count me queer, so won derful is this God-granted discovery. Praise be to the creator of queerness. God's name is Queer."

She stopped. She felt emptied out in the best possible way — the way you feel after you have said the exact right thing, the thing that has been building in you so long that saying it is less like speaking and more like releasing.

"The queerness of God endures from generation to generation," she said, more quietly now. "This is the God that is so queer that God refuses to be anything but queer. The keepers of normativity will be restored to their queerness. The hungry and poor will never want again. God will stand on the side of the Queer forever."

Tommy set down his coffee mug on the hood of Mary's car. He took her hands in both of his. They stood in the driveway

in the spring morning, two people who had each been visited and each been changed, and they held on.

Mary stayed for two weeks. They spent those weeks the way you spend time that you know will matter later — slowly, with attention, eating Tommy's cooking and watching Bob's silent, glittering, contented prayer, walking the neighborhood in the evenings and talking about what was coming.

When she left, she hugged them both for a long time at the car. She didn't say goodbye. She said, "Soon."

Chapter Five: The Naming of John

A name is a prophecy. Choose it carefully.

When the day finally came, it came the way days like that always do — suddenly, after all the waiting, almost too fast.

Marina called on a Thursday morning. She didn't say much. She said the child was ready. She said there was paperwork. She gave them an address and a time.

Tommy and Bob drove to the CPS office in Fort Worth and emerged two hours later with a baby girl. John was small and solemn, with eyes that seemed to be doing an assessment of everything around her. She looked at Tommy and Bob with a directness that was slightly unnerving in an eight-month-old.

Tommy said, later, that he felt recognized.

The drive back to Denton was very quiet. Bob had the baby in the backseat in the rental car seat they'd spent forty-five min

utes installing that morning. John looked out the window at the highway. The highway looked back. It occurred to Bob, sitting in the back with this child, that he had no idea what to say to her — and then it occurred to him, with great relief, that this was fine. He didn't need to say anything. He just needed to be there.

The entire community seemed to know, in the way Denton communities know things, that the baby was coming. There were people on the porch when they arrived. There was champagne already opened. There was a banner that said WELCOME HOME, JOHN, which was slightly misspelled and perfectly right.

* * *

The baptism was planned for the following Sunday. The congregation on the north side of town would do it — had, in fact, been planning it with barely contained excitement since Tommy announced the adoption at the previous week's service.

The complications began the day before.

It started, as complications often do, with concerned relatives. Bob's sister Maureen drove up from Waco with her husband Gerald, who wore a polo shirt and an expression of patient concern. Tommy's mother came from Abilene on the Greyhound, which spoke to the depth of her investment in the situation. Several friends of friends, people who had heard about John and had opinions about names, found reasons to appear at the house.

"Don't you know she won't know her gender identity if you name her John?" said Maureen, not for the first time.

"Plus, who exactly are you naming the child after?" said Gerald, who did not know about the light or the voice and would not have known what to do with that information if he had.

"It's a confusing name for a little girl," said Tommy's mother, whose name was Gloria, who had spent thirty years being confused herself and had come through it fine.

Tommy smiled at all of them with the patience of a school counselor who has heard everything and been alarmed by al-

most none of it. "Her name is John," he said. "She'll figure out what to do with it."

* * *

At the baptism itself, the congregation gathered in the small sanctuary that smelled of old carpet and candle wax and the very good coffee the deacons made every Sunday without fail. John was held by a deacon named Patricia who had the gift of calming children. The minister — a young woman named Reverend Park, who had come to the congregation three years ago and never left — stood before the font.

"We're going to baptize this child now," Reverend Park said, which was not her most eloquent opening but had the virtue of being true. "And before we do, the community wanted to ask the fathers one more time about the name."

This was not something Reverend Park had suggested. This was something the community had organized among themselves, out of a communal desire for narrative resolution that

Reverend Park privately found exasperating and publicly accommodated.

She turned to Bob.

Bob had the tablet. He had been carrying it all morning. He held it up and typed, slowly and deliberately, in large letters: HER NAME IS JOHN.

He pressed the display button.

The congregation read it.

And at that exact moment, Bob opened his mouth to say something — to say anything, the first thing, whatever came — and his voice came back. Not gradually. All at once. Full and clear, like a radio finding a signal.

"Her name is John!" he said, aloud, and began to cry.

The sanctuary erupted. It was not a polite eruption. It was the kind that happens when a roomful of people has been holding something and can suddenly let it go. People cheered. Patricia, who was still holding John, looked at the baby and said, "See? I told you they were going to be fine."

John looked at the congregation with her assessing eyes and appeared to find it satisfactory.

* * *

Later, after the champagne and the cake and the photographs and the slow departure of the well-wishers, Bob sat alone in the living room with John asleep against his shoulder and spoke to her in the quiet.

He said: "God loves us. God has redeemed us. God has raised for us a queer savior. God will save us from the keepers of normativity and make us queer. God is unfailing in God's love and you, my daughter John, will be called the prophet of the Most Queer, for you will go before God to prepare God's way and give knowledge of salvation to all people."

John slept through this, which Bob took as a sign of trust.

"The queerness of God will dawn on us," he said, more softly now, almost a whisper. "To give light to all who dwell in darkness and death. To guide us to the place of peace."

The live oak outside the window shifted in the night wind. The house was quiet. The baby was warm against his shoulder. Bob sat there and felt, for the first time in a long time, that everything was exactly as it should be.

Chapter Six: Josie's Dream

The truth doesn't always come
gently. But it always comes.

Meanwhile, Josie was having a very hard time.

She had believed Mary. She had said she believed Mary, and she had meant it when she said it, and she continued to believe it in the mornings when the light was good and she had her coffee and Mary was just Mary, the person she loved, making toast in the kitchen.

But Josie also believed in observable evidence. She believed in things that could be accounted for. She had driven a city bus for seven years, and driving a city bus required you to be absolutely clear about cause and effect. If you ran a red light, there were consequences. If you didn't check your mirrors, something happened. The world as Josie understood it was one in which every effect had a traceable cause.

Mary was pregnant. This was the effect. And regardless of what Mary had told her about the light and the Spirit of the

Queer and the voice that had spoken in the kitchen — Josie kept coming back to the question of cause.

She didn't say this to Mary. She carried it alone, in the way she had always carried the things she was unsure of — quietly, internally, letting them sit until she had something useful to do with them. She went to work. She drove her route. She was kind to the passengers, who were mostly, as always, people who needed to get somewhere.

She decided, privately and with a great deal of sadness, that the kindest thing to do was to end things quietly, before a child came who would be living proof of a story Josie couldn't entirely believe. She didn't want to cause a scene. She didn't want to make it ugly.

She came home one evening with this decision fully formed, clear as a road sign.

And she fell asleep.

* * *

In the dream, the light again. Josie recognized it — she had heard Mary's description well enough that the thing itself was familiar when it came. She was standing in the kitchen, and the kitchen was luminous, and she was not afraid.

"Do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife forever," the light said. "For the child conceived in her is from the Spirit of God. She will bear a queer child and you are to name the child Jesus, for Jesus will show the world the danger of normativity. The child shall also be called Emmanuel, which is God with us."

Then: "Go and make her your wife."

Josie stood in the luminous kitchen of her dream and let this land.

She had the sense that she was being spoken to by something that knew her entirely — knew her lists and her need for evidence and her particular brand of practical courage — and was asking her to extend that courage into territory she had never mapped.

She woke up.

Mary was asleep beside her. The room was dark. The regular, unremarkable dark of a house at three in the morning. Josie lay on her back and looked at the ceiling for a long time.

Then she turned on her side, toward Mary, and said, quietly, to the back of Mary's head: "I'm sorry I doubted. I'm going to marry you. If you'll have me."

Mary, who had been more awake than she appeared, said: "Yes. Obviously."

The ceremony was held three weeks later, in the backyard of a friend who was a minister. It was not legal in Texas. It was entirely real.

Chapter Seven: The Registration

The powerful always find ways
to make the vulnerable move.
This is not new.

In that year, President Barack Obama issued an executive or der requiring that all citizens register for the new federal health insurance program. It was a straightforward administrative matter. Millions of people handled it from their kitchen tables. But the implementation required that unmarried persons return to their hometowns to register, because the state databases were organized by county of legal residence.

In Texas, where marriage equality did not exist, where Mary and Josie's ceremony had been real and not legal, this created a problem.

Josie's family was from Cooper Creek, a small town east of Dallas that sat at the intersection of two farm roads and contained one hardware store, one diner, one gas station, one

church, and one hotel. Josie descended from a line of Coopers who had settled the area generations back and whose name had, in the way of small towns, eventually attached itself to the creek that ran behind what used to be their property.

Mary could have stayed in Dallas. She was technically registered there. But Mary was at that point heavily pregnant, and the idea of being separated from her wife — however unofficial that title was in the eyes of the state — was not something either of them was willing to entertain.

So they went together. They stopped in Denton first.

* * *

The stop in Denton was Mary's idea. She wanted to see Tommy and Bob. She wanted to see John, who was now a toddler with her father Bob's deliberateness and her father Tommy's laugh and eyes that continued to assess everything around her with unnerving precision.

More than that, she wanted to try again.

She and Josie arrived at the county clerk's office in Denton on a Tuesday morning. The office was in a government build ing downtown, beige carpet, fluorescent lights, the smell of old paper and air conditioning. There were three people ahead of them in line and a clerk behind the counter who looked at them the way people sometimes looked at them — the way that was not quite hostility but was not accommodation either.

Mary filled out the form. Josie filled out her form. They stood at the counter, side by side, and Mary asked: "Is there a way to register as a family unit?"

The clerk said: "Not for unmarried persons."

Josie said: "We're married."

The clerk said: "Not in Texas you're not."

Mary felt the first contraction.

She didn't say anything about it. She held Josie's arm and breathed through it and waited to see if it was the real thing.

The clerk had begun to speak about the relevant statutes. She was citing them from memory, which suggested she had done this before.

The second contraction came. Stronger.

"My water just broke," Mary said.

The clerk stopped citing statutes. The lobby rearranged itself. Someone behind them said something. Someone else went for the door.

Josie had Mary's arm. "We need to go," she said. "Now."

* * *

The hospital was six blocks away. At the hospital, a woman at the admissions desk asked for their insurance cards. Mary had one. Josie, between bus routes and on a temporary leave, had let hers lapse.

"We can't process a delivery without a guarantor," the woman said.

Josie said: "She is having a baby right now."

The woman said: "I understand that, but our policy—"

Josie said several things after that which she would later summarize as "not my finest hour" and which accomplished nothing. They were turned away.

Josie drove them toward Cooper Creek. She called ahead to the hotel.

The hotel manager's name was Dale. Dale was a squat man with a complicated relationship with his own prejudices — he knew what he believed and he also knew, somewhere in a part of himself he didn't examine often, that what he believed wasn't always right. He told Josie on the phone that the hotel didn't allow lesbians. He heard himself say this.

Then he said: "But I've got a barn out back. It's clean. It's warm. I'll open it up."

It wasn't nothing.

Chapter Eight: The Barn

Every shelter is sacred when it
is the only shelter. Every
manger holds a miracle when
the time is right.

The barn behind the Cooper Creek Hotel smelled of hay and animals and the specific cold that settles into old wood in early winter. Dale had opened it up, as promised — the lights were on, bare bulbs on long cords, and someone had put a blanket on the cleanest surface and a space heater in the corner that hummed and glowed orange.

Mary got out of the car bent over. Josie had her arm around her wife's shoulders and her face had the expression it got when she was operating on pure function — all the emotion compressed down into a hard, efficient core, the rest of her resources redirected toward the task at hand.

The barn had two horses in it, an old dog sleeping near the heater, and a cat that watched from a high beam with the de-

tached judgment cats reserve for human emergencies. There was a trough near the wall with fresh straw in it that Dale had put there in a moment of instinct he couldn't have explained.

Josie helped Mary to the blanket. She called for help. One of the hotel workers, a young woman named Sandra who had done a semester of nursing school before she ran out of money, came into the barn with towels and a firm competence.

"I've got this," Sandra said. "Both of you, listen to me."

Mary listened. Josie listened.

The baby came quickly, the way some things that have been long anticipated finally arrive — with almost impatient efficiency, as if the waiting itself had built up enough pressure to make the actual event immediate.

* * *

The child was born into Sandra's hands in a barn in Cooper Creek, Texas, on a cold December night. Josie cut the cord

with the scissors from Sandra's first aid kit. Mary held Jesus against her chest and looked down at this child with an expression that Sandra, afterward, struggled to describe. It wasn't the expression she had seen on other mothers' faces. It was something wider than that. Something that seemed to include the room, the barn, the night outside, the whole improbable situation.

"Hello," Mary said to the baby. "We've been waiting for you."

The baby was small and dark-haired and very loud, briefly, and then very quiet, in the way newborns settle when they are held correctly. The old dog near the heater raised its head and looked at the child and set its head down again. The cat continued its vigil from the beam.

Josie sat down heavily on a hay bale and put her face in her hands and did not cry, quite, but came very close.

"Hey," Mary said.

Josie looked up.

"Come here."

Josie came and sat beside her wife. Mary put the child in Josie's arms. Josie looked at Jesus with the expression of someone encountering a proof they had doubted and cannot now doubt anymore.

"Jesus," she said. Just the name. The word.

Sandra went to get more blankets. The space heater hummed. Outside the barn, the night was very clear.

Chapter Nine: The Workers in the Fields

The announcement of the
miraculous is never made to
the comfortable. It is made to
those who are already awake.

Right outside of Cooper Creek, on the east side of town where the highway became farm roads again, there were fields. In December the fields held whatever was left of the autumn's work — brown stalks, cold earth, the remnants of harvest. The men and women who worked them slept in the fields be cause they had no other place to sleep. They had come from hundreds of miles south and they worked for less than the work was worth and they sent money home and they waited for spring.

That night, several of them were awake. Not all of them — the ones with children were asleep in the two vehicles that served as their shared quarters. But six or seven of the work-

ers were sitting around a small fire, not talking much, watching the darkness.

The sky over the fields in December is very large. This is one of the things that does not require money to appreciate. The sky was immense and dark and full.

Andrés, who was twenty-three and had been doing this work since he was seventeen, was the first to notice the light.

It appeared in the eastern part of the sky, which already had the faint smear of a distant town's glow, but this was different from that. This was specific. Directional. Moving.

"What is that?" said Andrés.

Before anyone could answer, the light expanded. It filled the sky above the field with a brightness that was not blinding but was complete — everything was visible, every row of dead stalks, every face around the fire, every hand.

Everyone stood up. A few people moved back toward the vehicles.

Then the voice, which was not in the sky but was everywhere, which was not in any one language but which each of them understood in their own:

"Do not be afraid."

Andrés stayed perfectly still.

"I am bringing you good news of great joy. Tonight, for you, is born a savior and God in the city of Cooper Creek. This is how you will find the child — let the spirit guide you to a child wrapped in cloth in a manger."

Then thousands of lights — not lights exactly, but something for which the workers had no better word, luminosities, presences, the sky suddenly dense with them, the way a field suddenly becomes dense with birds when something startles them all at once. And sound with it — not music exactly, but something for which music was the closest word. A sound that was praise and declaration and love all together.

"Glory to God in the highest and peace and goodwill to all."

And then: dark. The ordinary dark. The fire, which had gone down while no one was tending it. The field. The cold.

The workers looked at each other. Their faces were different from how they had been before the light.

"Let's go," Andrés said. "Let's go and see."

They didn't discuss it. They knew where to go — not because they had been given directions, but because the thing that had spoken to them had left something behind in each of them, like a needle pointing toward a specific place.

They went to the barn.

* * *

They arrived to find Sandra outside smoking a cigarette, and she waved them in without ceremony because she had been in the barn when Jesus was born and at this point very little seemed beyond the ordinary.

The workers filed in. They removed their hats. Andrés went first, and he stopped when he saw the child, and he said nothing for a moment, just looked.

He told Mary what had happened in the fields. He told it sim ply, without embellishment, the way a person tells a true thing — because there was enough in the bare truth and adding to it would only diminish it.

Mary listened and held Jesus and said nothing. But the workers could see that she was taking it in, storing it, holding it the way you hold something you know you will need to re-turn to for years.

They stayed for perhaps an hour. They held the child in turn when Mary offered — carefully, with large and work-worn hands. Andrés stayed the longest. When he finally passed Je sus back to Mary, he said, "I don't know what any of this means."

"Neither do I," Mary said.

"But it means something."

"Yes," Mary said. "It does."

The workers left before dawn and went back to the fields. An drés, for the rest of his life, would tell people about this night. He told it in kitchens and fields and waiting rooms and, once, to a judge who was about to determine his status in this country. He said: I was there. I saw the child. Something happened to me that night and I have never been the same.

He was believed by some people and not by others. This was to be expected. He told it anyway.

Chapter Ten: The Baptism at the Creek

Water is always asking what
we're willing to wash away.

Eight days after the birth, when Mary had healed enough to move without difficulty, the small community that had gathered around the event in the barn — the workers, Sandra, Dale who had opened the barn with his complicated conscience, a few people from town who had heard, inexplicably, by a process that resembled osmosis more than communication — gathered at the creek that ran behind what used to be the Coopers' property.

It was cold. The creek was low and very clear, the way Texas creeks are in winter. The water ran over flat stones and the sound of it was the only natural sound, because the morning was otherwise still.

The minister who came to perform the baptism was not anyone's pastor. He was a young man who had been traveling through and who had shown up at the barn the morning after

the birth for reasons he struggled to articulate — he said he had felt pulled, the way iron is pulled toward a magnet, and this was as precise as he could get.

He stood in the cold water in his boots and took Jesus from Josie's arms and held the child over the water, which was the color of winter sky.

"Your name," he said, "is Jesus."

He poured water over the child's head.

The gathered people cheered. It was a ragged, motley cheer — from people who had no common language beyond the fact of being here, in the cold, at this creek, for this child. Sandra cheered. Andrés cheered. Dale the hotel manager stood at the back and did not cheer but removed his hat and held it against his chest.

Mary stood in the water next to the minister and held Jesus after and looked at her daughter with an expression she had worn since the birth — that wide, encompassing look, as if she were trying to take in more than her eyes could hold.

Josie stood beside her and put her arm around Mary's shoul ders, and they stood in the cold creek in Cooper Creek, Texas,

with their child, and the morning was clear and the water moved around their feet and somewhere in the east the sun was doing what it always does, despite everything, rising.

Chapter Eleven: Simeon and Anna

The ones who have been
waiting the longest know the
miracle when it arrives.

When Mary and Josie brought Jesus to Dallas for the dedica tion, they went to the Cathedral.

The Cathedral was an imposing building in the center of the city — stone and stained glass and a long set of steps up from the sidewalk. It had a reputation for being important and a somewhat less reliable reputation for being good. It had hired security guards who stood at the main doors in blazers and earpieces and watched the sidewalk with the particular vigilance of people who have been told that the institution they are guarding is worth guarding.

Outside the Cathedral, on the steps, there was a man named Simeon.

Simeon was old. It was difficult to say precisely how old because the life he had lived had aged him irregularly — his

hands were very old, his eyes were something else entirely. He sat on the steps in a coat that had been expensive once and was not anymore, and he watched the people coming and going.

He had been watching for a long time.

Many years ago, Simeon had been a different kind of man. He had been the kind of man who could acquire things — money, influence, the attention of rooms. He had also been the kind of man who could lose things, and he had lost most of what he'd acquired in a period of darkness that he was now able to discuss with the equanimity of distance. He had been homeless. He had been addicted. He had seen visions in those years that he could not entirely distinguish from the vi sions that came later, when he was clean, when the dreams grew clear and specific.

The dream that mattered had come seven years ago. In it, God had told him: you will not die until you have seen the Messiah. Simeon had woken from this dream and thought about it for a week before telling anyone. Then he had told a woman at the shelter, who had nodded as if this were the

most ordinary thing in the world, and said: "Then I guess you'd better stay clean."

He had stayed clean. He had waited.

* * *

On the morning that Mary and Josie arrived with Jesus, Simeon felt the thing he had come to recognize as the Spirit — a specific quality of attention, a tightening, a sense of being directed. He stood up from the steps.

He tried the front doors. The security guards stopped him. Politely, in the way of people who have been trained to be po lite while being firm. He was a disheveled old man with no stated purpose, and the Cathedral had policies.

Simeon walked around to the side of the building. There was a smaller door there, used for deliveries and exits, propped slightly open. He went in.

He was in a side corridor when Mary and Josie and Jesus came through the main hall. The family was moving toward

the altar. The dedication was about to begin. Simeon saw them from twenty feet away and felt something that had no word he knew of — a recognition so total that it temporarily removed him from normal operation.

He crossed the hall toward them.

The security guards saw him coming and moved to intercept. Mary looked up and saw the old man approaching, and she saw his face, and she called off the guards before they reached him.

Something in his face. The directness of it. The arrival of it.

Simeon reached her and held out his hands. Mary placed Jesus in them without hesitation, which surprised everyone watching, and which was exactly right.

Simeon held the child. He held him carefully, with the hands that had become old in several different ways. He looked at the child's face for a long time.

Then he looked up, not at anyone in particular, and said:

"Savior, you may now dismiss your servant in peace. Mine eyes have seen your queerness and know that your salvation is the salvation of all people. I have waited my whole life to hold this child."

The hall was quiet.

He handed Jesus back to Mary. He looked at her and Josie with a directness that was not unkind.

"This child will be the liberation of all," he said. "The queerness of many will be revealed. Especially yours."

Before they could ask him what he meant, someone else spoke.

* * *

From a pew near the front, an old woman stood. Her name was Anna. She had lived in the Cathedral — not metaphorically; she had an agreement with the custodial staff and a cot in a storage room — for going on twelve years. She prayed

there. She slept there. She ate what people brought her and occasionally what she found in the free pantry two blocks north. She was ninety-three years old and had been a widow since she was forty-one and had spent the intervening decades in the particular clarity that comes from having nothing left to protect.

She stood and pointed at Jesus and said, in a voice that carried to the back of the hall: "Jesus is the redemption of all people and in this queer we will all find our queerness."

Then she sat back down.

The dedication proceeded. Afterward, in the parking lot, Mary said to Josie: "Did you plan any of that?"

"No," Josie said.

"Me neither."

They buckled Jesus into the car seat in the back. Josie started the car. Mary looked out the window at the Cathedral, at the steps, where Simeon was sitting again in his old coat, watching the street.

"Do you think he's okay?" Mary said.

"He seemed okay," Josie said.

"He seemed more than okay," Mary said.

Chapter Twelve: The Monks from Asia

Truth travels. It does not ask
permission at the border.

In the months after the dedication, the family settled in Ponder, which was a small town northwest of Dallas where the sky was big and the neighbors minded their business with a thoroughness that Mary and Josie found restful. They found a house with a porch and a yard. Jesus was still an infant — small and dark-haired and, already, possessed of that quality of attention that would define him. People who held him for even a few minutes often reported afterward feeling that they had been seen.

Josie drove a school bus now, for the Ponder Independent School District. She was very good at it. Mary had returned to her work at the health clinic and was looking into a degree in public health at UNT, something she had been meaning to pursue. They had built something, in those first months — carefully, with the focused attention of people who know

what it cost to be here. It was not the life that Rick Perry's Texas had made easy to build. But it was theirs.

* * *

The monks arrived before Jesus had learned to walk.

There were seven of them, from a monastery in a country that Mary and Josie later researched and found to be far east of anywhere they had imagined the story reaching. They arrived in Dallas on a Thursday morning, with wheeled suitcases and the serenity of people who have been traveling for a long time and have made their peace with travel. They went directly to the Governor's Mansion.

Rick Perry was in the middle of his morning briefing when his chief of staff came in and said there were seven monks in the lobby asking about a child.

"What child?" Perry said.

"They say — and I want to be clear that I'm just reporting what they said — they say they've been following a star. And

they want to pay homage to a queer child born to be ruler of all nations."

Perry was quiet for a moment.

"Get me the religious leaders," he said.

* * *

The assembly of religious leaders that Perry convened that afternoon was a representative sample of the institutional Christianity of the state — men in good suits with well-maintained hair who had navigated the landscape between faith and power with great care for many years. Perry asked them where the Messiah was supposed to be born.

The leaders consulted among themselves. One of them, who had done graduate work in biblical studies, said: "The texts suggest Cooper Creek."

Perry brought the monks in. He was charming. He had always been charming — it was one of his most reliable attributes. He asked the monks to tell him when the star had

appeared. He listened to their answer with attentive interest. He told them to go to Cooper Creek, and when they found the child, to send word, because he wanted to come and pay homage himself.

He was lying. This was obvious to the monks, but they were monks and had long practice with patience, so they thanked him and left.

* * *

The star led them to Ponder. This was, geographically speaking, not Cooper Creek, but the monks had learned to follow the star and not the instructions, and the star was not interested in geography as the Governor understood it.

The star stopped above a small house with a porch and a yard where a child was currently playing with a red truck while two women watched from the porch steps with the specific half-attention of parents who are simultaneously watching and thinking about other things.

The monks got out of their rental van. The child stopped playing with the truck and looked at them. The two women on the porch looked at them.

"We followed a star," Andrés — who was not one of the monks, but who had been living nearby in Denton for the past few years and had somehow known to come — explained from behind them, helpfully.

Mary stood up. "Come in," she said. "I've been expecting something like this, though not exactly this."

The monks came in. They opened their suitcases and produced three gifts, which they set on the kitchen table with ceremony: a small gold box, a vial of frankincense oil, and a quantity of myrrh resin in a cloth bag. Jesus climbed up onto the table to examine these items and had to be removed twice.

That evening they ate together at a table that was too small and sat on chairs that didn't all match and told each other what they knew, which was not everything but was enough. The monks slept on the floor of the living room and the guest room and one of them on the couch with a quilt that had been Mary's grandmother's.

In the morning, the dream came to each of them separately but with the same content: do not go back to Perry. They compared notes over coffee and found they had been given the same instruction and complied with the same relief. They drove south toward San Antonio and then east to Houston and caught a flight through Toronto.

Mary washed the dishes from the night before and thought about what the governor wanted with her child. She didn't like the answer she arrived at. She said nothing to Josie yet. But she began, quietly, to pay attention to the weather.

Chapter Thirteen: The Flight

There are borders that cannot
be crossed with documentation.
You cross them with
desperation and God.

The angel came to Josie this time. Josie, who had been visited once before in a dream and had learned to take the dreams seriously.

She woke up at two in the morning and sat upright and said: "We have to go."

Mary, who had been half-waiting for this since the monks left, was already awake. "Where?"

"Mexico. Now. Perry is going to imprison every child in Texas that looks like Jesus."

Mary did not say: are you sure. She did not say: that seems extreme. She said: "I'll get Jesus. You start the car."

* * *

They packed in twenty minutes — the essentials, the documents they could find, the cash from the emergency fund that Josie maintained in an envelope in the sock drawer, the bag of things for Jesus. Mary carried Jesus to the car. He woke briefly, looked at the dark house from over her shoulder, and went back to sleep.

They drove south on 35 through the night. San Antonio at four in the morning, the city quiet and wide. Laredo at dawn, the border crossing point coming into view in the pale light.

They did not have the documentation for a legal crossing. This was a situation that Josie, who believed in documentation, found deeply uncomfortable, and which Mary, who had grown up hearing stories of desert crossings, understood in a different way.

At a gas station a few miles from the official crossing, they bought water — as many bottles as would fit in the bag Josie carried — and prepared.

The desert crossing took seven hours. It was cold in the early part and then hot and then cold again. They took turns carry ing Jesus on their backs. Jesus was cooperative in the way that small children sometimes are when the adults around them are operating with focused urgency — as if he understood that this was not a moment for the usual negotiations.

They entered Mexico on foot and took a bus north to Monter rey, where Mary had the name of a cousin of a friend of her mother's who had an apartment with a second bedroom.

They settled there. Josie found work. Mary continued her studies remotely. Jesus learned to walk on tile floors and developed a preference for mango that lasted his entire life.

They stayed for over a year.

* * *

In Denton and Cooper Creek and the small communities around them, the news was already arriving. Governor Perry, enraged when the monks did not return and when his inquiries revealed that the child and his family had vanished,

ordered a sweep. Children who fit the description he had assembled — which was broad and poorly defined and described, basically, any child who might be the one he was looking for — were removed from homes and placed in what the official language called protective custody and what the affected families called something else entirely.

The Texas Prison Industrial Complex, which had long been practiced at receiving children that the state did not want to release, received these children. Most of the state didn't notice. Rick Perry had done this kind of thing before, with adults, with others who were convenient to imprison, and the machinery was well-established.

In the fields outside Cooper Creek, Andrés heard about it and called Mary to tell her. Mary listened and said nothing for a long time and then said: "We're safe."

"But the others aren't," Andrés said.

"No," Mary said. "They aren't."

"What do we do?"

"We remember," Mary said. "We come back. We do something."

Chapter Fourteen: The Return

To go home after exile is not the
same as never having left. It is
better and worse
simultaneously.

When Perry left office, Josie had another dream.

This one was shorter than the others. The light came, as it al ways came, without announcement. It said: it is safe to re-turn to Texas. Go home.

Josie woke up and said: "Time to go."

The legal crossing, on their return, was denied. Their docu-ments were not in order — they had not been in order when they left, and the intervening year and a half had not im-proved them. The crossing officer at the bridge was not un-kind. He was simply institutional.

So again, the desert.

They crossed again on foot, in the April heat, with Jesus on their backs in turns and the water bottles in the bag. Jesus was two and a half now and had opinions about being carried but kept them mostly to himself, as if he understood that this was not the moment for opinions.

They arrived in Brownwood exhausted, spent the night at a motel where the desk clerk did not ask questions they could not answer, and drove home to Texas the next day.

Josie had a dream the night they were back — the same qual ity of dream, but warning rather than welcome. A specific mayor in Dallas. A specific hostility toward queer families that the dream was not subtle about.

So they went to Ponder.

Back to the house with the porch. Back to the yard. Back to the neighbors who minded their own business and the big sky and the life they had built, which was still there, waiting, as if it had always known they would come back.

Jesus ran to the yard and stood in it and looked at the sky with the expression of someone remembering something im portant.

"He will be called a Ponderian," Josie said.

Mary laughed. "Is that a word?"

"It is now," Josie said.

Chapter Fifteen: John in the Wilderness

The prophet doesn't go to the
wilderness. The wilderness
finds the prophet.

John grew up in Denton and became strong in spirit. She was six months older than Jesus — born into the arms of Tommy and Bob while Mary was still carrying her child — and her story ran ahead of his the way the opening act of something runs ahead of the thing itself.

She grew up in the house on Maplewood, with the live oak that was now massive and the yellow room that had been repainted twice and the two old men who loved her with the intensity of people who have waited a long time for something and received it.

Bob taught her to pray — the formless way, the way of sitting and listening. Tommy taught her the names of everyone on the block, which she retained with his same gift for memory. The congregation on the north side of town watched her

grow up and claimed her fiercely and was claimed by her in return.

She was, from early on, a person who noticed the things other people managed not to notice. She noticed when some one was carrying something they weren't saying. She noticed the structural shapes of injustice — the way things were arranged so that some people's burdens fell at the bottom while other people's privileges accumulated at the top. She said what she noticed, which made her both loved and difficult.

When she was seventeen she got a reputation for standing outside the office of a state senator who had voted to defund a LGBTQ youth shelter, every day for three weeks, with a handmade sign that said: HIS NAME IS QUEER AND HE DOES NOT LIVE HERE. The senator never acknowledged her. The shelter's funding was restored by a different mechanism. John maintained that this was not a coincidence.

She went to the University of North Texas on a partial scholarship and majored in theology and minored in organizing. She wrote a thesis about the queerness of the divine that her

advisor called the most theologically audacious work he had read in thirty years of teaching. He meant it as a compliment.

After graduation, she spent several years in what she called the wilderness of Denton — working, praying, thinking, organizing, preparing. Bob was old now, and she spent time with him in the evenings, sitting with him in the formless prayer he had first taught her. Meanwhile, down in Ponder, Jesus was still a boy — still learning the shape of who he was going to be. John was the forerunner. Her work was to go first, to clear the ground, so that when Jesus arrived at his own moment, there would be people who already knew how to listen.

"What are you waiting for?" Tommy asked her once.

"I don't know yet," she said. "But I'll know when I'm done waiting."

Tommy considered this. "Your father said something like that," he said. "Before Gabby showed up."

"How long did he wait?"

"A long time."

"Good," John said. "I can wait a long time."

One morning she packed a bag and drove to Dallas and was not quiet anymore.

Chapter Sixteen: Jesus Grows Queerer

Queerness is not a destination.
It is a direction. It is always
further.

Jesus grew queerer with each passing moment.

In Ponder, where the sky was big and the houses were modest and nobody famous came from there, Jesus grew up with Josie's lists and Mary's wide-encompassing attention and the specific combination of rootedness and wonder that comes from being raised by people who know what it cost to be here.

From Mary, Jesus inherited the capacity to sit with the enormous. The ability to let something be larger than you without being frightened by it. The gift of saying yes before you know everything.

From Josie, Jesus inherited the commitment to follow through. The understanding that love without action is not love but sentiment. The practical courage of someone who

has driven a bus through rain and dark and has arrived, reliably, at the right place.

School was a mixed experience. Jesus was good at the things that interested him and distracted by the things that didn't and spent several years in the office of the principal, a woman named Mrs. Holtz who eventually stopped calling Mary and Josie about it and started just talking to Jesus directly, which was more productive.

"Why did you tell your history teacher that the story of the founding of Texas was incomplete?" Mrs. Holtz asked once.

"Because it was," Jesus said.

"What would the complete version include?"

"The people who were already there. The people who did the work. The people who got left out of the official story."

Mrs. Holtz looked at him for a long moment. Then she said: "You can go back to class."

He grew. He became who he was going to be, which was already visible in the child who had held his finger out to the

light and found in the brightness something that was not threatening but generative.

He understood, from a very young age, that the queerness he carried was not a problem to be solved but a direction to be followed. That it was not a deviation from the norm but a revelation of something deeper than the norm. That God, who had organized the creation of the universe with apparently deliberate disregard for human categories, had opinions on the matter.

He talked about this everywhere. At dinner. At school. At the gas station in Ponder where the owner had known him since he was three and humored his theological pronouncements with the affectionate patience of someone who has watched a person grow and has decided, years ago, that they are worth listening to.

"You're going to get yourself in trouble," people told him.

"Yes," Jesus agreed, pleasantly. "Almost certainly."

Epilogue: The Dream Never Dies

The miracle does not end. It
finds new bodies. It wears new
faces. It keeps coming.

Today, the miracle of queerness still lives and the dream of a world made queer never dies.

It lives in the old minister who found his voice again in a hall way covered in glitter. It lives in the school counselor who painted a room yellow and waited with the patience of a tide. It lives in the woman who said yes in her kitchen before she knew what yes would cost her, and in the bus driver who had a dream and chose to believe it.

It lives in the migrant workers who looked up from cold earth and saw the sky full of light and ran to find a child in a barn.

It lives in the old man on the steps who had waited his entire broken life for one moment of recognition and received it.

It lives in the child who crossed the desert twice, once in her mother's arms and once on her own two feet.

It lives in every person who has been told they are too much, too loud, too queer, too alive — and who has chosen, despite that, to keep being all of it.

The dream of a world made queer is not a fantasy. It is a memory of the future — something that has always been true in the deep structure of creation, working its way to the surface, breaking through in barns and creek beds and hallways and kitchen floors and fields at night.

Rick Perry is gone. The governors come and go. The clerks at the counter who cite statutes at laboring women come and go. The machinery of normativity keeps running, but it has never managed to run all the way to the bottom of things, where the Queer lives, permanent and undisturbed.

John is out there somewhere, saying what needs to be said to people who would rather not hear it. Jesus is growing queerer by the day. Mary is holding something vast and letting it be held. Josie is following through.

The star is still moving.

Go and see.

— Ponder, Texas

About the Author

Jeff Hood is a theologian, activist, and death row spiritual advisor. He is the founder of the Execution Intervention Project (executionintervention.org), an organization dedicated to the abolition of capital punishment and to the accompaniment of those condemned to die. He has witnessed eleven executions.

His work asks the hardest questions of faith, justice, and what it means to be human in proximity to state violence. He writes and speaks about queerness as a theological category, about the radical hospitality of a God who refuses to be contained, and about what the church owes to those the world has thrown away.

He lives in Texas.

BOOK 13

Drugged: Interstellar Exploration of the Incarnation

Jeff Hood

2018

In 2018, Hood writes a science fiction story about a church service that will not end.

It opens with the formula: loud music, an altar call, the offer ing, more loud music. The narrator hates it, with a list of syn onyms for fake that fills a paragraph. Then he is drugged, strapped into a chair, frozen, flown to another planet with five strangers who cheer the landing. He does not cheer. “I was in hell,” he says.

The book is built in two voices. One tells the story in a few flat lines per chapter. The other stops to think about what the lines mean: the white room every tradition keeps, the search that finds only what it brought from home.

After months of finding nothing, the narrator prays the one prayer in the book that is his own: save me from this futility. An ooze appears. It asks who he says it is. His first answer is a curse. His second is a confession: “You are the Christ…the

very ooze of God." He tells the others. They lock him in the ship for blasphemy, and after about a day he recants.

Hood lets the recantation stand. The narrator is no hero. The ooze comes back anyway, first as one, then as thousands. The crew that locked him up ends on its knees. By the last chapter, all of them have been turned to ooze.

Under the comedy is the doctrine this volume keeps returning to. The incarnation is a permanent condition. Christ is plural. The fullness is offered to the one who planted the flag and to the one who recanted.

Drugged.

Interstellar Exploration

of the Incarnation

Jeff Hood

Author's Note

There is a kind of religion that is very loud. It announces itself. It fills arenas. It has a formula. It has a production schedule and a giving moment and a send-off that is designed to make you feel like you've received something, whether you have or not.

And then there is the other kind. The kind that doesn't have a name for what it found because the name hadn't been invented yet. The kind that encounters the divine in a form so unexpected, so outside the approved categories, that the only honest response is confusion followed by awe.

This book is about the second kind.

It is not a systematic theology. It does not build an argument from premises to conclusion. It moves the way encounter moves—disjointed, dreamlike, drugged. It begins with a formula and ends with dissolution. Everything in between is the

long, strange, beautiful work of learning to see Christ in forms the formula never prepared you for.

The ooze is real. I have felt it. I have been asked the question it asks. I have given the answer that came from somewhere deeper than my education.

Read it that way.

PART ONE:

The Formula

"When the music is loud enough, you don't have to think."

I. The Formula

Loud music. “Jesus is alive!” Loud music. “Do you know Jesus?” Loud music. “With every head bowed and every eye closed…” Soft music. “X number of people have come to know Jesus!” Loud music. “We can’t leave tonight without giving a portion back…” Loud music. “Go live for Jesus!” Loud music.

The formula was always the same.

I have thought about that formula for a long time. The way it breathed. The way it had no interest in you as a partic ular human being with a particular history and a particular wound that particular evening. It was assembly-line salvation. It was the spiritual equivalent of a drive-through. You were supposed to pull up, place your order, receive your Jesus, and drive away changed. The formula didn’t require your doubt. It didn’t require your history. It didn’t require you to be anything other than a warm body capable of raising a hand when the lights went low.

Truth be told, I hated all of it. It always felt so produced…predictable…inauthentic…fake…bogus…false… counterfeit…phony…synthetic…fraudulent…artificial… feigned…deceptive…faked…pretend…plastic…fictitious… dead…put-on…contrived…invalid…forced…mechanical… misleading…strained…manufactured…mimicked…untrue… constructed…worthless…imitative…fabricated…deceptive… insincere…invented…concocted…

Ok, I think you get the point.

Despite my best efforts, I always seemed to find myself near that bullshit. I'm sure I was mindlessly chasing some ass that night. I can't think of any other reason that I would've been there. Yet, there I was.

Let me tell you something about that church. Not that church specifically—I couldn't tell you its name now. I mean that church as an institution. As a practice. As a way of organizing human beings around a set of answers designed to

foreclose all further questions. That church is terrified. Has always been terrified. And the louder the music gets, the more terrified it is. You can measure a congregation's fear by its decibel level. The ones who have figured out the most—or the ones who most desperately need you to think they have—are always the loudest.

The formula is fear wearing a fog machine. The formula is the recognition, somewhere underneath all the praise music, that if the music ever stopped, the questions would come flooding in and there would be nothing to hold them back. So the music never stops. The formula keeps moving. The lights keep strobing. The next song starts before the last one ends. Because the formula knows what happens in silence.

God happens in silence. Not the God the formula is selling. Something older. Something that doesn't fit in the production schedule. Something that moves like ooze.

That's when you start needing a different kind of Christ. That's when you start looking.

II. Drugged

I was there but I really wasn't. Looking back, I suspect that someone drugged me. That's why some of my memories are disjointed. Let's see… I remember wildly running toward the light. I remember thousands of hands grabbing at me. I remember the speaker declaring me chosen. I remember starting to shake as everyone cheered. Then, everything went dark. I was out. I woke up in a white room. Five other people were there too.

I want to stay with the drug for a moment. Because I think it matters.

We are all drugged. Not necessarily in the way I was drugged that night. I mean drugged in the broader, more permanent, more theological sense. Drugged by certainty. Drugged by the need to have an answer before the question has fully formed. Drugged by a religion that promises peace in exchange for your capacity to tolerate ambiguity. Drugged by a tradition that treats doubt as a malfunction rather than

a faculty. Drugged by the idea that the incarnation was a singular event that happened to one person in one time and one place and has been safely categorized ever since.

The drug is administered early. Sunday school. Vacation Bible school. Confirmation class. By the time most of us reach adulthood, we've been given so many doses of comfortable doctrine that we've lost the ability to feel the edges of the questions underneath. We live in the smooth center of pre-approved answers. We don't even remember being numbed.

I remember being numbed. I remember the moment before the numbness took hold. I remember what it felt like to be standing at the edge of something vast and unknowable and then—suddenly, chemically, institutionally—not feeling it anymore.

Theological numbness is not peace. It resembles peace. It produces many of the same outward behaviors as peace. But it is the absence of sensation, not the presence of

something. The mystics knew the difference. They were suspicious of comfort that arrived too easily. They were suspicious of answers that required no suffering to reach. They understood that the divine is not encountered in the place where everything is settled. The divine is encountered at the edge, in the dissolution, in the moment when the formula stops working and something raw takes its place.

Being drugged into space is one way of being forced to the edge. It is not the recommended method. But the edge is the edge, however you arrive at it.

III. The White Room

When I tried to unlock the door or ask what was going on, I was told to stop interrupting, kneel quietly and pray for the mission. I didn't know what in the hell they were talking about…but they looked beyond serious. I don't know how long I prayed…but I do know that I never want to pray that long again. When I was just about to explode, the door swung open and a woman demanded that we come with her. When I hesitated, I was picked up and carried by the other people in the room. One by one, they proclaimed, "We will carry this burden together…" I still didn't know what in the hell they were talking about. I hadn't signed up for shit. Then again, I couldn't remember whether I had or not.

The white room.

Every tradition has a white room. The space set apart. The space that says: what happens here is different from what happens out there. The space that enforces its own seri ousness on everyone who enters it. Holy ground. Sacred

space. The room where God is supposedly more accessible than God is in the ordinary world.

I have my doubts about the white room. Not because I doubt the sacred. Because I think the sacred is not confined to the room. Because I think the white room can become a way of protecting the sacred from contamination—protecting it from the mess and ambiguity and contradiction of ordinary life—until the sacred is no longer recognizable as something that has anything to do with ordinary life. The white room becomes a museum. God becomes an exhibit.

Pray for the mission. I was told to pray for a mission I hadn't agreed to. This is how most religious missions begin, if we are honest. Not with the convert's freely given yes. With the community's certainty that the mission is necessary, that the people who need saving need saving, that the God who has called them has also called you whether you experienced the call that way or not. The mission is always certain of itself. The mission has to be, or it couldn't function.

We will carry this burden together. On its best days, that sentence is the whole of the gospel. The community bearing what the individual cannot. The body functioning as body. Love taking a practical, incarnate form.

On its worst days, it is a way of overwhelming dissent. The community as mass. The burden as something imposed rather than chosen. The together as a way of erasing the particular person who would rather not carry this particular burden at all.

Theology has to hold both. The best and worst of that sentence. The grace and the coercion that have always traveled together in the history of the church. That's not comfort able. But the formula was never going to get us to the truth. The formula was always going to need supplementing by something harder and stranger and less producible.

PART TWO:

The Launch

"Space is not empty. It is full of questions."

IV. The Music, The Words

Stunning light filled the room. I thought I might be dead. Loud music started booming out of the speakers. The music sounded familiar but the words were different. Everybody else started raising their hands, shaking and falling all over the floor. Not wanting to be suspicious, I did too. In the midst of it all, I tried to listen to the words…to get some clue of what was happening. "The heavens will declare your majesty…as I fly far beyond my celestial home to share your glory!" As I was trying to figure out what they were talking about…the door swung open and a man motioned for us to follow him.

The music sounded familiar but the words were different.

That sentence is worth sitting with. The music sounded familiar. The chord progressions. The rhythm. The emotional architecture designed to open the chest and lift the hands and produce the sensation of transcendence on a

reproducible schedule. All of that was familiar. The church has always known how to use music this way. It is one of the oldest technologies of the sacred. There is nothing dishonest about it on its face.

But the words were different.

The words were reaching beyond the planetary. Beyond the human scale of the usual Sunday morning hymn. The words were talking about celestial homes and flying far beyond them to carry glory into the abyss. The words were gesturing at a Christ who was not contained by the familiar categories. A Christ who was not just the Christ of the formula. A Christ who had always been more than what the formula was selling.

This is the thing about worship. When it works—when it breaks through the familiar into something genuinely unexpected—it tells the truth about God in spite of itself. The formula sets out to produce a manageable religious experience. But the music, at its best, gestures at something un-

manageable. Something that flies far beyond the celestial home it was given. Something that will not stay in the white room.

That's the incarnation. That is always the incarnation. The divine refusing to stay where it was put. The eternal becoming located in the temporal and then immediately, inexhaustibly, exceeding that location. Christ appearing in the expected place and then being found in ten thousand places no one expected.

The words were different. I was starting to hear something new.

V. The Chair

We were told to sit in one of the six chairs. I had never even seen a chair so large. Seatbelts shot out of the chair and strapped us down. I started freaking out. Immediately, a nurse came over and gave me an injection that knocked me out. When I woke up, I was still in the chair…but now I had a thick protective bubble around me. Looking around, I asked the other five people why it felt like we were laying down. No body answered. Thunder erupted. Everything shook. The windows revealed a sky exploding towards us. Then, I realized what was going on. "I'd been drugged into going into go ing into outer space!"

The church does this to you.

Sometimes it does it with music. Sometimes it does it with the slow, sustained accumulation of a worldview so total that by the time you notice you're inside it, you're already past the atmosphere. There is no return. The singular purpose of your life has been decided by people who were cer-

tain. The seatbelts have shot out and strapped you in and you are going somewhere whether you chose it or not.

And here is the theological question underneath all of that: what do we make of a faith that arrives through coercion? What do we make of a God who is encountered not in the free and open space of unencumbered choice but in the back of a spacecraft, strapped to a chair, still processing the drug?

The tradition has two answers. The first answer is that this is a corruption of the faith and must be rejected. God requires free consent. The coerced conversion is no conversion at all. The God who needs to drug you to get you aboard is not the God worth following.

The second answer is stranger and more uncomfortable. It is the answer that Job stumbles into, that Jonah discovers inside the fish, that Paul experiences on the Damascus road. Sometimes the encounter is not invited. Sometimes the divine does not wait for readiness. Sometimes God

finds you while you are actively avoiding God, strapped into a situation you did not choose, moving toward something you cannot yet comprehend. And the question is not whether you chose to be there. The question is what you will do now that you are.

Once we left the atmosphere, the woman next to me said, "You should be thanking us. We took you out of your sinful lifestyle…and now you are on a mission to take the name of Jesus farther than it has ever been carried before. God has blessed you with this opportunity!" Judging from her tears, I didn't respond how she thought I would. "Fuck you."

That response is also, in its way, theological. It is the theology of the person who has been told what their encounter with God is supposed to mean before they have had the chance to find out what it actually means. It is the refusal to accept a pre-packaged interpretation of an experience that is still unfolding. It is, in its profane way, a defense of revelation.

The formula cannot tell you what God means to you. Only the encounter can do that.

VI. Cryosleep

"Cryosleep initiating…"

…and just like that, I was out.

We slept for years…maybe even centuries…hell, maybe even millennia…then again, I guess it could only have been for a few seconds. "What is going on?" I didn't have a clue. I was becoming more and more desperate for answers.

Cryosleep is the body's mercy. The suspension of consciousness for the duration of a journey too vast to be endured awake. You cannot traverse the distance between here and the revelation while fully conscious. The mind would not survive it. Something in you has to go under while the larger movement happens.

The mystics called this the via negativa. The negative way. The path toward God not through accumulation but through subtraction. Not through acquiring the right beliefs

but through the dissolution of the categories that have been preventing encounter. The dark night of the soul is a kind of cryosleep. The consciousness that goes under is not the self—it is the self's confidence in its own categories. You wake up on the other side of something you cannot fully name.

Meister Eckhart said: the eye through which I see God is the same eye through which God sees me. My eye and God's eye are one eye, one seeing, one knowing, one love. That sentence requires the dissolution of the subject-object distinction. It requires the sleeper to wake up in a different relationship to what is being seen. It requires something like cryosleep—the suspension of the old consciousness so that the new one can arrive.

Time collapses in cryosleep. Years become seconds. Seconds become millennia. The normal coordinates fail. This is also what happens in genuine prayer. The felt sense of duration dissolves. You go in at one moment and come out at another and cannot account for what happened in between except to say that something did. Something moved. Some-

thing shifted in the direction of the unknowable, and you are not quite the person you were when you went under.

Then, I saw a strange looking planet come into view.

This is always how revelation arrives. After the long sleep of the crossing. After the dissolution of the familiar co-ordinates. After the question has been asked long enough that the questioner has given up on the question—and then, through the window, something new comes into view. Not what was expected. Something stranger. Something that requires new eyes to see.

PART THREE:

The Planet

"God is not where you expect God to be.

God is where you finally stop looking."

VII. Landing

"Landing sequence initiated…"

…and just like that, I was falling.

We landed with a thud. Everyone in the cabin started cheering praises to God. I was in hell.

There is a theology of hell worth taking seriously, and it has nothing to do with fire or eternal torment. It is the theology of misalignment. Hell is the experience of being in a room full of people cheering for something that strikes you as wrong. It is the experience of isolation within community. It is the experience of being the only one who feels the wrongness of a shared certainty, while everyone around you raises their hands in praise of it.

This is the hell that theological honesty sometimes produces. The person who has had a genuine encounter with the divine and finds that the encounter does not match the

community's approved version of the divine is suddenly alone in a crowd. The crowd is praising God. You are standing there wondering if you and the crowd are talking about the same being.

When the door opened, I was shocked at the landscape. I couldn't figure out what I was looking at. Descending the stairs, I kept wondering if I was dreaming. Before I knew it, one of the others planted a Christian flag and declared the planet conquered for Christ.

The flag.

There is a theology of conquest that runs through the tradition like a dark current. The assumption that the divine mandate includes the right to arrive in foreign territory and declare it claimed. The assumption that the Christ who is being planted here was not already here before the flag arrived. The assumption that the people—or beings, or landscape, or cosmos—being evangelized are empty containers awaiting content from outside themselves.

The incarnation undoes all of that. If the divine became flesh—if God entered the material world completely, without remainder—then there is no territory that is not already holy. There is no landscape into which God must be imported. The flag is always arriving somewhere God already is. The missionary Christ is always meeting the Christ who got there first.

But the formula cannot tolerate that. If God is already everywhere, already in everything, already constitutive of the world rather than a visitor to it, then the formula loses its reason for being. The formula needs territory to conquer. The flag needs somewhere to be planted. The mission needs a destination where God is not yet present.

I did not cheer. I was looking at the landscape and thinking: something is already here.

VIII. The Search

For months, we fanned out in different directions looking for signs of life. We didn't find a damn thing. Then, something miraculous happened…

The search is its own theological category.

Not the search that knows what it's looking for. That is reconnaissance, not search. That is the formula in exploratory mode, combing the terrain for versions of what it already knows, cataloguing what it finds according to categories it brought from home. That kind of search always finds exactly what it expected to find, because it has no mechanism for recognizing anything else.

The real search is the one that has abandoned the categories. The one that has been looking for so long, in so many directions, that it has forgotten what it was originally trying to find. The one that arrives at the edge of its own exhaustion and becomes, for the first time, genuinely open.

The mystics knew this exhaustion as a prerequisite. John of the Cross knew it. Teresa of Avila knew it. The desert fathers and mothers who sat in their caves and cells until the self's noise finally quieted enough to hear something underneath it—they knew it. You have to search long enough, and fail thoroughly enough, before the thing you were looking for can find you.

We didn't find a damn thing. That was the necessary precondition. We had to exhaust our categories. We had to plant the flag and fan out and come back empty before we were capable of seeing what had been there all along.

This is why the formula fails. Not because the formula is entirely wrong. But because the formula arrives too confident to be emptied. The formula cannot be exhausted because the formula never stops moving. The formula keeps generating noise. The formula fills every silence before the silence can do its work.

The silence of the alien world finally did its work on us. We came back with nothing. We stood in that nothing. And then something miraculous happened.

IX. The Prayer

"If there is anything on this planet…save me from this futility…"

…and just like that, I saw the ooze.

The prayer that precedes the miracle is always the honest one.

Not the performed prayer. Not the prayer that begins with the right words and ends with the right words and says in the middle exactly what you've been trained to say. Not the prayer that is really a speech addressed to an audience that happens to include God. Not the prayer you pray so that God and the people listening can both hear how well you understand the terms of the relationship.

The prayer that works is the one that admits futility. The one that has run out of performance and is left with nothing but the raw fact of the need.

Save me from this futility.

That is the most theologically honest prayer in the tra dition. More honest than the prayers that arrive already knowing the answer. More honest than the prayers that are already, secretly, statements of confidence dressed as petitions. More honest than the prayers that are weapons aimed at God's sense of obligation.

Save me from this futility is the prayer of a person who has stopped pretending. The prayer of someone who has been on an alien world for months and has found nothing and is out of ideas and out of certainty and out of the comfortable conviction that the mission was a good idea. It is the prayer of a person who has been reduced to the irreducible. Just the need. Just the asking. Just the raw human fact of being alive in the middle of something too large to comprehend.

The tradition calls this kenosis. Self-emptying. The voluntary or involuntary release of the self's accumulated content—its certainties, its categories, its defenses, its settled understanding of how God works and where God is and what God requires. Paul uses the word in Philippians to describe what Christ did in becoming human. Emptied himself. Took on the form of a servant. Humbled himself to the point of the cross.

The prayer of futility is a small human kenosis. The self emptying itself of its certainty so that something can come in.

And then. The ooze.

PART FOUR:

The Ooze

"The divine is not a solid. It cannot be pinned."

X. First Encounter

I was terrified. I hadn't signed up for any of this. Quickly, everything started to change. My heart was strangely warmed. Then, the ooze spoke, "Who do you say that I am?" "I don't have a fucking clue." "No, who do you say that I am?" "I don't know what to say." "Listen to your heart." All of a sudden, the answer welled up from deep within me. "You are the Christ…the very ooze of God." "Go and tell the others what has been revealed to you."

"Lo, I am with you always…"

…and just like that, the ooze disappeared.

My heart was strangely warmed.

John Wesley used that phrase. He was describing the moment at Aldersgate when something he'd been intellectually proximate to his entire life became experientially real. The knowledge was already there. The catechism was al-

ready there. The theology was already there. What arrived at Aldersgate was the warming—the moment when the proposition became incarnate. When it stopped being a thing he knew and became a thing he felt in the body.

That is the incarnation. In—flesh. The divine becoming material. The eternal becoming located. The everywhere becoming here. The proposition becoming warmth.

The ooze is the most honest image of the incarnation I have found. Not a man in a sandal, not a diagram, not a doctrine. The ooze. It has no edges. It cannot be pinned. It does not stand at a podium and explain itself in terms you can fact-check. It simply appears, asks the oldest question in the tradition, and waits to see what you already know before you know you know it.

Who do you say that I am?

Jesus asks this question at the pivot point of his ministry. At Caesarea Philippi. Not: what have you heard about

me? Not: what does the tradition say? Not: what do the scholars think? Who do you say? Present tense. Your saying. The active production of a confession that comes from some where deeper than study and deeper than tradition and deeper than anything the formula ever prepared you to produce.

The answer that welled up surprised me. It still does. Not because it was theologically unprecedented—others have said versions of it. Because of where it came from. It did not come from my education. It did not come from any text I had read or sermon I had heard. It came from the place underneath all of that. The place the ooze seems to speak to directly, bypassing everything the formula has built up between the heart and the truth.

You are the Christ. The very ooze of God.

And then the ooze disappeared. This is always what happens. The encounter does not last. The warmth does not stay at the same temperature forever. The mystics are unani-

mous on this point: the vision withdraws. The presence becomes absence. The task is then to trust, in the absence, what you felt in the presence.

Lo, I am with you always. The promise is made precisely because the felt presence will not always be felt. The al ways is the bridge across the intervals of darkness.

XI. The Rejection

I raced to tell the others what I'd seen. None of them believed me. In fact, everything I said just made them angrier and angrier. "Blasphemy! There is no Christ but Christ" they all screamed repeatedly. Before I knew it, they locked me in the ship until I recanted. After about a day, I told them I must have been mistaken. One by one, the others told me how glad they were that I was returning to Christ. I didn't know what they were talking about. I didn't care. I just knew I wasn't locked up anymore.

Blasphemy. There is no Christ but Christ.

The sentence is designed to be circular. Its circularity is the point. Christ is defined in advance. The definition is complete. Any experience that produces a different picture of Christ is therefore not an experience of Christ. It is an experi ence of something else—something dangerous, something that needs to be corrected, something that needs to be locked up until it recants.

The history of the church is largely the history of this sentence being applied to people who had the wrong kind of encounter. The Gnostics had encounters that didn't fit the emerging orthodoxy. The mystics had encounters that made the bishops nervous. The women prophets of the early church had encounters that the later church decided were inconvenient. Meister Eckhart was condemned. Julian of Norwich was ignored for centuries. Anyone who reported an encounter with the ooze in a form that exceeded the approved categories risked the same thing: the white room, the locked door, the demand for recantation.

I recanted. I am not proud of it. I have been in situations where the cost of maintaining my position was more than I was willing to pay in that moment. I told them I must have been mistaken.

But the ooze does not accept recantations. It does not release you from the encounter because the community found the encounter threatening. The encounter is permanent. It has already happened. It has already changed the

shape of what you know, even when you are pretending otherwise.

You can lock a person up and make them say the right words. You cannot reach into the place where the ooze has already been. That place belongs to something older than the community's certainty. Something older than the formula. Something that was already there before the flag arrived and will be there long after the flag has rotted away.

XII. The Return

"Greetings my children..."

...and just like that, the ooze appeared.

The others were terrified. "Be not afraid." I wasn't. "God has sent me to proclaim salvation to you. For, I am the Christ." For days, the ooze stayed with us and shared exactly what our hearts had always longed for. The miracles were in cessant. Before the end of our stay together, we were all on our knees worshiping this newfound Christ. We begged the ooze not to go. It was of no use.

"Let not your hearts be troubled...Believe in God, believe in..."

...and just like that, the ooze disappeared.

Be not afraid.

The most repeated command in scripture. Three hundred sixty-five times, some people say—one for every day of the year. Whether or not the count is exact, the repetition is itself the message. This is the primary thing the divine is always saying to the human. Not: be worthy. Not: be correct. Not: have the right theology. Be not afraid.

Fear is the engine of the formula. Fear of getting it wrong. Fear of the questions that have no answers. Fear of the silence where God might not speak. Fear of an encounter that doesn't match the approved categories. Fear of becoming ooze—of losing the solid edges that make you recognizable to yourself and to the community.

The ooze says: be not afraid. Of me. Of what I am. Of the fact that I don't have edges. Of the fact that I cannot be contained by the categories you brought. Be not afraid of the dissolution. Something is being released in you that needed to be released. Something that has been holding the shape of a certainty you no longer believe is doing you harm by holding it.

The miracles were incessant. I want to be careful about the word miracle. The tradition has overcrowded it. We have filled it with the supernatural, with violations of natural law, with events that require the suspension of the physical world's normal operations. Those things may or may not have happened. But they are not what I mean by miracle and I do not think they are what the ooze means by miracle.

The miracle is the encounter itself. The miracle is that the divine finds the human at all, given how thoroughly the human has walled itself off behind formula and certainty and the loud music that keeps the questions at bay. The miracle is that the heart warms despite everything. The miracle is that the answer wells up from somewhere below the education, below the catechism, below the recantation. The miracle is that the ooze returns after you've told the community you made a mistake.

It always returns. That is the miracle. Not the parting of the sea. The return.

PART FIVE:

The Fullness

"The incarnation is not a singular event. It is a permanent condition."

XIII. The Confusion

Months passed and we were growing more confused by the day. We just didn't know what to do except wait for the ooze to return. One day…after most of us had lost hope… thousands of oozes appeared in our midst. We were shocked. We thought there was only one. We were wrong.

"I wanted you to meet the fullness of Christ…"

…and just like that, the oozes were everywhere.

We thought there was only one. We were wrong.

This is the deepest theological error of the tradition. Not the error about ethics, not the error about politics, not the errors about who is in and who is out. The deepest error is the singularization of the incarnation. The insistence that God entered the world once, in one body, in one time, in one place, and that this entry was by definition unique and unrepeatable and therefore—by implication—that the rest of the

world and the rest of history is constitutively different from that one entry. Less sacred. Less infused. Less ooze.

Paul does not believe this. Paul writes in Colossians of a Christ in whom all things hold together. Not some things. Not the things that have been properly evangelized. All things. The entirety of the created order held together in the same Christ who appeared in Galilee and appeared to Paul on the Damascus road and appears, apparently, as ooze on alien planets to people who were drugged into going there.

Teilhard de Chardin does not believe it either. His vision of the cosmic Christ—the Christ who is the omega point toward which all of evolution is moving, the Christ who is the divine milieu permeating every atom of the created order—is a vision of thousands of oozes. Not one Christ. The Christ who is the principle of unity in all things.

And Hopkins knew it. Christ plays in ten thousand places. Not in one place. Not in the approved place. Ten thousand. Lovely in limbs and lovely in eyes not his—mean-

ing: the Christ is recognizable in every face, every body, every pair of eyes that has ever looked at you. The incarnation is not a historical event in the past. It is the permanent condition of the material world.

We were shocked. Of course we were. The formula had prepared us for one. The formula can only handle one. One Christ, one gospel, one formula, one flag, one white room, one approved form of the encounter. Thousands is a category error for the formula. Thousands breaks everything the formula has built.

Good.

XIV. The Fullness

Indescribable. Uncontainable. They'd placed all the stars in the skies and they knew them all by name. What our minds could not comprehend…our hearts knew. We had come to a knowing of something so much greater than anything we'd known before. Namely, that the fullness of the incarnation is available to all. We could all become Christ. We didn't hesitate.

They knew them all by name.

The naming. In Genesis, the naming of things is the first human act. In the Gospel of John, the Word that was in the beginning is the word that names things into being. In the mystical tradition, the name of God is the name of the ground of being itself—the thing underneath all things, the thing that holds all things in existence by knowing them.

The ooze knows. The ooze knows every star. Every planet. Every strange landscape that no human eye has ever

seen. Every person the formula forgot. Every encounter that didn't fit the approved categories. Every recantation. Every act of cowardice dressed up as submission. The ooze knows all of it and names it all and holds it all in the same inexhaustible knowing.

What our minds could not comprehend…our hearts knew.

This is the entire epistemology of the mystical tradition. The heart knows what the mind has not yet processed. The encounter precedes the understanding. You know something is true before you can explain why it's true. And if you wait for the explanation before you trust the knowing, you will wait forever. The explanation always arrives after. The warmth comes first. The theology tries to catch up.

The fullness of the incarnation is available to all.

All.

That word is doing enormous work in that sentence. The tradition has spent most of its history narrowing the all. Defining who is included in the all and what conditions must be met to remain included. The formula is primarily a mechanism for managing the all. Deciding who has responded correctly to the offer and who has not. Who has raised the right hand and who has raised it in the wrong spirit and who has not raised it at all.

But the fullness of the incarnation does not submit to that management. The incarnation is not an offer that can be accepted or declined. It is the condition of the world. The divine embedded in the human—in all the human, in every instance of the human, without exception and without the possibility of exception. Not as a reward. Not as a consequence of the correct response to the formula. As the permanent, irreversible, constitutive fact of what it means to be made of the same material as the ooze.

We could all become Christ.

This is not heresy. This is the oldest thread in the tradition. Athanasius: God became human so that humans might become God. Irenaeus: the glory of God is the human being fully alive. Gregory of Nyssa: the goal of the Christian life is theosis—the gradual transformation of the human into the divine, not by leaving the human behind but by discovering what the human has always been made of.

The formula is terrified of this. The formula needs the gap between human and divine to remain large. If the gap closes, the formula has nothing to sell. If you are already made of the ooze, you don't need the production schedule. You don't need the fog machine. You need the silence.

We didn't hesitate.

XV. The Becoming

"Draw near to us..."

...and just like that we were all turned to ooze.

What does it mean to become ooze?

It means losing your edges. It means releasing the form you have been holding so rigidly for so long—the form that said you were this kind of Christian and not that kind. This kind of believer and not that kind. This kind of person who has these kinds of encounters with the divine in these kinds of approved settings and not any other kind. The form that was protecting you. The form that was also trapping you. The form that made it impossible to flow into the spaces where you were actually needed.

The tradition calls this mortification of the self. A terrible phrase. It sounds like punishment. It is not punishment. It is the release of a constriction. It is the discovery

that the self you have been protecting so carefully is not the self that needs protecting. The deeper self—the self that is made of ooze, that has always been made of ooze—does not need the protection. It cannot be threatened by uncertainty. It cannot be damaged by the dissolution of the formula. It is the thing underneath the formula. It was there before the formula and will be there after.

This is the paradox at the heart of the incarnation. The divine became fully human. Took on edges. Became located. Became vulnerable to everything that flesh is vulnerable to. And in doing so, did not cease to be divine. The edges did not diminish the ooze. They expressed it. They gave it a specific form through which it could be touched and questioned and followed and lost and found.

And then the specific form was released. The resurrection is not the restoration of the form. It is the release of the ooze from the form back into its uncontainable, indescribable, ubiquitous fullness. The risen Christ is everywhere and nowhere. Cannot be held. Cannot be predicted. Appears in locked rooms. Appears on the road to Emmaus. Appears

as a gardener. Appears as a stranger on the beach making breakfast. The form is gone. The ooze is everywhere.

We were all turned to ooze. Even the ones who had planted the flag. Even the woman who told me I should be thanking her. Even me—the one who was drugged, who didn't consent, who said fuck you and meant it, who recanted when he should have held firm.

Even me.

Because that is the nature of the fullness of the incarnation. It does not wait for you to deserve it. It does not wait for you to have the right theology or the clean hands or the approved confession. It finds you on an alien planet in the middle of a mission you didn't choose, and it asks you a question, and it waits to see what you already know before you know you know it. And when you answer—even imperfectly, even with profanity, even through the fog of the drug and the confusion of the cryosleep and the shame of the recantation—it draws you near.

And just like that.

You are ooze.

Epilogue: What the Ooze Requires

I carry the formula. I carry it as a reminder of what happens when certainty becomes a product and salvation be comes a service and God becomes the name of the feeling the production schedule is designed to produce. I carry it as evidence that the impulse to manage the divine is as old as religion itself, and as futile, and as human.

I carry the drug. The long sleep of the certainty I was given before I had the capacity to question it. The years of not feeling the edges of the questions underneath. The cryosleep of a worldview so total it took a drugged launch into the unimaginable to break through it.

I carry the ooze.

That is the one I am most grateful for. The one I discovered in the furthest reaches of the impossible. The one that asked me who I said it was and waited while the answer came up from somewhere deeper than my education. The

one that appeared again when I had recanted and thought I'd lost it. The one that multiplied into thousands because it had always been thousands and I just hadn't had eyes to see it yet.

What does the ooze require?

Not the formula. Not the production schedule. Not the flag. Not the white room.

The ooze requires the honest prayer. Save me from this futility. The prayer that has run out of performance. The prayer that is nothing but the raw fact of the need. The prayer that arrives after the long search through the alien landscape has come up empty.

The ooze requires the willingness to have your categories broken. The willingness to arrive expecting one and be given thousands. The willingness to find Christ in the ooze—formless, edgeless, uncontainable, unmanageable by anything the formula has ever built.

The ooze requires that you listen to your heart. Not in stead of your mind. With your mind. But listen all the way down. Past the education. Past the catechism. Past the recan tations. To the place where the answer is already waiting. Where it has always been waiting. Where the divine and the human are not two things separated by a gap the formula has been built to cross—but one thing, already present, already warm, already asking the question.

Who do you say that I am?

I have a better answer now than I did the first time. Not a complete answer. Not an answer I could write down in a creed or defend in a committee or explain to the satisfac-tion of anyone who needs the formula to stay intact. Just a better answer. A warmer answer. An answer that has been refined by the long crossing and the alien landscape and the exhaustion of the search and the miracle of the return.

You are the Christ.

The very ooze of God.

Present in the formula and in the failure of the formula.

Present in the music and in the silence the music has been trying to fill.

Present in the spacecraft and the alien planet and the flag and the months of futile searching.

Present in the person who planted the flag.

Present in the person who refused to cheer.

Present in the recantation.

Present in the return.

Present here.

In this.

In me.

In you.

In all of it.

Draw near to us.

And just like that.

BOOK 14

Governors Amongst the Racists: A 50th Anniversary Retrospective of the 1970 Alabama Democratic Primary

Jeff Hood

2020

On This Book

In November 2005, Hood sat in Albert Brewer's house in Birmingham with a tape recorder running. Five days later, he sat with the journalist Bob Ingram in Montgomery. This book is built on those two interviews, on the campaign advertisements of May 1970, on the newspapers that printed them.

It marks the fiftieth anniversary of the election. The form is spare: a quotation at the top of the page, a paragraph beneath it, then the next page. The quotations carry no names.

The story is quick to tell. Lurleen Wallace dies in office in May 1968, leaving the job to her lieutenant governor, Albert Brewer. He raises teacher salaries, equalizes school funding, creates an ethics commission, reaches out to newly registered Black voters. George Wallace assures him he will not run in 1970. Then he runs. Brewer leads the first primary by 7,000 votes. In the runoff, Wallace makes race the only issue, with fake endorsements, rumors about Brewer's wife and

daughters, an advertisement asking white Alabama if this is the state it wants. Wallace wins by 34,000.

Hood refuses the easy version. Brewer is the good man of the book, yet the page headed "We were best friends" records that he was Wallace's champion in the legislature for years, bill after bill. The voters get no pardon. Wallace ran as the candidate of the masses, Hood writes, "and the masses were largely racist."

Why does the history of one election sit in a volume of theology? Because the lie worked, with God's name on it. Wallace declared that white people were ordained by God to run the state. Then he won. A Southern theologian has to know how that sermon was built.

The last page gives two names with two dates. Albert Brewer, 2017. George Wallace, 1998.

Governors Among the Racists.

A 50th Anniversary Retrospective

of

The 1970 Alabama Democratic Primary.

Albert Brewer
47th Governor of Alabama
(1 Term / 1968-71)

George Wallace
45th Governor of Alabama
(4 Terms / 1963-67, 1971-79, 1983-87)

"Lies set all this shit up."

George Wallace. Albert Brewer. Titan. Reformer. Past. Future. Rage. Hope. Devolution. Evolution. Though there are many words to describe it all, the 1970 Alabama Gubernatorial Primary was an election unlike any election seen before…or since. This was no modern democratic election. This was a blood match…the one with the most teeth left at the sound if the bell would be declared the winner. Sound backward? This was Alabama. It was almost as if the Civil Rights Movement had never happened. Maybe it hadn't. Integration was still almost nonexistent. Though some folks wanted change, most still didn't. Politicians were more than happy to pander to the fears of the masses. Time and again, fear had proven to be the only strategy worth employing. Courage was seen as weakness. In the midst of such lunacy, the election commenced.

"Wallace punished disloyalty by execution."

In 1967, George Wallace finished his first term as governor. Under the state's constitution, Wallace was forbidden from running for another term. In order to retain power, he had decided that his wife, Lurleen, should run in his place. She was elected by a wide margin and served until she succumbed to cancer in 1968. Upon the death of Governor Lurleen Wallace, Lieutenant Governor Albert Brewer became Governor. This turn of events prompted George Wallace to give assurance to Albert Brewer that he had his full support and that Wallace would not seek the governor's office in 1970. These powerful white politicians all seemed content... Two years later, things changed. Ambition was probably the straw that broke the camel's back. You can't run for President without a place to run from. So, Wallace announced. Brewer refused to back down. There you have it. Simple? Right?

"Brewer: Too black for Alabama."

George Wallace was a serpent. Sometimes the serpent kills. Sometimes the serpent heals. Nevertheless, the serpent remains as cunning as ever. Albert Brewer was a nice guy...and....you know the story...nice guys always finish last. Everyone thought Brewer could pull it out. They forgot who he was running against. Even though the outcome seems obvious now, it wasn't so obvious then. Wallace had to work. Everybody knew what that meant.

"I will never be out ni****ed again!"

Most people don't know that Wallace started out as a racial moderate. With such a stance, Wallace got his ass kicked in election after election. Then, after losing the governor's race to John Patterson in 1960, he made the above promise that he kept in 1970. Brewer thought he was ready. He wasn't.

"I decide what's new."

In 1970, people quickly concluded that Brewer and Wallace had always been mortal enemies. Such thinking couldn't be further from the truth. In fact, Brewer had already served as the Speaker of the Alabama House of Representatives and Lieutenant Governor under the Wallace machine. When he struck out on his own, Brewer decided to go a new path. Wallace wanted voters to know that he had gone too far. New wasn't always popular in Alabama.

"I wouldn't go to Alabama to save my mother's life."

The decade leading up to the showdown was one of tremendous violence. When Wallace declared “segregation here, segregation now, and segregation forever,” his supporters enforced his promise in the streets. Children blown up. Ministers murdered. Unarmed citizens executed. Women brutalized. The crimes against humanity continued without ceasing. Alabama remained the unquestioned, "Heart of Dixie." Despite the continued fierceness of it all, Brewer was able to create a coalition of moderates and black folk that he thought would carry him through. I think he forgot where he was.

"We were best friends."

Brewer was one of Wallace's earliest supporters. Throughout the years of Wallace's most ardent racism, Brewer never wavered. Day after day, Brewer defended Wallace's most futile efforts to defy the federal government. Bill after bill, Brewer was Wallace's champion in the legislature. Interview after interview, Brewer defended Wallace. I guess you could say that he was the truest of true believers.

"Loyalty to Wallace was always expensive."

When Lurleen ran for Governor in 1966, Wallace made Brewer he practical running mate in the Lieutenant Governor slot. They both won in a landslide. Little did the public know, Lurleen was sick with a fierce reoccurrence of cancer. Throughout her short term in office, Lurleen underwent surgery after surgery. None of it worked. During his 1968 campaign for President, Wallace told all that would listen that she was beating back the disease. In April of 1968, Wallace even told the public that Lurleen was coming home from the hospital because she was cured. It was all a lie. Lurleen passed away on May 7, 1968. Brewer might have been the most shocked of all. Now, he was Governor.

"Is this the same guy?"

After years of doing Wallace's bidding, Brewer was stepping out on his own as a reformer of sorts. The national media loved it. In piece after piece, Brewer was called the antithesis of Wallace. From his new platform, Brewer reached out to newly registered black voters, increased funding for state schools, pushed to rewrite much of the racist language out of the state constitution, established a state ethics commission and championed economic reform. Behind the scenes, Wallace was fuming. Brewer tried not to care. The main thing that he was concerned about was expanding his coalition…which miraculously included…folks ranging from the Alabama Farmers Association (ALFA) to prominent African–American ministers. To add insult to injury, Brewer accomplished these goals with staff left over from the Wallace administrations.

"Fresh air was miraculously coming out of Montgomery."

For Brewer, regress was never going to be a path to progress. People far and wide took notice. "He's the best governor this state has ever had." "He understands that everything don't have to be about keeping the blacks down." "Teachers are finally getting their due." "We are finally being treated like we matter." "This is new...this is real." Such momentum did not occur in a vacuum. Throughout his administration, Brewer searched the state for the best the state had to offer. Careful to not upset Wallace further, Brewer tried to make sure they were agreeable. It didn't matter...anybody but Wallace in charge was going to be disagreeable.

"Only a sissy would spend time working on all that shit."

Brewer was on a roll. In his first year alone, he succeeded in multiple areas that his predecessors either failed or didn't even consider trying…the creation of the Alabama Ethics Commission…the regulation of pornography…the banning of major industrial air pollution…the engagement of black communities…the elimination of waste in state budgets…the cessation of cronyism. The list goes on and on and on…but progress is not always popular in Alabama. Despite questionable responses, Brewer decided to use any capital that he'd gained to tackle what would become his signature achievement…education reform. The legislation that he proposed and eventually signed into law…established the Alabama Commission for Higher Education…made permanent the Alabama Education Study Commission…equalized funding for all school districts…drastically increased education appropriations…raised teacher salaries. After all this, Brewer was on top of the world. He even garnered the

nerve to do the unthinkable…privately engage state leaders about quickly integrating public schools…though he had to remain defiant publicly. Due to his numerous diplomatic achievements…and his ability to avoid embarassing incidents…Brewer was incredibly well positioned to run for a full term. That is…until…

"You will be the only Wallace candidate on the ballot."

Up until the last few days of qualifying, Brewer was convinced that Wallace wasn't gong to run. It seemed as if Brewer had too much support to be beat. Praise and support was coming from every direction. All of the denials turned out to be a lie. To the shock of many…and no one…Wallace announced his candidacy.

"Somehow Brewer received the impression that I wasn't going to run for governor..."

All bets were off. Conventional wisdom was out the door. Nobody could be trusted. The race was on.

"I'm going to be the nastiest thorn in the side of the President…"

Wallace didn't care anything about talking about Brewer. He wanted to talk about race. He wanted to talk about integration. He wanted to talk.

"I think he thought he was just going to waltz back into office."

The old Wallace magic was gone. People seemed tired of the constant theatrics. Initially, Brewer held a wide lead in public polling. Incessantly, he promised to keep on being a full-time governor. The meaning of such a message was not lost on Wallace or his supporters. As the weeks went by, it was very clear that the message was working. People thought of Brewer as a simple man…and thought of Wallace as everything but. In addition to local funding sources, Brewer was also getting money from President Nixon's re-election campaign and other sources…as none of them were interested in facing Wallace again in 1972. The money was flowing…and Brewer was winning.

"I was pleased to be able to show the world what I had accomplished as governor."

Wallace was fighting for his political life. Pollsters were warning him to be prepared for an early defeat. In fact, Brewer's pollster had him up by 18 points. Wallace's team didn't know what to do…they'd never been in this position before. Determined not to lose, Wallace decided to do what he knew how to do best…play to the racism of the people…and when I say play…I mean play. Brewer talked about a quality education…Wallace was talking about your daughter bringing home a black guy from school. Brewer was trying to create a broad coalition…Wallace called his efforts integrationist communism. Brewer talked about a need to move forward…Wallace called himself the only white man in the race. Brewer talked about his efforts to help the state…Wallace talked about the blood he had shared defending the white way of life. Brewer talked about talked about the organizations supporting him…Wallace called them the coon bloc. Regardless of all of this, Brewer

thought he could win without a run-off. His energized speeches rarely mentioned Wallace…he didn't have to…he was the favorite.

"I won't do anything to embarass you..."

Brewer's people were already pulling out the champagne. They forgot about Charles Woods. Badly disfigured from a war injury, the Dothan businessman was running a strong third behind Wallace and Brewer. As the primary drew closer, it became apparent that Woods was going to siphon off enough votes to force a run-off. When the day finally arrived, Wallace and Brewer finished practically tied...with Brewer up by a slight 7,000 votes. The Brewer people couldn't believe that they hadn't won outright. The Wallace people couldn't believe that Wallace had been drawn into a run-off. Dumbfounded, Wallace was prepared to use every dirty trick in the book. Brewer wasn't ready for it. I don't know that anybody could have been.

"Vicious is the only word to describe those days..."

Wallace promised to never be out n*****ed again. In the run-off, he kept his word. Race became the only issue. Wallace made sure that nobody talked about anything else. In the primary, urban people turned out and rural folk didn't. Wallace had to reverse these results. Wallace Campaign Director Tom Turnipseed wasn't afraid to share his strategy with anyone who asked...

"We're going to promise them the moon and holler n*****."

When race became the dominant issue, Brewer's folks panicked. They sent Brewer out right away to declare...

"I'd like to think that we are past pitting class against class, race against race, and ethnic group against ethnic group in an Alabama election."

True to form, Wallace responded…

"I have never campaigned on a racist basis and would never campaign on a racist basis."

Not long after he made these comments. Wallace blanketed the state with warnings about the consequences of the black vote. Brewer was caricatured as the lackey of black leaders. Brewer tried to push back. Nobody seemed to be listening. Wallace made speech after speech. Even reporters had a hard time catching up. The same scare tactics came up again and again and again. He had rural people believing that a full scale invasion of black people was afoot. Progress was being made…but it didn't seemed to be happening fast enough.

"Dirty wasn't enough...we had to get dirtier..."

While complaining about the dirty tricks of the Brewer campaign, Wallace sent his people all over the state to stir up trouble. People far and wide were declaring that the blacks were taking over. It was claimed that Brewer had a secret black cabinet. Incessantly, Wallace shouted out the dangers of the black vote. He declared that white people were ordained by God to run the state...and that anyone who stood in God's way would be damned...Brewer. Wallace's people further declared that Brewer was preparing to appoint black presidents at Alabama and Auburn. In multiple dirty adds, Wallace shared fake endorsements of Brewer from prominent black organizations...purported black police officers declared that they couldn't wait to be part of the Alabama Highway Patrol in a Brewer administration....and purported black parents thanked Brewer for the forced integration of various white schools. There was even an ad that was a dramatization of a white lady getting pulled over in the middle of the night

by a lewd black patrolmen. Probably the one that was the worst, was an ad that showed a little white boy being surrounded by big black boys who look like they are ready to eat him…with the byline…"Is this the Alabama you want?" The fear was raising Wallace from the dead. Wallace knew what he was doing…he was even caught on a hot microphone saying…

“Of course we have got to scare people; 300,000 n***** votes is mighty hard to overcome.”

The tactics didn't just stop at scaring people. Things got very personal very quickly. The Wallace people circulated multiple letters claiming that Brewer was a homosexual. In almost every speech, Wallace referred to Brewer as "ole' sissy britches." On numerous occasions, Wallace told people that Brewer's daughters were having affairs with black men. First Lady Brewer was called a "drunk" and a "sexual prize" for multiple black men. Nothing was substantiated. Everything was just said. Things didn't just stop at words. Daily, the Wallace campaign fraudulently called nursing homes and other venues to say that the Brewers were coming to visit. When they didn't show up, it made them look exceedingly bad. Of course, they couldn't show up when they didn't know about the calls in the first place. Nasty birthed nastier.

"The Klan has always graciously supported my campaigns."

In ad after ad, Wallace called Brewer an enemy of white people. Repeatedly, Wallace declared at rallies, "Brewer has been endorsed by every black organization in the state. Newspaper editorialists around the state called Wallace's actions downright "embarassing." Regardless, Wallace wasn't running as the newspaper candidate...he was running as the candidate of the masses...and the masses were largely racist.

"Hit the panic button!"

In the closing two weeks of the campaign, Brewer slowed his campaign down. He thought that Wallace had made himself into a clown that nobody would elect to anything. Internal polling showed him ahead. After the long campaign, why not take a rest? His decision would prove to be a fatal mistake. At the same time, Wallace gained more and more momentum. He had successfully convinced Alabamians that race was the only issue that mattered. Just days before the election, Brewer's people told him that there was a chance he was going to lose. Unlike his nervous staffers, Brewer remained confident.

“If you can’t stand hot grease, then get the hell out of the kitchen!”

Due to his decision to slow things down, Brewer had little space from which to push back against Wallace. All he could do was criticize Wallace's use of race in the press. Wallace loved it…and called him a "crying sissy britches" as often as he could get the words out of his mouth. Wallace was peaking at the right time and he knew it. Small newspapers and local organizations released endorsement after endorsement. These were the people he needed…they were his people.

"Don't give in to the hate."

Brewer was desperate. In his final rally, Brewer begged people to hear the truth. Movement around the state...showed that people weren't all that interested in the truth. Brewer was a good guy. This wasn't the election for a good guy.

"We couldn't have won any other way."

Wallace knew he had won early. Against all odds, Wallace was back. At his victory party, he just kept on championing hope. Things were very different at the Brewer party. Once the results were clear, Brewer became very bitter...and probably ruined his political care in his speech. He just wanted some honesty. The people of Alabama weren't interested. Wallace won by 34,000 votes.

Albert Brewer

RIP 2017

George Wallace

RIP 1998

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BOOK 15

Sanctuary Hospice: A Practical Study of Disparity and Diversity

Jeff Hood

2020

In November 2011, Hood was a graduate student in healthcare ethics at Creighton University, living in Tupelo, Mississippi, in need of a practicum site. Driving out of town, he saw a small yellow and red building with a phone number on the sign. He called.

At their first meeting, the administrator told him what troubled her. Since the hospice opened in 2005, 88.59 percent of its patients had been white. The surrounding area was 58.7 percent white, 36.8 percent Black. The mission promised care to all, regardless of ability to pay. The beds said otherwise.

What follows is the least literary book in the Omnibus. Hood surveys fifty employees. He runs focus groups, conducts interviews, prints the questionnaire with its yes-or-no answers. Half of those surveyed say the hospice is not a racially sensitive place. He recommends two remedies: cultural com petency training, a minority outreach director. He answers the objections to his own method.

The prose is a student's, careful with citations. The setting is a place where people go to die, sixteen decorated rooms with gardens outside. Hood notes how beautiful it is. Then he asks who gets to die there.

The preface, dated February 2020, comes from a later man. The project is almost eight years old. He says his views have radicalized, that he would use much stronger language today. He has had no contact with the hospice since. He hopes it has grown. "For some reason, I doubt it," he writes. Racism, in his words, infests many of these spaces: "It is our job to be the exterminator."

The study is measured. The preface is angry. Both are printed here as he left them.

Chaplaincy puts the theologian in incredibly close contact with the many problems of our healthcare system. After many months in that role, I determined that I needed more education with regards to what ethics should look like in such a space. With this in mind, I started a masters program in healthcare ethics at Creighton University. For over a year, I trained to complete an ethical analysis of a healthcare institution. After such training, I settled on Sanctuary Hospice House in Tupelo, Mississippi. While there, I discovered how racism covertly works in such a space. This text was the culmination of all of my studies that year. Though this project is almost eight years old, my experiences with hospices over the years have informed me that every word is as relevant as ever. I have not had any contact with Sanctuary Hospice House since I finished this project. I hope that they have grown. For some reason, I doubt it. Since I wrote this, my views have radicalized. I am sure that I would use much stronger language and suggest much stronger consequences today. Regardless, these words are my response to what I met at the time. In the midst of

such, let there be no doubt that racism…then and now…infests many of these spaces. It is our job to be the exterminator.

Rev. Dr. Jeff Hood
February 26, 2020

Sanctuary Hospice: A Practical Study of Disparity and Diversity

Introduction:

In November of 2011, I was at the end of my rope. I had spo ken with both Dr. John Stone and Marybeth Goddard numerous times about trying to find a practicum sight to little avail. I needed a place to do my practicum and I needed a place quick. One day, as I was driving out of Tupelo, Mississippi toward school, I noticed a small yellow and red building on the side of the road. The sign out front said *Sanctuary Hospice* and gave a phone number in bright red letters. I had previously been very interested in end-of-life care, so I decided to give the entity a try, as a possible location to do my practicum. When I called, I asked to speak with the adminis trator of the hospice and, to my surprise, I was told to wait one second for Linda Gholston. After an exchange of pleasantries and preliminary information about the practicum, she asked if I would be willing to come in for a meeting at the end of the week. I agreed.

In our first face-to-face contact, Mrs. Gholston described consistent problems Sanctuary has had with racial disparity

and maintaining a diverse environment. She asked me to de sign a project that paid particular attention to these issues. Knowing that I had little time, I enquired of Mrs. Gholston, "Who would be the key group of people to interact with around this issue?" She thought the patients would be. Dr. Stone suggested that I organize my project around the employees of Sanctuary Hospice, due to their proximity to the problem and their need to know about the problem. In later conversation, Mrs. Gholston and I both felt like this could be a good way to begin the process of eliminating disparity and encouraging diversity. I went to work on some preliminary ideas.

In December of 2011, I presented Mrs. Gholston a learning proposal centered on interaction with the employees of Sanctuary Hospice. The employees were to be the key party in my project and, through extended interactions with them in surveys, focus groups, and in personal interviews, it was my intention to learn as much as I could about the problems of racial disparity and a lack of diversity at Sanctuary. The following pages provide description of my findings, through diverse interactions with employees, in four key parts: a detailed description of the site and ethical problem, a descrip-

tion of the contextualization of the ethical problem, a description of the identification of key parties and methods used for obtaining their input, and a description of the solutions that I recommend to solve the problems (L. Gholston, 2011, personal communication).

Description of Sanctuary Hospice and the Ethical Problem

Description

Sanctuary Hospice is a non-profit residential and home hospice service located in Tupelo, Mississippi. The residential facility and home hospice headquarters are located on a large plot of land heading southwest out of town on Highway 6. Upon pulling into the parking lot, one is immediately struck by the foliage that surrounds the property. There are lush trees and brilliant gardens surrounding the building. Walking into the facility, one discovers that the inside is decorated as intentionally as the outside. The furniture, paint, floors, and flowers are arranged to perfection. The residential facility has 16 beds in 16 meticulously decorated rooms for the care of residential hospice patients. Next door to the main building is an office to direct the care of Sanctuary's 45 home hospice patients. Together, these facilities serve over 61 hospice patients at a time. Under the direction of Administrator Linda Gholston, over 50 full-time and around 24

part-time employees staff the residential and home hospice services (L. Gholston, 2012, personal communication).

Mission

The mission of Sanctuary Hospice is "to provide, regardless of ability to pay, care and compassion to the dying and those they love, in response to God's call that we serve one another" (Sanctuary Hospice, 2012, website). This mission originated out of a mission trip organized by the Tupelo United Methodist Church to Mexico City in 2004. Participants realized the continual desperate need for hospice services and asked themselves why they couldn't provide similar services to their community. Upon return, the group met, organized, and fundraised for over a year to construct a hospice facility. Sanctuary Hospice is a result of these efforts. In keeping with their mission, the facility serves the wealthy and impoverished alike from 18 surrounding counties. The facility runs on monies collected from Medicaid, Medicare, private insurance, and donations. Upon opening, the administrators of the Hospice dedicated themselves to both God and the community, with a promise to never turn anyone away based on finances.

Primary Functions

Sanctuary Hospice provides an array of services to the dying and their families. The facility employs a plethora of diversely-trained employees, including social workers, physicians, nurses, nursing assistants, chaplains, home health aides, chefs, and a broad mix of other staff, to provide for the comfort of dying patients. The facility dedicates itself to pro viding four levels of care, routine home care, 24-hour care during a crisis situation, inpatient care for symptom management, and respite care/caregiver relief. In the completion of all of these tasks, the administration seeks "to promote an environment of selfless service, extreme compassion, and boundless love based on God's call for us to serve one another" (Sanctuary Hospice, 2010, *Sanctuary hospice: everyone needs a sanctuary*, brochure).

My Selection of the Site

I presently live in Tupelo and drive three days a week to finish up coursework on a Doctorate of Philosophy in United Sates History at the University of Mississippi in Oxford.

Since moving here from Birmingham, this commute has consistently taken me past Sanctuary Hospice on Highway 6. I have consistently been struck by the beauty of the establishment and wondered aloud what the place was about. When it came time to search for a practicum site, I contacted many facilities and found myself consistently unsatisfied. I, honestly, was unsure of what to do. One day, in the midst of this creeping desperation, I drove by Sanctuary Hospice and decided to give them a phone call on a whim. I spoke with Hospice Administrator Linda Gholston and set up a meeting for later on in the week. Upon my arrival to the site, I was immediately struck by the beauty and quality of maintenance of the facility. I sat down and Mrs. Gholston told me the mission and story of the facility. I was very moved by the Hospice's dedication to serving the dying in the surrounding areas, regardless of their ability to pay. I felt like this could be a place where I could learn a tremendous amount. I was even more pleased with the site when Mrs. Gholston asked if I would be willing to do a study of racial disparity and the lack of diversity at the Hospice.

Vulnerable Populations Served

Sanctuary Hospice is dedicated to "serving all types of people, regardless of race, religion, sexual orientation, or socioeconomic status, based on the call of God to serve one another" (Sanctuary Hospice, 2010, *Sanctuary hospice: everyone needs a sanctuary*, brochure). The facility serves mostly impoverished people in Northeast Mississippi who are in their final months or weeks of life. Based on the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality's (AHRQ) definition of vulnerable populations contained in *Ethical Dimensions of Health Policy*, "populations with special needs for or barriers to care from a variety of conditions or circumstances and less able than others to safeguard their own needs and interests" (Brock, 283). I consider the typical populations that Sanctuary Hospice serves to be dually vulnerable. They are less able to safeguard their own needs and health due to an inability to pay for quality services and by deteriorating health at the end of life. Sanctuary Hospice's mission is to serve all vulnerable populations in the area in need of hospice care. Unfortunately, according to their own statistics, Sanctuary Hospice is not reaching vulnerable African-American populations in the same magnitude they are reaching local white populations.

Ethical Problems

Based on data collected since Sanctuary Hospice opened in 2005, their patient population has been 88.59% white, 10.77% black, and .21% Hispanic (Sanctuary Hospice, 2012). The surrounding area of Tupelo, Mississippi, according to the *United States Census Bureau*'s website, is about 58.7% white, 36.8% black, and 3.5% Hispanic (United States Census Bureau, "Mississippi," http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/28/2874840.html) . Linda Gholston and I take this to mean that the Hospice is failing to reach African-American and Hispanic populations that are, according to the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality's definition, often triply vulnerable, due to lower economic status, deteriorating public health, and the combination of historical injustices and continued unequal access to education, capital, jobs, and other means of advancement. The issue of racial disparity is of particular ethical concern to Sanctuary Hospice. Mrs. Gholston feels like the Hospice is failing to equally serve all of the populations in the surround ing areas. Based on the initial numbers, I agree with her eth ical assessment.

When I became aware of the racial disparity at Sanctuary Hospice, I constructed a project based upon seeking employees' opinions of why there is a racial disparity at Sanctuary Hospice. I also added a dimension to my project that sought to examine if Sanctuary Hospice is an environment welcoming of diversity. I made an early hypothesis that one of the reasons for the disparity issues could be a lack of cultural sensitivity at the Hospice. I made this decision based on a re sponse to one of the initial stages of my project, the survey, as I discovered that 50% of the 50 employees polled did not believe that Sanctuary Hospice was a racially sensitive and accepting environment. I sat out to determine the answers to my initial questions through continuing the survey, conducting focus groups, and arranging personal interviews. These conversations are intended to accomplish three specific things: to reveal to the employees that there is a racial disparity and diversity problem at the Hospice, to solicit opinions and insights from the employees as to why they believe there is a racial disparity and diversity problem at the Hospice, and to solicit opinions and insights from the employees as to what can be done to eliminate disparity and en courage a diverse environment. These interactions will pro-

vide Mrs. Gholston with valuable feedback on possible ways to encourage a diverse environment and eliminate disparity.

Contextualizing the Problem

Mississippi

In Mississippi, great disparities in health, treatment, and quality of care exist between white and nonwhite populations, particularly African-Americans. According to the Mississippi Department of Health Disparities' "Mississippi's Plant to Eliminate Racial and Ethnic Health Care Disparities," successful policies to combat overt racism, prejudice, and discrimination, while important for granting initial access, have consistently failed to eliminate these disparities over time (Mississippi Department of Health Disparities, 2003). There has to be wider deliberate action. According to Madison Powers and Ruth Faden's *Social Justice: The Moral Foundations of Public Health and Health Policy*, expressions of wider concern and engagement, from both governments and institutions, are often the first step needed to begin the process of closing the disparity gap. These confessions and expressions of concern are public displays of re-

morse and respect. They specifically advance and champion the notion that members of disadvantaged minorities are en titled to equal regard and treatment as full moral persons. (Powers & Faden, 89).

Introduction to Concerns and Context of Sanctuary Hospice

Linda Gholston, Administrator of Sanctuary Hospice, has recognized the need to reach out and express concern about the plight of historically disadvantaged minorities, in order to begin the process of closing the health, treatment, and quality of care gap in hospice care. Gholston has particular concern about the lack of diversity within the staff and patient populations at Sanctuary Hospice, as close to 90% of patients and 80% of employees are white. Through surveys, interviews, and interactions with the staff, it is my intention to express her concern and to solicit advice concerning the best ways to overcome disparity and achieve greater diversity. I have found two site-specific relevant aspects of and reasons for the lack of diversity at Sanctuary Hospice that deserve wider discussion, including a lack of cultural compe-

tency and a lack of proper outreach and marketing to minority communities.

Cultural Competence

The first major aspect of the problems of disparity and lack of diversity, I discovered at Sanctuary Hospice, is a lack of cultural competency. The Department of Health and Human Services' Office of Minority Health describes culture and competence in the following ways, "*culture* refers to integrated patterns of human behavior that include the language, thoughts, communications, actions, customs, beliefs, values, and institutions of racial, ethnic, religious, or social groups" and "*competence* implies having the capacity to function effectively as an individual and an organization within the context of the cultural beliefs, behaviors, and needs presented" (United States Department of Health and Human Services' Office of Minority Health, 2005). With these definitions in mind, cultural competence implies that one knows how to function effectively within the context of cultural beliefs, behaviors, and needs presented. According to the Mississippi Department of Health Disparities, "culturally competent primary health services facilitate clinical en-

counters with more favorable outcomes, enhance the potential for a more rewarding interpersonal experience, and increases the satisfaction of individuals and families receiving services" (Mississippi Department of Health Disparities, 2003).

Over the past few weeks, I have interviewed and spent time with over fifty employees at Sanctuary Hospice. These discussions have yielded multiple examples of a lack of cultural competence with regard to the maintenance of an environment that is welcoming toward African-Americans and other minorities. Multiple Caucasian employees used the word 'colored' to describe their African-American patients and coworkers. These employees utilized this word with no regard as to who was around, indeed, four instances occurred while their African-American coworkers were present. Privately, I asked what this word meant to several African-American employees. The use of the word 'colored', they often said, harkens them back to an era of separate facilities, racial violence, and overt mandated discrimination. The consistent use of the word 'colored' speaks to a cultural incompetence on the part of many Caucasian employees at Sanctuary Hospice.

Over the past eight weeks, four employees passively used the word 'nig***' in conversations with me. I suspect, but remain unsure, that this word was used only around other white people. One of the employees used the term to inform me that "all da' nig***s are happy here at Sanctuary." Another employee told me that the reason the facility can't run right sometimes is due to "some of these ignorant gold-teethed nig***s who work here." These statements reveal racist attitudes maintained by some of Sanctuary's employees. The intermittent use of the words 'colored' and 'nig***,' according to the African-American staff that were asked, hinder progress toward the creation of a racially accepting and diverse context. Patients, families, and employees who hear these offensive terms are quickly reminded that they are in a white hegemonic context, where 80% of employees, 90% of patients, and 95% of the leadership is white. This does not help with efforts to achieve greater diversity at Sanctuary. Proper cultural competence would challenge and help eliminate these initial hindrances and problems standing in the way of achieving greater diversity.

The context of Sanctuary Hospice is Northeast Mississippi. In this context, it has been my experience that racially offen-

sive language can be heard by simply walking into the grocery store or down the street. Few employees, by their own admission, have ventured far out of this context. Most employees describe themselves as being totally formed and shaped by Mississippi. Many of these same employees were unable to understand why I would question their use of the words 'colored' and 'nig***.' To them, these words are as ap propriate as describing someone as 'tall' or 'short.' There is a stagnant ignorance that pervades the site with regard to what is appropriate racially sensitive language.

The leadership of Sanctuary Hospice needs to employ cultural competency training to positively shape their context. Many of these employees are going to have to be educated as to the meaning of and need for cultural competency before they will even begin to realize that there is a problem. The white employees' respective contexts have simply not allowed them to see that there is a problem with racially insen sitive language at Sanctuary Hospice. Proper culturally com petent language could go a long way to helping secure the positive and affirming diverse context Linda Gholston and the administration desire.

Outreach/Marketing

The second major aspect of the problems of disparity and lack of diversity, I have discovered at Sanctuary Hospice, is a lack of minority-specific outreach and marketing. Sanctuary Hospice is a well-marketed service to the wider community surrounding Tupelo, Mississippi. One does not have to look far in Tupelo to find Sanctuary Hospice's advertising, often with the tag-line "Everyone needs a Sanctuary." I have found this tag line to has gone viral in the community. Just the other day, I thanked my wife for picking me up, to which she jokingly replied, "No worries…Every one needs a Sanctuary." When my wife tells persons at our church where I am doing my practicum, they too jokingly reply, "Good…Everyone needs a Sanctuary." The doctor who is set to deliver our twins replied, upon hearing where I am currently work, also replied, "Well…Everyone does need a Sanctuary." Since I have lived in the community, I have seen and read multiple complimentary profiles of people and goings on at the Hospice. Many of the major civic fig-

ures in the area serve on the Board of Directors and often recommend the Hospice's services. Two marketing directors work five days a week traveling to local medical centers, churches, clubs, and other local institutions in cars with full graphic wraps publicizing the Hospice's services. These efforts yield many of the Hospice's patients. In short, this is not an institution that has had any issue publicizing or marketing itself or its services in the Tupelo area.

The numerous interviews, conversations, and focus groups of the past few weeks, however, have revealed a problem with the marketing Sanctuary Hospice employs and the publicity the Hospice receives. I have had multiple employees tell me that they feel the Hos pice inadvertently markets itself primarily to the Caucasian community. One employee said, "These white folks' commercials are not effective…Jeff, black folks ain't goin' to respond to no commercials with a bunch of smiling white people." The discussion revealed that some black employees substantially resented the publicity and commercials. An African-American nurses' aide revealed more repressed feelings, stating,

"Jeff…Who do you see on T.V. or in the newspaper when this place gets publicized??? White folks." Three employees held an extended discussion with me about the need for an African-American marketing director. One of them said, "Now Jeff…How can you expect two privileged white ladies to know how to reach out to black folks?" I was also struck by another statement from a Caucasian employee, "This is a white founded and operated institution…How do you expect us to know how to reach out to the so-called African-American community?" Further discussion with yet another two employees also revealed resentment around the four African-Americans that sit on the Board of Directors, "Those are the whitest black folks I have ever seen…Why don't they have any of our pastors or civic leaders?," one remarked. When told of these prior comments, one nurse remarked, "We could probably squeeze a black family or employee in there, but I don't want to put the ghetto crowd in there…it would make the Hospice look bad to white people…they are the ones paying the bills you know." These many varied statements reveal a substantial

gap between the perception of the Hospice Administration concerning what successful marketing and publicity looks like and the perception of many of their black employees.

When questioned about the effectiveness of their marketing and outreach campaigns, most white employees responded with statements like "Everyone at church thinks they are great" or "I hear many of my friends and family comment positively on them" or "Most of our patients' families say they have seen and like our commercials." The next question I ask is, "Are these groups mostly white?" The response is always something similar to "yes, but that doesn't mean they cannot know a good commercial." I even had one employee state, "Well I did have one of the few black ladies at my church ask me why there are so many white people on the commercials…but, I didn't think much of it…it was only one negative opinion in a sea of positives." I take numerous comments like these to mean that most of the administration and employees are evaluating the effectiveness of their marketing and outreach campaigns through the lens of their

> mostly white contexts, which doesn't allow room for many independent black opinions. Statements like these, when combined with previous derogatory statements made by employees, point to a gap in effective marketing to the black community that is probably opaque to many in the administration due to the overwhelmingly positive beliefs and attitudes of people within their contexts. They hear people in their churches and local communities talking about the positive effects of the marketing and think theirs is a job well done. The problem is that these spaces don't allow for many independent black opinions. When these opinions are offered, from black employees and one of the black ladies at a white employees' church, they seem like one or two negatives in a "sea of positives."

Based on their comments, I think that many members of the administration and employees do not understand the need for outreach directly to minority communities, due to their majority-white contexts. I think that the Hospice could really benefit from hiring someone whose sole job is to reach out and market Sanctuary to minorities. This action would

exhibit concern and respect for the problem and create good will in the community. I think this could be a really positive first step toward bridging the disparity gap and creating a more diverse environment at the Hospice.

Conclusion

Large questions of context arise when discussing issues of racial disparity and lack of diversity at Sanctuary Hospice. The two instances described in this paper include a lack of cultural competence and a lack of minority-focused marketing/publicity campaigns. It has been my experience that, in both situations, the white-dominated context often inhibits an ability to actually see the problems of disparity and lack of diversity from a minority perspective. My interactions with minority employees have greatly enhanced and informed my understanding of these problems and lead me to a few conclusions. Developing cultural competency through training exercises would help create the proper language and actions to foster a diverse environment. Reaching out to minority communities, perhaps even hiring a minority outreach co-

ordinator to direct such work, in ways that are more effective would also help to create a positive diverse racial perception of Sanctuary and could also have a direct effect on eliminating disparity. I think these are two major facets/aspects of the diversity problem at Sanctuary, which are perpetuated based on the maintenance and continuation of white-dominated atmospheres/contexts. Solving these problems begins with recognizing the existence of this context and bringing in a diversity of voices to help eliminate disparity and create a diverse context at Sanctuary Hospice.

Identifying the Key Parties and Obtaining Input

Starting the Project

During the first week of my practicum, I quickly realized that Linda Gholston was the key unchallenged leader of Sanctuary Hospice. Since she had blessed my project, I had very lit tle trouble getting started or interacting with employees. There were secretaries and other members of the hospice ad ministration prepared to assist me in whatever ways I needed. My first task was to collect as much data as I could about the racial make-up of the United States, Mississippi, Tupelo, and Sanctuary Hospice. I wanted to base my discussions with the employees around the latest data.

Collecting Data

I spent the first two days of my practicum scouring the offices of Sanctuary and the Internet. To gather the needed socio-economic information about surrounding populations I turned to the *United States Census Bureau*'s website. Here, I discovered that the United States is 72.4% white, 12.4% black, and 16.3% Hispanic

(http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/00000.html); Mississippi is 59.1% white, 37% black, and 2.7% Hispanic (http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/28000.html); and Tupelo is 58.7% white, 36.8% black, and 3.5% Hispanic (http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/28/2874840.html). I then went and gathered the racial make-up of all 1,402 of Sanctuary Hospice's patients since 2005. The patient population is 88.59% white, 10.77% black, and .21% Hispanic. I separated the statistics for the past year's 264 patients, they were 87.5% white, 10.98% black, and .76% Hispanic. I also spent time researching the racial make-up of employees and found that they are 80% white and 20% black. I looked into the earnings of employees at Sanctuary Hospice. I quickly realized that of the highest paying and most influential half of jobs, 90% are staffed by white persons and 10% are staffed by black persons (Sanctuary Hospice, 2012). Based on the 25.8% disparity gap in patients, the 16.8% disparity gap amongst employees, and the significant pay and influence gap, I was further affirmed in focusing my project on discussing disparity and diversity problems affecting two key groups, black employees and the wider black community/ potential patients. From the collection of these statistics, I

gained an ability to speak to the disparity and diversity issues at Sanctuary Hospice with real authority and precision.

Surveying the Population

The second task I undertook, toward the end of my first week, was to survey the project's key population, the employ ees. I wanted to be able to broadly understand their racial feelings and understandings before we began the focus groups and personal interviews. I accomplished this task through the construction of a yes or no styled survey. I consulted Giuseppe Larossi's *The Power of Survey Design: A User's Guide for Managing Surveys, Interpreting Results, and Influencing Respondents* throughout the process (Larossi, 2006). This book, though quite dense, gives valuable information about creating surveys and influencing respondents. I quickly realized that the survey would be a valuable way to introduce my project and start the needed disparity and diversity conversations with the employees of Sanctuary Hospice. I began the survey with an introduction of the project and myself, which read as follows:

January 11, 2012

Hello Sanctuary Hospice.

I hope this message finds you well. My name is Jeff Hood. I am a newly married 28 year-old-doctoral student at the University of Mississippi in U.S History. I have a background in ministry and hold a Master of Divinity from The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, a Master of Theology from Emory University, and a Master of Arts in U.S. History from the University of Alabama. In addition to my academic work in theology and history, I have a great interest in ethical behavior in healthcare. For the past year, I have been pursuing a Master of Science in Bioethics at Creighton University in Nebraska to this end. I am currently in the final stages of this degree and am responsible for completing a project that would help a healthcare organization become more ethical.

I approached Linda Gholston in November with this task in mind and asked if she could use any help at Sanctuary Hospice. She asked if I might be interested in completing a

project based around Sanctuary's present lack of minority patients and employees in comparison with the percentages of minorities in surrounding communities. Due to time constraints, I suggested that we limit the project to preliminary discussions with Sanctuary's employees. The result of these and further conversations is the present project you are being asked to participate in.

I will be conducting three phases of a race relations project at Sanctuary Hospice.

The first phase, you are currently holding in your hand. This is a survey of your racial ideals, ideologies, and thoughts both in general and in particular. I ask that you anonymously fill out the survey and place it in the marked box located next to Lisa Powers' office.

The second phase will be centered on 30-minute focus groups. These groups will be made up of five employees at a time and will take place during working hours. In the coming weeks you will be contacted concerning your appointed time to attend your particular small group discussion.

The third phase will be centered on personal interviews. These discussions will be an opportunity for many of you to elaborate on what you said in the focus groups.

Between these three phases, it is my goal to solicit your general and specific opinions of race relations and ascertain what you think Sanctuary Hospice can do to improve its number of minority patients and employees.

I am really excited about this project and working further with you.

I look forward to your input.

Jeff Hood

This letter was attached to every survey that went out and, intentionally, focused on the input that the employees could provide. Following this brief introduction, I included a short list of 16 questions, which read as follows:

Sanctuary Hospice Racial Relations Survey

Please Circle One Answer to All Questions and Return this Survey Portion to the Marked Box Next to Lisa Powers Office

Do you think that the United States is a racially sensitive/accepting place to live and work?

Yes or No

Do you think that Mississippi is a racially sensitive/accepting place to live and work?

Yes or No

Do you think that Lee County is a racially sensitive/accepting place to live and work?

Yes or No

Do you think that Tupelo is a racially sensitive/accepting place to live and work?

Yes or No

Do you consider yourself to hold racial prejudices?

Yes or No

Would it bother you or make you uncomfortable to work in an all-Caucasian or all-African-American or all-Hispanic context?

Yes or No

Do you have friends outside of Sanctuary Hospice House/ Home Hospice Services who are of opposite races?

Yes or No

Do you think that Sanctuary Hospice House/Home Hospice Services is a racially sensitive and accepting place to work?

Yes or No

Can you think of an instance of racism or paternalism at Sanctuary Hospice House/Home Hospice Services you have witnessed or heard about within the last year?

Yes or No

Do you ever feel uncomfortable working with someone of an other race at Sanctuary Hospice House/Home Hospice Services?

Yes or No

Have you ever felt concerned about the lack of minority patients treated by Sanctuary Hospice House/Home Hospice Services?

Yes or No

Does the lack of minority employees in prominent positions within Sanctuary Hospice House/Home Hospice Services bother you?

Yes or No

Do you think that minorities are aware of the services of Sanctuary Hospice House/Home Hospice?

Yes or No

Do you believe that Sanctuary Hospice House/Home Hospice Services does an adequate job of reaching out to minori ties in the surrounding areas?

Yes or No

Can you think of immediate improvements that could be made to better serve minority patients at Sanctuary Hospice House/Home Hospice Services?

Yes or No

Do these questions make you uncomfortable?

Yes or No

These questions were constructed in a specific way to allow for an introduction to many of the topics that I hoped to cover in the focus groups and personal interviews. I spoke with two employees to make sure that they understood the topics discussed. I specifically asked if they thought that people would understand the concept of paternalism and one responded, "I think that anyone who is reasonably educated can understand this survey and you have to be reasonably educated to work here." The other employee affirmed these assertions. After this practical encounter, I proceeded with the survey. Lisa Powers, one of Mrs. Gholston's chief lieutenants, made sure that the survey got out to and was completed by most of the employees at Sanctuary Hospice. Fifty employees anonymously returned surveys to the box next to Mrs. Powers' office. The results were as follows:

Sanctuary Hospice Racial Relations Survey

Please Circle One Answer to All Questions and Return this Survey Portion to the Marked Box Next to Lisa Powers Office

Do you think that the United States is a racially sensitive/accepting place to live and work?

86% Yes / 14% No

Do you think that Mississippi is a racially sensitive/accepting place to live and work?

70% Yes / 30% No

Do you think that Lee County is a racially sensitive/accepting place to live and work?

70% Yes / 30% No

Do you think that Tupelo is a racially sensitive/accepting place to live and work?

72% Yes / 28% No

Do you consider yourself to hold racial prejudices?

12% Yes / 88% No

Would it bother you or make you uncomfortable to work in an all-Caucasian or all-African-American or all-Hispanic context?

72% Yes / 28% No

Do you have friends outside of Sanctuary Hospice House/ Home Hospice Services who are of opposite races?

92% Yes / 8% No

Do you think that Sanctuary Hospice House/Home Hospice Services is a racially sensitive and accepting place to work?

50% Yes / 50% No

Can you think of an instance of racism or paternalism at Sanctuary Hospice House/Home Hospice Services you have witnessed or heard about within the last year?

12% Yes / 88% No

Do you ever feel uncomfortable working with someone of an other race at Sanctuary Hospice House/Home Hospice Services?

14% Yes / 86% No

Have you ever felt concerned about the lack of minority patients treated by Sanctuary Hospice House/Home Hospice Services?

14% Yes / 86% No

Does the lack of minority employees in prominent positions within Sanctuary Hospice House/Home Hospice Services bother you?

20% Yes / 80% No

Do you think that minorities are aware of the services of Sanctuary Hospice House/Home Hospice?

72% Yes / 28% No

Do you believe that Sanctuary Hospice House/Home Hospice Services does an adequate job of reaching out to minori ties in the surrounding areas?

92% Yes / 8% No

Can you think of immediate improvements that could be made to better serve minority patients at Sanctuary Hospice House/Home Hospice Services?

20% Yes / 80% No

Do these questions make you uncomfortable?

14% Yes / 86% No

When I first quantified the results of the survey, I studied them very closely. Most of the answers broke down along predictable lines, 90-10, 80-20, or 70-30. The response that didn't was the most surprising answer of all. Right at 50% of respondents claimed that they did not believe that Sanctuary Hospice is a racially sensitive and accepting place to work. I

intentionally placed this question later in the survey, after respondents answered other questions of a similar nature, to make sure that they did not misunderstand the question. Judging from the responses to the rest of the questions, I think that this response is a fairly accurate portrayal of how the employees feel. As mentioned in a previous section, the response to question 8 changed my project. I knew from this moment forward that there would be a need to base much of my work around deciphering the amount or quality of racial sensitivity that existed at Sanctuary Hospice. These initial findings helped to direct my preparation for the upcoming focus groups and the personal interviews.

> Between the quantification of the survey results and the focus groups, I went to talk about my preliminary findings with Linda Gholston. She was as shocked as I was to learn that 50% of respondents claimed that they did not believe that Sanctuary Hospice is a racially sensitive and accepting place to work. She asked if I thought that there was some kind of wording mistake. I told her that the survey was set up in a way that should have prevented any mistakes. The next step I informed her was to ask the employees

themselves. I made an educated assumption that if 50% of employees truly believed that Sanctuary Hospice was an insensitive environment, it would come out in the focus groups and personal interviews.

Focus Groups

I wanted to make sure that I organized and conducted the focus groups in a way that encouraged the greatest openness in discussion. I used Pranee Liamputtong's *Focus Group Methodology: Principles and Practice* to help me achieve these goals (Liamputtong,2011). I hosted ten different groups of employees. The sessions all proved colorful and rarely lasted less than 45 minutes. I intentionally organized my first two groups to be all black and all white. This allowed me two homogenous groups to compare with the diverse groups. I thought this would be helpful to see if employees' comments changed based on the diversity of their environment. The very first all black group revealed some interesting information. This group included the three black employees at the Hospice and they voiced complaints about the nature of the envi-

ronment at Sanctuary. They cited the intermittent use of troublesome language, the lack of black outreach/marketing, the lack of celebration on Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s birthday, and the lack of more black members of the Board of Directors as evidences of an insensitive environment. The group suggested that hiring some type of person in charge of minority outreach and affairs would be really helpful. The next group of three white nursing assistants immediately stated, upon starting the discussion, that they did not think that there was a problem and then proceeded to often use the word "colored." When I asked if they thought that the word "colored" might be inappropriate, they responded that I was being too sensitive. This group also informed me that Sanctuary Hospice has always been a largely white hospice and they didn't see any problem with that. The third group wondered aloud, "Where are the current marketing persons going and who are they focusing on?" They seemed to think that it was the fault of the marketing directors that more black patients were not coming to Sanctuary Hospice. They also stated their belief that

the Hospice was not as sensitive of an environment as it needed to be. The fourth group argued often about the use of the word "colored." Two white ladies in the group did not think it should be offensive and one black lady said it was. The group, ultimately, came to the conclusion that, if it is as offensive as the black lady says it is, there might just be a need to eliminate this word from the vocabulary of Sanctuary Hospice. The fifth group turned out to be all white and was probably the most caustic group that I had. Throughout our time together, one lady in the group went on and on about how stupid an exercise the entire conversation and project was. "The coloreds have it made," she added. Others in the group were not as caustic, but were simply unable to understand why there should be any concern around the racial disparity and lack of diversity existent at Sanctuary Hospice. At the end of the group, one of the ladies meekly stated that she thought it might be a good idea to hold training to help employees to be more sensitive to other cultures. The caustic lady responded, "For what?" The sixth group began with a young black em

ployee stating, "Jeff-I am going to go ahead and tell you that Mississippi is backward and the only reason that Sanctuary Hospice is sometimes insensitive is due to the fact that it exists in Mississippi." This group agreed that there was a need for greater sensitivity at the Hospice. They spoke of the need for wider outreach to the black community. The seventh and eighth groups were all white and maintained many of the similar themes of previous all white groups. They could not understand why there was a need to study racial disparity and a lack of diversity. "I love everybody…" was a consistent phrase used. These two groups intermittingly used the word "colored" and in one group one lady accidentally (based on the look on their face) used the word "nig***." The ninth group included two black employees. These employees were very vocal about their love for the Hospice and their desire to make it more attractive to the black community. They felt that hiring a black minority outreach manager could be a huge step in building trust, eliminating disparity, and creating a more diverse environment. "Jeff-there is a large number of black people

who could be helped by this place…if they knew that this was a safe environment to come to," one lady added. I responded by asking, "Do you think if that this is a safe environment now?" All four members of the group separately responded that they thought that Sanctuary was a safe environment, just not all that welcoming to minorities. "Jeff-there is a need for training," one lady surmised. In the tenth and final group, a black lady and white lady went back and forth about whether there was a need for wider outreach to the black community. The group exhibited to me on a micro level the wider lack of a racially welcoming diverse environment at Sanctuary Hospice. These group discussions proved to me that there is a desperate need for cultural/racial sensitivity training and an added need for someone to be hired to conduct outreach/marketing to the black community.

Following these groups, I went to talk with Linda Gholston. I informed her of the many insensitive and troubling comments that I heard. I told her that I could now understand why 50% of respondents claimed that they did not believe that Sanctuary Hos-

pice is a racially sensitive and accepting place to work. I spoke of the need to begin with two big steps, conducting racial sensitivity training and hiring someone to be in charge of outreach/marketing to the black community. She agreed that these were both good practical ideas and that she would give them further thought. I told her that I was now going to start the personal interview phase of my project. She said she looked forward to hearing from more people.

Personal Interviews

I completed the personal interview phase of my project within the last two weeks of my practicum. The initial goal was to interact with some of the more zealous persons in the focus groups one-on-one. I also wanted to hear the opinions of various people who were unable to come to the focus groups. I interviewed probably close to twenty people. Two of the interviews turned out to be with virulent racists. They used the word "nig***" over and over again when describing the black employees and patients of the Hospice. The five black employees I interviewed each recounted similar stories

of encountering racial insensitivity. They all suggested sensitivity training as a really positive first step for dealing with some of these issues. They each told me that they are bothered by the lack of black employees in prominent positions within Sanctuary Hospice. They suggested that hiring a minority outreach director and making him or her a member of the administration would be a bold statement. One of the white employees I interacted with asked for my forgiveness for some of the things that she said in the group. She said that she was just having a bad day. I extended my forgiveness and we talked about the need for greater sensitivity when discussing racial issues. The last two employees I interviewed were white. They both told me that they were embarrassed of many of the other white employees for the way that they act around black employees. "They are just ignorant and don't know no better," one lady said. Both of these employees thought that sensitivity training would be a really positive first step toward eliminating disparity and encouraging a diverse environment. They also liked the idea of someone being hired to head up minority outreach. These ten interactions substantiated my conclusions from the fo-

cus groups and propelled me to want to try to interact with a few more people.

Throughout my practicum project, I have identified and interacted with key parties. I first figured out that Linda Gholston was the head and unchallenged leader of Sanctuary Hospice. I have relied on her for advice, encouragement, and direction. I then figured out, with Dr. Stone's help, what key groups I might need to concentrate on in order to gain a wider understanding of the disparity, insensitivity, and lack of diversity at Sanctuary Hospice. I settled on interacting with employees, due to their proximity to and need to know about the problems. I deployed three methods for obtaining input regarding the ethical problems of disparity, insensitivity, and lack of diversity, including a survey, focus groups, and personal interviews. In this report, I have based my con clusions on the interactional methods.

Analyzing Results and Proposing Solutions

Learning Goals

I constructed a learning plan that identified four achievable goals centered on the organization of focus groups. First, I stated a desire "to learn how to organize small groups of peo ple/employees to discuss race relations at Sanctuary Hospice." Second, I stated a desire "to learn how to facilitate open and practical dialogue concerning race relations within small groups at Sanctuary Hospice." Third, I stated a desire "to learn how to organize and summarize the information I gain from these group dialogues into helpful written reports that are of benefit to Sanctuary Hospice." Fourth, I stated a desire "to learn how to present appropriate suggestions for the future to the administration of Sanctuary Hospice." These four learning goals represented an honest attempt to effectively construct the project. In my achievement of these four goals, I discovered a wealth of information that pointed me to solutions and inadvertently expanded the project.

Expanding Forms of Communication

The project has focused on gathering information and opinions concerning a lack of diversity and continuing racial disparity at Sanctuary Hospice. Although I remained committed to the focus groups, I quickly realized, at the onset of my project, that I was going to have to employ further methods of communication, at both the beginning and end, in order to be able to both introduce the project and critically evaluate conclusions. I decided to expand the project and add two forms of communication: an introductory survey and follow-up interviews. The introductory survey helped me to introduce the project to the employees and garner preliminary opinions before the focus groups began. The results allowed me a chance to ask specific questions and confront the groups with particular responses from their fellow employees. The follow-up personal interviews allowed me to ask specific employees about their responses to the initial survey and their experiences in the groups. Many employees got the chance to say things in the personal interviews that they might have felt uncomfortable saying in the groups. The utilization of these various forms of com

munication allowed me the chance to hear a plethora of responses to the ethical problems of racial disparity and a lack of diversity. In many of these responses, the suggestions were similar. In the sections that follow, I intend to illustrate how the responses of employees helped me to formulate two distinct solutions to the interconnected ethical problems of racial disparity and a lack of diversity. I intend to begin with the problem of a lack of diversity.

Lack of Diversity

Mrs. Gholston's initial concerns about a lack of diversity at Sanctuary Hospice have only become exacerbated, in my mind, based on my interactions with the employees. In my initial collection of data, I realized that close to 90% of patients and exactly 80% of employees are white. Upon distribution and dissemination of the survey, 50% of employees responded that they did not feel like Sanctuary Hospice is a racially sensitive environment. In the focus groups, continued use of the word "colored," use of the word "nig****," numerous unsubstantiated hostile refer-

ences to the privileged status of black people, and frequent descriptions of Sanctuary as insensitive all spoke to and confirmed contextual and cultural reasons for the persistent lack of diversity. In numerous personal interviews, employees consistently remarked that one of the main reasons that Sanctuary is not a diverse environment is that "it is not an environ ment welcoming of diversity." During personal interviews, two other diversity issues besides race became apparent, religious beliefs and sexuality. In three different personal interviews, I was made aware of an in sensitive situation involving a Muslim patient, who asked for his beard to not be cut and to not be visited by the chaplain. All three accounts confirmed that when the often-unruly patient grew too weak to resist, his beard was cut and a chaplain regularly visited his room. This account revealed a problem with Sanctuary's maintenance of a religiously diverse environment. In another personal interview, a woman revealed herself to be a lesbian. She described numerous encounters with other employees and the chaplain where she was told things like, "I am praying for

you and your sexuality" or "The Bible says that homosexuality is a sin." She said that these encounters often made her feel uncomfortable and she would like for them to stop. This account revealed a problem with Sanctuary's maintenance of a diverse environment with regard to sexual orientation. When engaged by the project, minorities have consistently, through multiple means of communication, described Sanctuary Hospice as an occasionally insensitive and often culturally incompetent environment. All of these instances combined to inform me that Sanctuary is unable to maintain a diverse environment due, at least in part, to the cultural incompetence of many of their employees.

Cultural Competence

As mentioned in a previous section, cultural competence implies that one knows how to function effectively within the context of the various cultural beliefs, behaviors, and needs

presented. According to the Mississippi Department of Health, "culturally competent primary health services facilitate clinical encounters with more favorable outcomes, enhance the potential for a more rewarding interpersonal expe rience, and increases the satisfaction of individuals and families receiving services" (Mississippi Department of Health, 2003). Based on my interactions with employees and their revelations about themselves and their work environment, I don't believe that the staff at Sanctuary Hospice has proper cultural competence. The logical way to deal with such deficiency is through an extended program of cultural competency training. When I first broached this solution with Mrs. Gholston, she informed me that Sanctuary Hospice has never participated in any type of cultural competency training. I told her that I suspected that much of the failure to maintain a welcoming and diverse environment has to do with cultural incompetence and that I would construct a plan to tackle this area. Cultural competency training is my primary solution for beginning the process of creating an environment that is welcoming to diversity.

Cultural Competency Training

According to *Health Affairs*, the goal of cultural competency training is "to create a healthcare system and workforce that are capable of delivering the highest-quality care to every patient regardless of race, ethnic ity, culture, or language proficiency" (Betancourt, Green, Carillo, & Park, 2005). Creating an environment capable of handling diversity takes work and de termination, especially in an environment where 80% of your employees are white. "It is imperative to begin with a broad overview of the goals of and need for cul tural competence training," writes Ruth Carol in *Minority Nurse* (Carol, 2007). The employees of Sanctuary Hospice should be made aware of my study and interactions with their fellow employees to inform them why there is a need for cultural competency training. The goals of the training should concentrate on issues of race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and reli gious preference. I think that citation of specific incidences of culturally insensitivity that have occurred at Sanctuary Hospice should be presented and dis-

cussed amongst the group. The administration needs to make clear what are and what are not appropriate responses to diverse situations. I would recommend that the administration inform staff of immediate prohibitions of the words "colored" and "nig***," negative or concerned remarks or actions based on someone's sexuality, and negative or concerned remarks or actions based on someone's religious preferences. I think that reversed role-play situations, where a white person or Christian is being discriminated against or disrespected, could also be very helpful in revealing the danger of cultural incompetence. An experienced, educated, and well-trained cultural competency educator could address, train against, and recommend policies to combat all of the insensitive remarks and actions brought to light by this project.

There are many resources available in Mississippi to help Sanctuary Hospice organize cultural competency training. There is an "Ethics and Cultural Diversity in Helping Professions" class occurring on March 23, 2012 at New Beginnings Adoption and Family Services Center in Tupelo and the contact is Leah Sharpe

at 662-842-6752 x 103 (National Association of Social Workers, http://www.naswmschapter.org/continued.html). This could be a quick way to have a discussion with someone who is holding cultural competency training in the Tupelo area. The University of Mississippi Medical Center has a Division of Multicultural Affairs that offers cultural competency site training and the contact is Gaarmel Funches, Director of Community Education and Outreach, at 601-984-1340 (University of Mississippi Medical Center Division of Multicultural Affairs, http://mca.umc.edu/staff.html). This could be a way to directly set up site training by competent experienced educators. North Mississippi Medical Center in Tupelo, Mississippi has offered cultural competency training in the past through their community outreach department headed by Dr. Ormella Cummings. This would be a great way to dis cuss conducting cultural competency training, see what local competency training has looked like in the past, and confirm if there are any future dates planned for cultural competency training. Dr. Cum-

mings can be contacted at 662-377-3000 (North Mississippi Medical Center, http://www.nmhs.net/ormella_cummings.php).

The Mississippi Department of Health's Office of Health Disparity Elimination would be a helpful contact for locating competent cultural competency trainers in Mississippi. The office can be contacted at 601-576-8102 (Mississippi Department of Health Office of Health Disparity Elimination, http://msdh.ms.gov/msdhsite/index.cfm/44,0,236,html). All of these contacts could provide helpful advice and guidance for beginning the process of organizing cultural competency training and securing competent teachers.

Eliminating Racial Disparity

The racial disparity problem at Sanctuary Hospice is statistically apparent, only a little over 10% of Sanctuary Hospice's patients are black in an area where the population is nearly 40% black. Based on my conversations with employees, there are two major reasons for this ethical dilemma that consistently came up, in-

cluding an inability to maintain an environment that is welcoming to diversity and a failure to properly market Sanctuary's services to minority communities. The first major reason, a failure to maintain an environment that is welcoming to diversity, has already been discussed in great detail. Cultural competency training should go a long way to securing an environment that is welcoming to diversity. Such an achievement alone, however, would not solve the racial disparity problem at Sanctuary Hospice. There is a need for marketing and outreach that can eliminate disparity through securing a positive/desirable standing in minority communities and helping to attract more minority patients and families to the Hospice. My conversations and communications have revealed that many employees do not think that Sanctuary has done an adequate job of reaching out and marketing themselves to minority communities. One of the primary reasons continuously cited by employees is a lack of diversity in those Sanctuary utilizes, re cruits, or hires to market its services to minority communities.

Minority Outreach Director

I am proposing hiring a minority as the minority outreach director to help build upon strides made to make Sanctuary Hospice a more welcoming environment of diversity. This is not a new concept and many colleges, government institutions, and hospitals already have offices and coordinators in place to direct outreach and marketing to minority communities. Sanctuary Hospice already employs multiple marketing directors who go out into the community to promote hospice services to medical institutions, churches, civic clubs, and other organizations. This would be the minority outreach director's job as well, except with a concentration on minority institutions. The director would need a similar sized budget to the other marketing officers in order to make sure that he or she is able to reach minority communities through multimedia outlets. The Hospice should also place a premium on the minority outreach director recruiting minority pastors and community leaders to serve on

Sanctuary's Board of Directors. The director could hold events at the Hospice, like a King Day Service, Gospel Choir Service, Employee Outreach Day, or Cinco de Mayo Celebration, that specifically target minority communities and make the place more accessible and diverse. These events, when combined with proper marketing, could do wonders for bolstering Sanctuary Hospice's reputation in minority communities. The minority outreach director could help continue the conversations of diversity and disparity long after this project is complete. The director could develop trusting relationships with medical institutions that minorities frequent, so that they will have no trouble or hesitancy referring their patients to the Hospice. Based on conversations with many employees, it seems that many in minority communities just need to feel a part of the Hospice so that they will know that Sanctuary will be a resource when they need it. I believe that hiring a minority outreach director would show concern, create awareness, produce an increase in minority patients, help manifest diverse interactions, and help close the disparity gap.

I recommend that the Hospice pursue filling this position with the same swift speed that they pursue holding cultural competency training.

There are many resources available to Sanctuary Hospice as they seek to find a minority outreach director. I think one of the best resources that Sanctuary has, which I have consistently utilized for this project, are their minority employees. I think it would be wise to put one of Sanctuary's minority employees on a hiring committee to help identify the best candidate. I also think that it would be wise to utilize some of the pastors of the larger minority churches in town for the hiring committee. Pastor Robert Jamison of People's Community Baptist Church in Tupelo has been recommended for placement on a committee to help find a minority outreach director by numerous employees. Pastor Jamison can be reached at 662-844-1118 (People's Community Baptist Church, http://pcbctupelo.net/7101.html). Numerous employees have also mentioned North Mississippi Medical Center's Chief Strategy Officer, Dr. Ormella Cummings, as a major resource available to assist in the

hiring of a minority outreach director. Dr. Cummings can be contacted at 662-377-3000 (North Mississippi Medical Center, http://www.nmhs.net/ormella_cummings.php). Dr. Donald Cole, Assistant Provost and Assistant to the Chancellor Concerning Minority Affairs, is responsible for minority student and faculty recruitment and retention at the University of Mississippi. His office could serve as a valuable resource for constructing a similar office at Sanctuary Hospice. Dr. Cole could also serve as a valuable mentor to the hiring committee and to the future minority outreach director (Office of the Provost, http://www.olemiss.edu/provost/staff.html). Franciscan Health Systems' Hospice, the largest provider of hospice services in Washington state, runs a successful outreach program to help make minority populations more aware of hospice care. This program has helped bridge the disparity gap in Washington (Franciscan Health System News and Information, http://www.fhshealth.org/News.aspx?arch=1&newsid=369). It would be wise to get in

touch with the program and see how they have been successful. Charles Horne, their minority outreach coordinator, runs the program and can be contacted at 253-534-7000 (Franciscan Hospice and Palliative Care, http://www.fhshealth.org/Health-Care-Services/Hospice-and-Palliative-Care/). Kansas City Hospice and Palliative Care has also seen tremendous success after hiring a minority community outreach director. The percentage of their African-American patients dramatically increased, from 8% to 14%, in less than two years (Kansas City Hospice and Palliative Care, *Hospice Management Advisor*, Nov. 2010). Brenda Sanders, their minority outreach director, would be a good person to contact concerning the process of hiring a minority outreach director and creating a minority outreach program. She can be reached at 816-363-2600 (Kansas City Hospice and Palliative Care, http://www.kansascityhospice.org/Information/ContactUs.asp?~=). All of these resources combined should be very helpful in beginning the process of se-

curing a minority outreach director to help eliminate the disparity gap at Sanctuary Hospice.

Conclusion

I think that a two-pronged approach is the best way to tackle the lack of a diverse environment and the persistent disparity gap at Sanctuary Hospice. Cultural competency training should help to create an environment that is welcoming to diversity. A minority outreach director can help fill the achieved welcoming space with a diversity of people. The minority outreach director can also help maintain a diverse and welcoming environment to make sure that gains are not lost. These solutions combine to offer Sanctuary Hospice an escape from a continued homogenous environment.

Possible Objections

No report is ever complete without addressing possible objections. Throughout this project, I have tried to keep possible objections in mind and incubate my project from them. I have spent tireless hours researching the best possible ways

to construct surveys, focus groups, and personal interviews around the topics of disparity and lack of diversity in a particular setting. This project is a result of these hours and I have only strayed from the expert's advice when the situation demanded it. I have worked hard and endured difficult situations to produce the best results possible. Whether I have been successful or not, will be up to the reader. I would, however, like to address three main objections that could be raised.

First, there could be objections based on my concentration on employees and not people in the community. I understand this objection and, in some ways, sympathize with it. If there had been more time, I would have loved to have gone out into the community and secured a broader range of perspective. There was not and the work that I have done is based on the perspectives of the people who are closest to the problems, the employees. I believe that they above all others are able to speak about the internal and external dynamics of Sanctuary Hospice that might contribute to the continuation of problems of disparity and a lack of diversity. With such affirmed, this project is intended to be a place to start further

work from and, perhaps, the next person can have more intentional interactions with the community.

Second, I am aware that objections could be made as to myself as head of the project or to the methods that I used to go about securing information from the employees. To this I can only respond that I am a white male who did the best that they could with the allotted time given. I don't feel that people were any less open with me than they would have been with a racial minority or female. In fact, I think my race sometimes helped the project. I think many African-Americans simply wanted to talk to anyone who would listen and white people felt like it was safe to be open around me. I utilized three different forms of communication to solicit opinions, an anonymous survey, open focus groups, and private personal interviews, and feel that this allowed more than enough room for all employees' opinions to come across. I think that any one method could be isolated and criticized, perhaps a question on the survey, the intimidation of focus groups, or the discomfort of a personal interview, but together I believe that they present a strong myriad of options for expression from the employees. Considering all three op tions, I am of the firm belief that I have been granted a

unique purview into the working environment of Sanctuary Hospice.

Third, I am aware that this project is only as valuable as the truth of the perspectives that the employees shared with me and the veracity of my reporting of what they said. I know that there will be some who encounter this document who question whether many of these statements were ever made or are being reported correctly. To this, I can only reply that I have done the best I could to protect the identities of those who shared, anonymously report what was said, and come to conclusions based on the information that was given to me. I realize that some of the employees' statements could have been embellished or lies. There is no way for me to know or check. The only thing that I can say is that many of the state ments that I heard lined up directly with the statements of others. I also employed the survey to see if there were any large trends and 50% of employees said that they felt that Sanctuary Hospice was not a racially sensitive environment. The statements that were made to me and are subsequently contained in this report seem to verify this initial finding. So whether particular statements were embellished or made-up is of little consequence to the fact that there is a documented

disparity problem and a large trend of insensitivity that was revealed in the survey and verified through subsequent conversations.

While I realize that there is no way to incubate a project against all objections or criticisms, I have done my best to speak to three possible significant objections. I have done my best to complete the project openly, solicit opinions, and report them accurately. The project has always been about the employees of Sanctuary Hospice and their opinions. My conclusions can only rest on what they told me. The veracity of their claims and my conclusions are left up to the reader to judge.

Conclusion

The employees of Sanctuary Hospice have helped me to create a project that speaks to the ethical problems of disparity and lack of diversity. Through three means of communication, a survey, focus groups, and personal interviews, the employees have worked tirelessly to offer openness, dissent, encouragement, and solutions. The two-pronged approach of cultural competency training and hiring a minority outreach director is a direct result of these conversations. It is my hope that all who read this study at Sanctuary Hospice will be challenged to tackle the issues of disparity and lack of diversity using the methods recommended jointly by the em ployees and myself. I think that this path offers Sanctuary Hospice the opportunity to fulfill their mission and reach all persons in the community with their services.

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BOOK 16

The Revised Gospels of Jesus Christ

Jeff Hood

2020

The preface gives the whole origin. Late one night, something happened, Hood is not sure what, and by morning these revisions existed. He released them over time because he thought they might overwhelm all at once. He warns that he made mistakes in the transcription. The date is May 24, 2020.

Each of the four takes a canonical gospel chapter by chapter, keeps its numbering, moves it to Texas.

Jesus on Death Row follows Matthew. Jesus is born in Harris County to a long line of oppressed people. Herod is the Governor, the magi are nuns off a bus from the East Coast, the first disciples are shrimpers called from the cells across the pod. The Lord's Prayer asks forgiveness "as we forgive all who incarcerate us." After the resurrection, the bishops protect their money by pretending they never knew him.

The Sociopathic Jesus follows Mark, and it is the hard one. Hood calls it revelation through negation. Its Jesus is a self-

ish man adored in a Dallas club, announced by a bartender in designer jeans. His gospel of fabulousness destroys the world. Only in the afterlife does God show everyone the real Jesus. They seem to know her.

Frances follows Luke. The Christ is a daughter, born in Lubbock, laid on an old mattress behind a dumpster. She is executed. Afterward, three disciples walk from Dallas to Fort Worth in a protest against the death penalty, grieving her, without recognizing the woman who has joined them on the road.

The Queer follows John, from “In the beginning was the Queer” to a last line that sends the reader back to the first book in this volume: “The Queer of Ponder is Jesus of Nazareth.”

These pages are rough by the author's own account. Across close to sixty thousand words, Christ is killed in Texas four times.

The Revised Gospels of Jesus Christ

Jeff Hood

Late one night, something happened. I'm not entirely sure what. I just know that God found me. By the morning, I'd written, "The Revised Gospels of Jesus Christ." They're writ ten from where I was at. I released them over time. I guess I thought they might be too overwhelming all at once. In these revisions, I found relevance. In the midst of transcription, I am sure that I made mistakes. It was impossible to prevent it...everything was just coming at me so fast. Regardless, there is life to be found in these words. I know. I've lived them.

Rev. Dr. Jeff Hood

May 24, 2020

Jesus on Death Row

A Revision of the Gospel of Matthew

1.

Jesus the Messiah descended from a long line of oppressed people. For twelve generations, Jesus' family struggled to survive. The story of Jesus was born into flesh in Harris County, Texas.

Mary was embarrassed to be pregnant. Not knowing how she got pregnant or even how Joseph would respond, Mary tried to hide the changes in her body. When the child started to show, Joseph asked Mary what was going on. Not wanting to lie, Mary declared that she was pregnant by the Holy Spirit. Joseph was furious and planned to never talk to her again. Running away in deep pain and anger, Joseph collapsed in an alley. Exhausted from crying and shaking over the loss of his one true love, Joseph fell into a deep sleep.

Joseph didn't know whether he was dreaming or not when an angel appeared to him and declared, "Come on man. Do you honestly think Mary was sleeping around? Go and take her as your wife. God put the child there for a reason. The child will go by Jesus and will save all people from their sins." These events took place in accordance with the words of a

prophet, "It will be hard to believe, but a virgin will have a son. When the child is born, everyone will call him Emmanuel or the God who is with us." Joseph woke up and wondered about his sanity. When he realized that he was of sound mind, Joseph married Mary. The couple didn't have sex the whole pregnancy and the baby was born. The family proudly called him Jesus.

2.

Rolling in by bus from the East Coast, wise nuns arrived to Texas and asked, "Where is this child that was revealed to us in prayer to be the Messiah? We saw his star in the sky." When the Governor heard this, he was frightened that oppressed people would rise up together and overthrow his unjust system. Quickly, he brought the wise nuns in and confirmed the information. Scrambling, the Governor left and spoke with his closest advisors. Everyone gathered agreed, the child was a threat that must be eliminated.

The Governor brought the wise nuns back in and encouraged, "Go and find the child. When you do, please send word back. We want to celebrate his birth." Increasingly suspi-

cious, the wise nuns left and followed the star. Not long after they arrived in Harris County, the wise nuns saw the star stopped over a housing project. The wise nuns raced into the apartment to behold Mary with her child. Slapping tambourines and cheering, the wise nuns worshipped at the feet of the child. The wise nuns opened their suitcases and offered beautiful stones and precious metals from the East Coast as gifts. Bright lights in their dreams warned them to not return anywhere close to where the Governor was. The wise nuns got back on the bus and quietly returned to their home.

The Governor was aggressive toward oppressed folks and the people in Jesus' neighborhood had had enough. Nobody knew when the next tragedy was about to go down. With vio lence everywhere, God appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Take your child to Mexico and remain there until I tell you to come back." Joseph packed everything and the family was off. The journey across the desert was difficult. After many days, Joseph, Mary and Jesus crossed the Mexican border and began to live undocumented in Mexico. This was

to fulfill what was spoken by God through the prophet, "Out of Mexico I have called my son."

When the Governor realized the wise nuns tricked him, he became enraged. Declaring martial law in Harris County, the Governor proceeded to destroy every opportunity for advancement that any young oppressed men might have and ordered the police to harass them at every turn. "Shoot at the slightest provocation!" the Governor ordered. Lives were de stroyed daily. This fulfilled the prophecy of Jeremiah, "Voices were wailing in lamentation and mothers wept for the lose of their children, because they are no more."

Many years later, the Governor died in a fit of rage. God appeared to Joseph and told him, "Get up and take Jesus and Mary back to Harris County. The Governor is dead." Packing up, the family started to travel through the desert. Journeying back into the United States was more difficult than leaving it. Customs and Border Patrol agents were everywhere. None of the group had enough water to drink and each of them fell down exhausted on multiple occasions. If it weren't for Mary pushing the family along, they would have died. When Joseph heard who the new Governor was, he be

came afraid to go home. God assured him that he would keep the family safe. When the family arrived in Harris County, Mary suggested that they settle in Houston. The family made their home in Houston, so that what had been spoken through the prophets would be fulfilled, "The child will be called a Houstonian."

Many years after the family returned to Harris County, Jesus was sharing wine with others at a wedding party when a cou ple was shot and killed. Although there was no evidence or witnesses linking him to the crime, the District Attorney decided Jesus fired the shots and filed capital murder charges. Jesus' family had no money for counsel. To sway the jury, the District Attorney repeatedly called for vengeance and blood. While his public defender slept throughout the trial, Jesus was found guilty and sentenced to death. Until the date of execution arrived, Jesus would sit in solitary confinement on the Polunsky Unit or Texas' Death Row.

3.

John the Baptist appeared in a cell on the pod and loudly proclaimed, "Repent! The realm of God is upon us!" John

was the one that Isaiah spoke about when he shouted, "The one crying out in the pod: Prepare the way of God, make the paths straight."

John only ate health food and refused to eat any of the food served on the row. People from all over the country wrote to him, many believed him to have special spiritual powers. Af ter the writers repented of their sin, John would splash water on a card, include instructions to rub it on their forehead and mail it to them for their baptism.

When the guards walked by, John screamed out, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bear fruit worthy of repentance. You don't get a pass to do evil because of your position; God is the one who makes justice not you. Every tree that does not bear good fruit will be chopped down and thrown into the fire!"

"I try to baptize you with water for repentance, but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to stoop down and slip off his sandals. He will baptize with the Holy Spirit and fire. He will gather all the wheat and toss the chaff into the unquenchable fire."

Then Jesus arrived on the pod from Harris County. Upon ar rival, Jesus asked for John′s baptism. Thinking he wasn′t worthy to baptize Jesus, John quarreled. Jesus replied, ″Let it be so, for I need to be an example to the others.″ John con sented. Through passing notes, the two planned to do the baptism as Jesus walked by John′s cell the next day. The hour came for Jesus to be taken outside for recreation and John tossed Jesus the water card as he walked by his cell. When Jesus rubbed the water card on his forehead, the ceil- ing of the Polunsky Unit opened up and the Spirit of God de- scended on him in the form of a dove. A voice from heaven spoke and said, ″This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.″

4.

The guards could not believe what happened. Everyone was afraid of Jesus. Deciding to place him on a higher level of punishment, Jesus was put in a padded solitary room and not allowed to leave for forty days and forty nights. While

there, Jesus fasted and prayed. The great tempter came to him and said, "If you are the Son of God then make food appear." Jesus answered, "One does not live by food alone, but by the very words that proceed out of the mouth of God."

The devil took him to the top of the Texas State Capital and said, "If you are the Son of God, then jump off. For it is written, God will command angels to keep you from hitting the pavement." Jesus replied, "It is written, do not put the Lord your God to the test."

The devil then took Jesus to the top of Mt. Everest and showed him the splendor of all the nations of the world and said, "If you will worship me, I will give you all of these nations and your freedom." Jesus snapped back, "Away with you Satan! For it is written, worship and serve God alone." Jesus woke up in the padded room and couldn't tell what had actually happened. He had a strange sense that angels were with him.

John's execution date grew closer and Jesus decided to do whatever it took to get out of the padded room. When he eventually was allowed to return to his cell, Jesus passed

through multiple other pods and what the prophet Isaiah spoke was fulfilled, "He will pass through multiple pods-those who sit in darkness see a great light, and for those who sit in the shadow of dawn...light will dawn."

From that time forward, Jesus proclaimed, "Repent, for the realm of God is here."

Looking across from his cell, Jesus encountered two brothers named Peter and Andrew who used to be shrimpers on the coast and declared, "Follow me, and I will make you shrimpers of people." Immediately, the brothers decided to become Jesus' disciples. On the other side of the pod, two more brothers named James and John called out to Jesus and they became disciples too.

Jesus and his disciples started sending out letters proclaiming the good news of God and offering prayer to cure all the ailments of the people. When people miraculously started to become well, Jesus became famous and everyone started sending him letters asking for prayers of healing. Letters started to arrive from all over the world. Jesus empowered many others to heal and proclaim the good news.

5.

When he saw how many people were interested, Jesus spent time writing his thoughts and convictions down from his cell. Upon finishing the writing, Jesus sent them out.

Jesus declared,

"Blessed are the depressed, for the realm of God belongs to them.
Blessed are those who grieve alone, for they will be comforted.
Blessed are the generous, for they will inherit the earth.
Blessed are those who demand justice, for they will be filled.
Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.
Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.
Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.
Blessed are those who are persecuted for doing the right thing, for the realm of God belongs to them.

Blessed are you when people revile and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you because of me. Your reward in heaven will be great, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets before you.

You are the salt packets of the earth. You bring the flavor. If you toss out the few salt packets you have then where is the flavor going to come from? If you waste the salt, then how will it be good for anything?

You are the light of the world. You cannot hide the light of a sprawling city. No one covers up the small light they have. When I let my light shine, it gives light to the whole cell. In the same way, let your light shine and brighten areas of dark ness, so that people might see God.

Do not think I have come to overthrow the law. I have come that the law might be made full. For truly I tell you, there will come a time when all is made right and there will be no need for any laws. Whoever oppresses will be called least and the oppressed will be the most in the realm of God. For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the clergy and politicians, you will not enter the realm of God as you are.

People say don't kill, but if you are angry with someone then you are just as guilty as if you killed them. If you insult some one, then you are liable to the community. If you curse at people, then you are in danger of hell. Imagine if these were the rules everyone lived by? When you start to do good works, don't continue until you are reconciled to those you hate or that hate you. If you are thinking about suing someone or someone is going to sue you, settle before you get to court. Who wants to be stuck in hate or court?

People say don't cheat. But I say don't cheat with your eyes. If your body causes you to hurt your self or other people then correct it. For it is better to correct the body than to hurt your self or everyone around you.

Marriage is meant to be permanent. Divorce and remarriage sucks the life out of all involved. If you have to get divorced, don't keep on getting married over and over again.

Don't take a bunch of oaths. Just do the right thing. Let your yes be yes and your no be no.

When someone oppresses you, turn the other cheek. If someone sues you, then give them what you have. If anyone forces you to walk a mile, then do two. Give to everyone who begs or asks to borrow.

Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you. Follow the way of God, God loves and takes care of everyone the same. For if you love those who hate you, then you will change their hearts and change the world. If you only love those who love you, then you will be doing the minimum and the minimum never amounts to much. Follow God and try to be perfect like God.

6.

"Don't show off. If you are going to be generous, then simply do it and don't expect a big reward and accolades. When you can, do well by people in secret. God will know what you are up to.

Don't stand up and pray just for everyone to see you. Go to quiet places and pray. God will meet you in those secret places.

When you pray, don't just use a bunch of words to show off. Give your heart to God. God knows what is coming before you ask God.

Pray like this:

'Our God who is there
blessed be your name
Your realm grow on here
Your will be done
unrevealed as it is revealed
Give us this day our daily food
And forgive us our oppressions,
as we forgive all who incarcerate us.
Do not let us be consumed in times of trial,
but deliver us from evil.'

What you forgive will be forgiven of you and what you don't forgive will not be forgiven of you.

When you fast, do not let anyone know that you are fasting. Wash up and try to look like you are not fasting. God will see it and that is all that counts.

Do not store up things here. Even if I was interested, I don't have much room in my cell. Do justice and make peace so that you will sow fulfillment in God's realm. For what you value is where your heart is.

The eye is the keeper of the body. If your eye is healthy, then your body will be full of light. If your eye is full of darkness, then no light will be able to get into your body. If the light in you is darkness, then how great is your darkness!

No one can serve two masters! Either you will love God and hate things or you will love things and hate God. You cannot serve both.

I sit on death row and have found what it means to live past worry. Learn not to worry about your life, what you will eat, what you will drink, how your body looks or what you will wear. Is life not more than all of these frivolous things? Look at the birds of the air! God takes care of them. Do you

not think that you are as valuable as the birds? Can you add anything to your life by worrying? Consider the grass of the field. Does God not clothe the fields in splendor? Do you think that God will fail to clothe you? Have faith! Don't spend your life worrying about things! God knows you need all of these things. Seek God first and all of these things will be added unto you. Do not worry about tomorrow. Today has enough troubles of it's own.

7.

"Do not judge! God will judge you by the same measure that you judge others. Don't point out the particle in the eye of a friend when you have a pole stinking out of your own. Don't you dare try to take the particle out of your friend's eye when you can't maneuver with a pole in your own eye. Take out the pole in your own eye and then you will be able to help others.

Do not give your pearls to pigs. They will trample them and turn and maul you!

Ask and you will get it. Seek and you will find. Knock and the door will be open unto you. For everyone who asks receives,

everyone that searches finds and everyone who knocks will find the door open for them. Is there anyone who could give a stone when a loaf of bread is asked for? If a child asks you for fish sticks, would you give them a snake? If you would do the right thing in these circumstances, can you imagine how much more God will do for you?

Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.

Enter through the hard way. The easy way leads to destruction. The hard way teaches you to live life as God intended.

You will know whether people are false prophets or not by their fruits. Good trees bear good fruits and bad trees bear bad fruits. You will know them by their fruit.

Seek me. Don't seek anything else. Don't deceive your self into thinking that you are calling on me when you are not.

Everyone who hears these words and acts upon them will be like the walls of this prison. Come hell or high water, nobody is getting out. They build prisons strong to hold people in. Build your faith equally as strong.

When Jesus finished saying these things everyone was astonished."

8.

Not long after Jesus got done writing down his teachings, he was told he had a visit. When he arrived to the visitation booth escorted by three guards with shotguns, there was a man sitting there with inflamed sores all over his body. Pick ing up the phone, the man spoke into the receiver: "You can make me well if you want to." Jesus sent a spirit of healing through the cord and everyone in the visitation realized that the man was made well. The guards didn't know what to do and quickly took Jesus back to his cell.

Later in the month, one of the guards quietly approached Jesus. "One of my dearest friends has been struck with cancer. Can you heal her by declaring her well?" she tearfully requested. 'Wow!" replied Jesus, "I have never seen this type of faith." After some meditation, Jesus declared, "It is finished." When the guard arrived back at her locker, a message awaited her on her phone that said her friend was can-

cer free. According to the time stamp, her friend was healed the very moment that Jesus prayed.

One of his disciples in the pod slid Jesus a picture of his mother-in-law and said that he was told that she was sick in bed with fever. Jesus rubbed on the picture in prayer and made her well. On the pod, there were many evil people. Je sus cast out demons and healed as many as he could. These actions fulfilled the words of the prophet, “He took our infirmities and bore our diseases.”

When people began to see and hear about what Jesus was doing, thousands of people wanted to correspond and follow him. One wrote, "I will follow you wherever you go!" Jesus replied, "I am sitting on death row. You need to come and visit to know what it means to follow." The gentleman replied, "I must first bury my father." Jesus answered strongly, "Come here and let the dead bury the dead."

There was a tornado about to hit the Polunksy Unit. Everyone on the pod thought that they were going to die. Jesus was asleep. His fellow inmates screamed for Jesus to save them. Half asleep, Jesus pointed out the window and de-

manded the weather calm. Immediately, the tornado was no more. Both the guards and inmates were amazed, remarking, "What type of man is this, that even a tornado would obey him?"

A few weeks later, two new inmates were brought to the Row. Within a few seconds, Jesus realized that the two were possessed and tormented by demons. The two shouted at Jesus, "What do you want with us Son of God? Are you here to torment us?" There was a large group of horses feeding in the field. The two demons asked to be thrown into the horses. Jesus replied, "Go!" The herd of horses galloped away. The two tormented men were now calm. Everyone continued to be amazed and frightened by these occurrences. Thinking his cell might be giving him some strange powers, the guards asked for Jesus to be moved a few cells down.

9.

Jesus moved a few cells down the Row.

During a time of visitation one day, children wheeled an angry and bitter paralyzed man to Jesus' booth. When Jesus

felt their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Take heart, your sins are forgiven." Then some of the other inmates who were having visits remarked, "That dude really is nuts." Jesus per ceived their murmurs and said, "Why do you think evil in your hearts? Is it easier to say 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say 'Stand up and walk?' But so that you might know that I have authority to do it all, sir, stand up and walk." The gentleman was overcome with joy and got out of his chair to dance around. When the rest of the visitation room saw it, they were filled with awe and started celebrating the majesty of the moment. The guards were angered by the whole spectacle and quickly cleared the room.

While Jesus was being moved back to his cell, he saw an evil man named Matthew and said, "Follow me." From that day forth, Matthew did good and followed Jesus.

During dinner, Jesus talked to Matthew across the pod. The guards couldn't believe that someone who declared to be so religious like Jesus would associate with Matthew. When Je sus heard the talk, he said, "Those who are well have no need for a physician, but the sick need help. Go and learn what

this means, 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have come to be with sinners."

The disciples of John in a few pods over sent word, saying, "Why do we have to fast and your disciples don't?" Jesus said, "No one should mourn while I am here. The day will come when I am taken away, and then fasting will be appropriate. No one fixes a rip in their prison jumpsuit with a preshrunk patch before they wash it, for the patch would pull away as the fabric shrunk and the tear would be made worse. Neither is soda put in a bottle and shaken up, for it will burst and ruin everything in sight!"

While he was ruminating about these things with the guys on the pod, Jesus opened a letter from a prominent pastor that read, "My daughter has just died, but say the words and I know that she will live." Jesus asked the rest of the pod to pray before reading further. During their prayer, one disciple shouted out, "Jesus, I am having a vision of a woman who has been suffering from terrible hemorrhages for the last twelve years. She is begging you to heal her." Jesus shouted back, "Tell her, your faith has made you well." Jesus returned to prayer over the pastor's dead daughter. "I think

she is just sleeping," Jesus shouted out. The disciples laughed at Jesus, until the ceiling opened up and they all saw a vision of the girl getting up out of the coffin at the funeral home. The miraculous occurrence was known throughout Texas and many very afraid.

Two blind men from another part of the prison sent word that they wanted to be healed. Jesus sent back a question, "Do you believe I am able to do this?" "Jesus, we wouldn't have asked you if we didn't believe with all of our hearts that you could do it," the blind men sent word back. "Let it be done according to your faith. Go to the bathroom, dip your fingers into the water and rub your eyes, " Jesus wrote. The men experienced healing exactly as they were told and spread the news of their new vision throughout the prison and beyond.

One of the guards had a demon that made him unable to speak. Jesus called the demon out of the guard and he started speaking immediately. Everyone in the prison was amazed and consistently said, "Nothing like this has ever happened around here!" Those guards and inmates that re-

fused to believe in the love of Jesus replied, "Only the ruler of demons can cast out demons."

Jesus continued to heal and preach the good news of love. With compassion for everyone he encountered, Jesus collected followers. Looking around the pod and writing to oth ers, Jesus consistently commented, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few, God wants us to go out and collect the harvest."

10.

Jesus gave authority to his twelve disciples on the Row to cast out unclean spirits and cure every sickness and disease. Unfortunately, Jesus already knew that one would betray him.

The twelve were given instructions: "Proclaim that God is here with us. Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse cancer and cast out demons. Don't charge anything for anything. You will be taken care of. Whoever writes or visits, encounter them with generosity and decipher what they need to be set free. If anyone does not listen to your words, shake

off the dust of your feet and get out. Those folks will realize the error of their ways on judgment day."

"You will be like sheep among wolves, be wise as serpents and innocent as doves. Beware of the religious people, they will make all kinds of false accusations against you and try to destroy you. Because of me, you will be drug before governors, parole boards and judges to give testimony. Do not worry about what to say, for I will give you the words to speak. The Spirit of God will speak through you. Remember, you will be betrayed and hated because of my name. But the one who endures to the end will be saved. When you are persecuted, just keep going."

"No disciple is over the teacher, follow me. Those who tell the truth are always maligned."

"Do not be afraid; for there is nothing that is covered up that will not be revealed, and nothing secret that will not become known. What I tell you in the dark, speak out in the light; and what you hear whispered, proclaim it loudly. Do not fear anyone. For they can only kill the body and cannot kill the

soul. Remain loyal to the God that knows all and loves all. Do not be afraid, you are as valuable as anything."

"Everyone who acknowledges me on death row, I will acknowledge before God; but whoever or whatever part of them that denies me on death row, I will deny before God."

"I do not come to create spaces that are peaceful, I have come to push into and create dangerous spaces of love and justice. I will set family members against each other in a battle for truth and one's primary foes will often be in their own house hold. You must love me more than family. Truth and love are greater than the connection of blood. Those who think that they have found their life will lose it, and those who give their life to protecting and working to free me and others who are oppressed will find it."

"Whoever welcomes you welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one that sent me. Welcome prophets so that you might know where to go next. Welcome the righteous so that you might know how to become righteous. Whoever gives to those in need will never lose their re ward."

11.

Once Jesus finished instructing the twelve, he told them to start proclaiming the message.

When John heard what Jesus was doing, he sent a question through his disciples, "Are you the one we have been waiting for?" Jesus answered, "Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind see, the crippled walk, those with disease are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are given life, and the poor hear good news. Blessed are those who take no offense to such actions."

Upon writing to John's disciples, Jesus started to share about John: "Why is everyone so interested in John? Do you care because you think he is a prophet? John is more than a prophet. This is the one about whom it is written, 'See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you.' There is no one else born of women greater than John, yet the least are still greater than the greatest. From the birth of John the Baptist until now we have suffered violence, and the violent will take it back through love.

For all the prophets prophesied about John before he came. Let anyone with ears listen!"

"What will I compare this generation? It is like children saying, 'We rhymed in the streets for you and you did not dance; we cried and you did not mourn.' John did not come eating and drinking. You said he had a demon. I came eating and drinking. You said I was a glutton and drunkard, a friend of nasty vile sinful people. Yet wisdom is vindicated by deeds."

Jesus started to rebuke the cities that would not change. "Woe to you, Dallas! Woe to you, Fort Worth! Woe to you, Denton! Woe to you, Texarkana! Woe to you, Lubbock! Woe to you, El Paso! Woe to you, Galveston! Woe to you, San Antonio! If the letters written to you had been written to Marfa, they would have repented long ago. On the day of judgment, it will be much more tolerable for Marfa than you. And you, Austin, will you be exalted to God? No, your solutions will be thrown to hell. For if the horrible laws passed within you have condemned you."

"I thank God that the truths of love and justice are hidden from the wise and revealed to infants. It is the gracious will

of God. All things are granted to me by God; and no one knows me except God and anyone I reveal my self too."

"Come to me, all who are depressed and burned out, and I will give you rest. Take my cares upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my cares are easy, and my burden is light."

12.

The disciples kept eating many snacks from the vending machines in the visitation room. One of the guards remarked, "All your disciples eat is junk food." Jesus replied, "When my disciples are hungry let them feast. Do you know what it means when I say, 'I desire mercy not rules?' Stop condemn ing the innocent and assisting in the demise of the guilty. For I am tired of talking about food."

Going back to his cell, Jesus started to pray. In a vision, a man with a withered hand appeared to him. The man's hand was withered from fighting others. Jesus struggled to decipher whether the man would return to fighting if he healed

his hand. Upon realizing that grace is still stronger than the future possibility of sin, Jesus said, "Stretch out your hand!" The man stretched out his hand and it was restored. When the man went to the news media and shared what happened in a vision with Jesus, the authorities started to conspire about how to get Jesus executed faster.

When Jesus found out about this, he grew more and more resolute in his cell. More and more people started to write to him and he cured all who sought healing. Jesus asked every one to keep it quiet. The actions of Jesus fulfilled the words of Isaiah: "Here is my servant, that I chose, my beloved, with whom my soul is well pleased. I will put my Spirit upon him, and he will proclaim justice to everyone. He will not wrangle or cry aloud, nor will anyone hear his voice in the streets. He will not stop until he brings justice to victory. And in his name all people will hope."

The guards brought Jesus an especially unruly prisoner who was also blind and mute. Realizing that his behavior was due to the stress of his conditions, Jesus put his hands on the prisoner's head. The prisoner immediately could see and hear. Word of what happened spread to the entire prison

and people excitedly declared, "Can this be God in the flesh?" Those in charge of the prison and their higher ups quickly dismissed what happened, "Jesus is just an evil magician and false prophet." Jesus knew what they were saying and remarked for all to hear, "Evil and righteousness cannot mix. Why would I heal someone in the name of evil? Where have you been to help this man? Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters. Blasphemy against righteousness cannot be maintained in this life or the next."

"Trees are known by their fruit. Bad trees produce bad fruit and good trees produce good fruit. You are a bunch of snakes! How can anyone who is evil speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. The good person brings good things out of a good treasure and the evil person brings evil things out of an evil treasure. Every careless word will be discarded on judgment day. By your words you will be justified and by your words you will be condemned."

Quietly, the warden and administration of the jail said to Jesus, "We want to see one more sign from you." But he replied

quickly, "You evil people! You have had signs and there are signs right in front of you!"

"When unclean spirits come out of a person, they wander around looking for a resting place, but they can find none. Then they try to go back from where they came from. When they arrive back, they find there original space empty, swept and put in order. Then they go back and get more unclean spirits, and they enter and live there. The space is worse off than it was before they came out of the person in the first place. This is how it is with those evil people who keep refus ing to believe. They just keep collecting evil."

While he was still speaking, the guards informed him that he had a visit from his mother and brothers. Jesus replied, "Who are my mother and brothers?" And pointing to his dis ciples, "Here are my mother and brothers! For whoever follows God is my brother and sister and mother combined."

13.

Later in the afternoon, Jesus looked out his cell window. While he was looking, letters started to pile up in his cell and

all of his disciples were interested in talking. Jesus had to re treat to his bed just to have enough room to breathe. Jesus started to tell his disciples many things in parables.

"There was farmer who planted some seeds. Some seeds fell on the pavement. The birds swooped down and ate them. Other seeds fell on gravel, where they had just a little soil and they sprang up quickly, since there was no depth to the soil. When the sun rose, the plants were scorched due to their lack of roots. Other seeds fell amongst the grass spurs, and the spurs grew and choked them out. Other seeds fell on fertile soil and brought forth huge amounts of corn. Let anyone with ears listen!"

The disciples were curious about why Jesus kept speaking in parables. He replied, "I am giving you the secrets of God. To those who have, more will be given and they will have in abundance; but from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away. The reason I speak in parables is to open hearts, minds and ears that are closed to normal ways of teaching. This is to fulfill the prophecy of Isaiah: 'You will listen, but never understand, and you will look, but never perceive. For the hearts of people have grown dull,

and their ears hard of hearing, and they have shut their eyes; so that they might not look with their eyes, and listen with their ears, and understand with their heart and turn-and I would heal them.′ But blessed are those eyes that see and ears that hear. Many have longed to see what you see and never saw it and hear what you hear but never heard it."

"Hear the parable of the farmer. When anyone hears the words of God and does not understand it, the evil comes and snatches away what is planted in the heart; this is what was planted on the path. As for what is planted on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the words and immediately receives it with joy; yet such a person has no root, but endures only for a while, and when trouble or persecution arises on account of the word, that person immediately falls away. As for what was planted among thorn, this is the one who hears the words, but the cares of the world and the lure of wealth choke the words, and they yield nothing. But as for what was planted on good soil, this is the one who hears the words and understands them, who indeed bears fruit and yields a tremendous amount of corn."

Jesus put before them another parable: "God's realm may be compared to someone who planted good seed in their field; but while everybody slept, an enemy came and planted weeds among the corn, and then escaped into the night. When the stalks came up and bore corn, the weeds also appeared. The farm workers came and said, 'Did you not plant good seed in your field? Where did the weeds come from?' The farm owner answered, 'One of my enemies must have done this.' The farm workers replied, 'Do you want us to rip out all the weeds?' The owner replied, 'No, for in ripping out the weeds you will damage the corn. Let both grow until the harvest and then we will separate the weeds from the corn. We will burn all the weeds and keep all the corn.'"

Then, Jesus shared another parable: "The realm of God is like a mustard seed that someone took and planted in a field; it is the smallest of all seeds, but when it grows it is the great est of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make their homes on the branches."

Jesus also added, "The realm of God is like cookie dough that is cooked until it makes a soft delicious batch of cookies."

Through a diverse use of parables, Jesus educated and awoke all who would listen. This is to fulfill what the prophet said: "I will open my mouth to speak in parables; I will proclaim what has been hidden from the foundation of the world."

Then he stopped preaching, went deep into his cell and laid down on his bunk. The disciples in the cells closest to him whispered and said, "Explain to us the parable of the weeds of the field." Jesus answered, "The Son of God plants the good seed in the field of the world. The good seeds are the children of the realm of God. The bad seeds come from the evil one. The devil is a farmer too. The separation and division is the harvest at the end of the age. The angels will be doing the reaping. The weeds will be burned in the fire. The corn will be gathered up. The Son of God will cleanse the realm and throw all sin and evil into the fire. The righteous will shine like the sun. Let anyone with ears listen!"

"The realm of God is like buried treasure, which someone dug up and hid; then in their joy they go and sell all that they have and buy the field."

"The realm of God is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, in finding the one pearl of his dreams, he went and sold all that he had and bought it."

"Again, the realm of God is like a net that was thrown into the sea and caught every kind of fish; when it was full, they drew it in and took it to the beach. The fishermen separated the good fish from the bad. This is what it will be like at the end of the age. The angels are going to separate good from evil. The evil will be burned off."

"Do you get it?" They whispered, "Yes." "Every writer from the realm of God is like the person who brings every treasure they have in their house outside and puts it on display." When Jesus finished explaining the parables, he quickly went to sleep in his bunk.

When Jesus woke up the next morning, he received word from Houston that everyone was incredibly critical of a piece in the newspaper that called him a religious teacher and prophet. "Where does this murderer get off thinking he has any religious wisdom or power? Is this not the truck driver's son? Mary is his mother right? Don't his sisters still live

here? Don't his brothers live here too? Where is he getting all this from? Jesus is a good for nothing murderer! He's an animal not a religious teacher! We've all known this about him since he was a kid!" The entire city was deeply offended by Jesus. In a letter to the editor, Jesus responded, "Religious teachers and prophets are without honor in their hometown." Because of their unbelief, only a few people were healed in Houston.

14.

The Governor heard reports about Jesus; and he said to his advisors, "This is John the Baptist; he has been raised from the dead, and he has been reincarnated in Jesus." For the Governor had arrested John, shackled him and put him in solitary confinement on account of his constant criticisms of the many injustices of Texas. Though the Governor wanted to execute him, he feared the masses, for many people regarded John as a prophet. When the Governor's birthday came, there was a performance at the state capitol. The Gov ernor loved a male dancer so much that he promised him whatever he wanted in Texas. Having previously been scorned by John, the dancer asked for his execution. The

Governor went up to his office and ordered it done. The body of John was brought up from Huntsville to his house for everyone to see. The disciples of John picked up the body from the back of the mansion and buried it outside of Austin. Many of the disciples drove all night to Livingston to be able to visit Jesus and tell him what happened.

After being told about John, Jesus retreated to his cell and refused to get out of bed. All of Jesus' disciples kept calling for him and refused to eat until he responded. The disciples did not let up and Jesus took compassion on them. The disciples declared, "It is late and we have not eaten for days. We are about to call the guard and beg him to bring us some food." Jesus replied, "That is not necessary. What do we have here on the pod?" The disciples replied, "a bag of chips, a piece of cake, a soda and half of a peanut butter sandwich." Everyone slid what he had to Jesus. Taking the items, Jesus blessed them and started to pass them out. Through miracu lous multiplication, everyone on the pod ate until they were full and there was plenty left over.

Jesus went back into his cell to pray alone. When the early morning arrived, a terrible storm battered the pod. Lighten-

ing opened up a hole in the roof and water started to fill up the jail. Everyone was terrified. The guards and the prisoners called out to Jesus. Walking through the wall of his cell, Jesus stood in the middle of the pod. "He really is a ghost, " cried out the guards. But Jesus responded, "Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid."

Peter answered him, "Jesus, if it is truly you, command me to walk through the wall of my cell." He said, "Come!" So Peter started walking toward Jesus in full stride. When he passed through the wall, Peter became frightened and the wall started to overcome him. He cried out, "Save me!" Jesus reached out his hand and pulled him through, saying, "You of little faith, why did you doubt?" When they returned through the walls to their cells, the storm, hole and water were gone. Everyone in the pod was remarking, "This truly is the Son of God."

When the day of visitation arrived, people recognized Jesus and asked for healing. Letters poured in asking for a piece of something of his so that they too might be healed. Everyone who asked for healing from Jesus was healed.

15.

The Bishops and Pastors started to come to Livingston from Austin to visit Jesus on death row and said: "Why do you break religious traditions? You do not speak about God in the prescribed ways." He answered them, "And why do you talk about God without any concern for injustice? For God said, 'Love the stranger amongst you.' You do not care about all the immigrants in this state who have nothing. You want to take whatever they have and deport them. So, for the sake of your religious traditions, you make the word of God void. You hypocrites! Isaiah prophesied rightly about you when he said: 'These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me; in vain they worship me, teaching hu man selfishness as doctrines.'"

Then he wrote to his disciples, "Listen! It is not what goes into the mouth that defiles a person, but it is what comes out of a mouth that defiles." The disciples wrote back and said, "Do you know that our Bishops and Pastors are taking offense to this statement?" Jesus responded, "Every religious movement that God did not plant will be uprooted. Leave

them alone. They are blind guides in the world. If one blind person leads another, then they will both fall into the pit." After Jesus read what he wrote aloud, Peter shouted from across the way, "What does that even mean?" Jesus replied, "I don't see how you could still not get it. Do you not see that what you eat goes through your stomach and into the sewer? What comes out of the mouth comes from the heart and defiles. Out of the heart comes murder, selfishness, stealing, anger, hate and assault. These are what defile and imprison us, but to not say a prayer correctly or read the right Bible does not defile."

Annoyed and tired, Jesus retreated to his bunk and fell asleep. The guards awoke Jesus a few hours later and informed him he had a visitor. While he was visiting with one of his disciples from Lubbock, a woman in the visitation room started shouting, "Have mercy on me Jesus, my daugh ter is tormented by a demon of materialism." But he did not answer. The disciple asked Jesus to silence her. Finally, he answered, "I was sent to prophesy to the people of Texas." But she came and begged at the glass, "Lord, help me!" Jesus answered, "It is not fair to take food intended for Texans and

throw it to someone from France." She remained persistent and replied, "Yet even the dogs get some of the crumbs that fall from the table of the teacher." Then Jesus answered her, "Woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish." And the materialism immediately left her daughter.

After Jesus left the visitation room, he journeyed back to his cell and climbed into his bed. Everyone in the pod held up letters from people who were sick and in need of help. With one wave of Jesus' hand over the letters, the abused, the lame, the maimed, the blind, the mute, the angry, the hateful, the sick and many others that the letters represented were healed. Jesus put all of the letters from people who were sick at his feet and healed them as well. Guards and other staff started to come to him and ask him to heal their sicknesses and wounds. People around the world were shocked, when all of a sudden their loved ones could walk, speak, talk and function. Everyone praised the name of Jesus from Death Row.

Early one morning, Jesus opened up a letter from a disciple who was helping undocumented immigrants. The disciple said that he was housing nearly four thousand undocu-

mented immigrants and their families and had no means to feed all of them. In a letter, Jesus pronounced a blessing over his disciple's refrigerator and told him to start passing out the food. Miraculously, nearly ten thousand undocumented immigrants ate until they were full that day. The dis ciple photographed the miraculous occurrence and sent a picture to Jesus. From that day forward, the disciple never worried about food again.

16.

The Bishops and Pastors arrived once again to test Jesus. "Show us a sign from heaven that you are truly the Son of God!" the group demanded. Jesus answered, "In the evening, you say, 'the sky is red and beautiful.' In the morning, you say, 'It will be stormy today for the sky is red.' You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but you don't know how to interpret the times. You ask for a sign when the sign is right in front of you!" Jesus retreated to the back of his cell and refused to speak to them any longer.

Later, as the meal trays were being passed out. Jesus told the disciples, "Beware of the false stale bread of the Bishops and

Pastors." The disciples remarked to each other, "Does Jesus not like the communion bread that they send down here?" Growing frustrated, Jesus replied, "Why are you talking about bread? Do you still not perceive? Do you not remember all the miracles? How could you fail to see that I am not speaking about bread? Beware of the false stale bread of the Bishops and Pastors!" Then they realized that Jesus was talking about the false teachings of the Bishops and the Pastors.

One day on the pod, Jesus asked the disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" The disciples said, "Some say John the Baptist, others Elijah, and still others Dr. Martin Luther King, Mother Teresa or Gandhi." He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter replied, "You are the Messiah! The Son of the living God." And Jesus replied, "Blessed are you Peter, son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but God did. Peter you are the rock upon which I will build my church and the gates of hell will not overcome it. I am giving you the keys to the realm of God. Whatever you bind on earth will be bound in the realm and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in the realm."

In addition to those on the pod, Jesus repeated the message in letters and told everyone to not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah.

Jesus started to let his disciples know that he would be executed in Huntsville and be raised on the third day. Peter whispered to Jesus, "This will never happen to you! We will never let you get executed." Jesus replied, "Get behind me Satan! You are considering only human things not the divine."

Then Jesus told his disciples, "If anyone wants to be my follower, let them deny themselves and take up the device of their execution and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their lives for my sake will find it. For what will it profit someone if they gain the whole world but forfeit their soul? What would anyone give in exchange for their soul?"

The Son of Man is coming with God to repay everyone for what they have done. There are some of you who will not taste death before you see the Son of Man coming out of the realm of God.

17.

Late one night, Jesus whispered to Peter, James and John to come with him and he transported them to the top of the prison. James was afraid of the guards, but Jesus assured him that no one could see him. In an instant, Jesus was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became dazzling white. Suddenly, Moses, Elijah, Dr. King and Mother Teresa appeared and started talking to Jesus. Peter got happy and declared, "Jesus, it is good for us to be here; if you wish, I will make five dwellings for you and our guests." While he was still speaking, a bright light boomed down, "This is my beloved Son; in whom I am well pleased. Listen to him!" When the disciples heard this, they collapsed to the roof of the prison overcome with fear. But Jesus came and touched them, saying, "Get up and do not be afraid." And when they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus alone.

Upon transporting them back into their cells, Jesus ordered them not to tell anyone about what happened until he was raised from the dead. And the disciples replied, "Why do the Bishops and Pastors uplift the names and lives of ancient and modern saints?" Jesus replied, "They would rather talk about them than live like them. God was present in all of the saints, but the religious leaders refused to live like them and most often persecuted them. The Son of Man is about to suffer the same fate." The disciples understood the parallels to the story of John the Baptist.

During visitation, one of the guards approached Jesus and said, "Have mercy on my son. He is an epileptic and suffers terribly. Numerous times, he has been seriously hurt while seizing. I asked your disciples to help, but they couldn't." Je sus replied, "How much longer must I be here and listen to this mess? How much longer must I put up with all of this unbelief? Bring the boy to me." Later that day, Jesus rebuked the demon of sickness and the boy was cured before their very eyes. The disciples privately asked, "Why couldn't we cast out the demon?" Jesus replied, "Because you have little faith. If you had faith the size of a mustard seed, you

could walk through walls unassisted. Nothing would be impossible for you."

Back in the pod, Jesus said, "I will be betrayed and executed. Then, I will arise on the third day." All of the disciples were greatly distressed.

Prison officials came to Peter and said, "Why does your teacher refuse to pay a tithe to the church?" He replied, "Jesus does not want to support the many injustices of institutional churches." Later, Jesus asked Peter, "Should you take tithes from innocent children or from others who are complicit in the evils perpetuated by the institutional church?" Peter replied, "From others." Jesus said to him, "Then the children are free. However, so that we pay our tithe and be free of the burden of explanation. Go to your toilet. You will find a fish inside. Open the mouth of the fish and pull the gold coin out. Take that and mail it to a religious institution that is resisting war."

18.

The disciples whispered to Jesus and asked, "Who will be the greatest in the realm of God?" Pulling out a picture of the child of one of his disciples, Jesus said, "Unless you change and become like this little child, you will never enter the realm of God. Whoever loves purely and humbly like this lit tle child is the greatest in the realm of God. Whoever welcomes such a child in my name welcomes me."

"If any of you do evil to this child, it would be better for you to be drowned in the sea. Woe to the stumbling blocks! The times are tempting and evil, but woe to those who put out blocks to stumble over."

"If your hand or foot causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away; it is better to embrace God with the evil parts of you gone than not to embrace God at all. If your eye causes you to sin, cut it out and toss it away; it is better for the evil parts of you to be burned up than for all of you to not to embrace God."

"Do not despise any of these little ones around you, for I tell you that their angels continually see the face of God. What do you think? If a shepherd has a hundred sheep and one

gets lost, would she not leave the rest in the field to go find the lost one? If she finds it, she will rejoice more over finding the one that was lost than over the ninety-nine that never ran away. God does not want anyone to be lost and will search for the lost until God finds them. God gets what God wants."

"If someone in the community sins against you, go and point out the offense to the member while you are alone. If the member listens, then you have regained a friend. But if you are not listened to, take one or two others along with you, so that every word will be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If the member refuses to listen to them, tell it to the community; and if the offender refuses to listen even to the community, let such a one be murderer to you. Whatever you bind on this earth will be bound in the realm of God, and whatever you let go of on this earth will be let go of in the realm of God. If two of you agree on anything on this earth, God will do it for you. Whenever two or three are gathered in my name, I am there amongst you."

Then Peter whispered from the cell across the way, "How often should we forgive someone? As many as seven times?" Jesus replied, "Not seven times, but seventy-seven times."

"The realm of God is similar to the landowner who decides he wants to free his workers from their economic slavery and pay them back what he should have paid them to begin with. When he figured up everything, he brought the first worker in and gave him ten thousand dollars. The landowner begged for forgiveness. The worker took pity on him and decided to forgive him. Then the worker went back and demanded money that some of the other workers owed him. The workers didn't have it and the worker decided that he was going to take them to court. The workers begged him to not take him to court, yet the worker had no mercy on them. The landowner called the worker in and said, 'I was trying to make things right and you decide to go and oppress your fellow workers? Why did you not show them mercy? Those workers are going to make more money than you and will be your bosses from now on.' This is the way it is with God. Mercy will be shown to the ones who remain merciful and generous to all people in all spaces at all times."

19.

Before being confronted by some Bishops and Pastors, Jesus spent many peaceful days healing people, writing letters and enjoying multiple visits.

Pastor after Pastor and Bishop after Bishop wrote to test him, "Is it right for someone to get divorced?" Jesus responded, "People leave their parents to become one in marriage with someone else. God blesses such unions. What God has joined together, let no one separate." The Bishops and Pastors kept challenging Jesus with different scenarios and situations. Jesus replied, "Don't think about the scenarios and situations, do what you believe is perfect and what God has called you to do. Divorce is not the perfect way." The disciples replied, "This is a difficult teaching. Maybe it is better to not marry." Jesus remarked, "Marriage is complicated. Our ideas of marriage have excluded so many people. Sexuality and gender exist on spectrums. All people everywhere should simply cling to those that they love. Let anyone accept this who can."

In the visitation room, many children came to Jesus and asked for a blessing. The disciples couldn't believe how many children went up to the glass to be blessed by Jesus.

Growing angry, the disciples tried to stop the kids. But Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for the realm of God belongs to them." And he laid his hands on the glass to bless the children until the guards pulled him away to go back to his cell.

Not long after he got back, Jesus opened up a letter from a wealthy celebrity, "Dear Jesus. What do I have to do to inherit eternal life? Do I need to keep all the commandments? I feel like I already do. Any help you could provide would be appreciated. Thanks." Jesus chuckled a bit and then replied, "Give up all of your fame, sell everything you have and follow me." Later, Jesus heard the wealthy celebrity fainted upon opening the letter.

Jesus said to the disciples, "It will be hard for anyone who is wealthy or rich to get to the realm of God. Indeed, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle." The disciples were grieved and asked, "Who will be saved?" Jesus swiftly replied, "For human beings it is impossible, but with God all things are possible."

Peter questioned, "We have abandoned everything to follow you. What is in it for us?" Jesus replied, "You will join me in the realm of God where all will be renewed. There will be much to let go of between now and then. There the first will be last and the last will be first."

20.

"God is ready for you whenever you come to God. The time or the day doesn't matter. God has the grace to restore you whenever you arrive. God chooses to bestow grace on all. Those who come late will be treated as if they got there early. In the economy of God, the first will be last and the last will be first."

Before Jesus went out for a visitation, he turned to the disciples and said, "The time is coming when they will take me to Huntsville and I will be handed over to the corrupt authorities to be executed. The Bishops and Pastors will condemn me to death. I will be mocked and executed. On the third day, I will rise from the dead."

When Jesus arrived for his visit, the mother of some of his disciples came up to the glass to ask him a favor, "Will you declare that my two sons will sit next to your throne in the realm of God?" Jesus swiftly replied, "You do not know what you are asking. I don't think you are able to drink the cup I am about to drink." The woman replied, "We are able." Jesus declared, "You will drink the cup. The seats are God's to grant not mine."

When word got back to all the other disciples that the mother asked such a question, everyone was angry. Jesus calmed ev eryone down and said, "Whoever wishes to be great must become a servant. Whoever wishes to be first among you must become a slave. I did not come to be served but to serve. I have come to give my life as a ransom for many."

Secretly, guards brought two blind inmates to Jesus. The inmates cried out, "Jesus have mercy on us." Everyone told them to be quiet so that the administration wouldn't notice. Jesus asked, "What do you want me to do for you?" They both said, "Open our eyes." Moved with compassion, Jesus touched their eyes and made them well. Immediately, both regained sight and became followers of Jesus.

21.

One day after a visit, all of the inmates on death row and the guards banged things against the bars in celebration of Jesus. The shouts and cheers were deafening. This moment fulfilled the prophecy, "God is coming as the bars are banged and the hopelessly imprisoned shout for joy." Everyone leaned in to touch Jesus and laid paper beneath his feet in respect. "Hosanna! Hosanna in the highest! Hosanna!" they shouted. When Jesus arrived at his cell, the warden came down and asked, "What is all the commotion?" One by one people answered, "We are celebrating the prophet named Jesus."

Later that week, Jesus entered the visitation room and drove out all who were peddling drive-by religion. He said to them, "You don't care about these folks. You can't save souls with quick prayers. You save souls with love. Get out of here." Jesus cured the sick and the needy in the visitation room. The children started to shout, "Hosanna! Hosanna! Hosanna in the highest!" He left them and went back to his cell.

In the early morning, Jesus was hungry. Seeing a package of sweets in his cell, Jesus dove across the room. When he real ized it was just an empty package, Jesus cursed the package. With two snaps of his fingers, Jesus made the package disap pear. One of the disciples saw what happened and was amazed. "How did you do that?" he asked. Jesus replied, "If you have faith and do not doubt, not only will you make a package disappear, but you will be able to pick the mountain up and throw it into the sea. Whatever you ask for in prayer will be done."

One day, a couple of Bishops and Pastors came on the pod and were surprised when everyone told them that they believed in Jesus. "Who is this Jesus?" they said. "It is I," replied Jesus. "By what authority do you teach all of these folks all this stuff?" they demanded. Jesus replied, "I will ask you a question. By what authority do you get to come on the pod and other Bishops and Pastors don't get to?" The Bishops and Pastors didn't know how to answer and said, "We don't know." Jesus replied, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I teach what I teach."

"An older mother had two sons. She asked both to help her move. One did and one didn't. Which one do you think did the will of the mother?" Jesus asked the disciples. In loud ex clamation, they replied, "The first!" In response, Jesus explained the question, "The murderers on death row will get to the realm of God before everyone else. For you have believed and followed first. You met God in a strange place and refused to turn away."

"Maybe another story might make it clearer. A man owned a few homes and leased them out in a lawless country. When the time came to collect the rent, the man sent his assistant to collect from the tenants. But the tenants seized the assistant and killed her. Later, the man sent a group of police offi cers to get the rent. But the tenants seized the officers and killed them too. Finally, the man sent his oldest daughter and said, 'Surely, they will respect my daughter.' But when the tenants saw the daughter, they murmured amongst themselves, 'Here is the heir to these houses. If we kill him, then we will get the houses.' So they killed him in the backyard. What should the owner of the houses do with these

tenants?" They replied to Jesus, "Put those piece of shit tenants to death and find renters that are not monsters."

Jesus replied, "Have you not read: 'The stone that was rejected has become the cornerstone?' The realm of God will be given to those who protect life. Those who destroy life will need to be destroyed and resurrected into life." When word got out to the prominent Bishops and Pastors in Texas, they knew he was talking about them. The religious leaders petitioned the Governor to have the execution date sped up. Fearing those who thought that Jesus was a prophet, they did everything in secret.

22.

Once more Jesus offered a story, "The realm of God may be compared to someone who gives a wedding for their daughter. The mother sent out attendants to gather everyone for the wedding, but no one would come. For a second time, the mother sent out attendants to get everyone who was invited

and told them to tell them, "Everything is ready. I have a feast, a band and plenty of alcohol. Come to my daughter's wedding!" Everyone went away and joked about the wedding. Some even screamed and cursed at the attendants. The mother was enraged. Along with some loyal friends, the mother went out and told all of the people she invited that she was done with them. Then, the mother went out into the street and started inviting random homeless people. All sorts of people attended, some were good and some were bad. 'Those who are invited are not worthy to attend, but these folks are.' The wedding was filled with guests. There was one person who was making a particular disruption with crude sexual advances and ruining everyone's time. The mother went to him and kicked him out into the darkness of night. 'You will learn better,' she said. Many get the opportunity to come into the presence of God and few have done the work to be chosen."

The Bishops and Pastors plotted to entrap Jesus. Sending some of their members down to visit him, they said, "We know you are sincere. You teach in the way of God and love all people. So tell us this: Is it lawful to pay taxes to the gov-

ernment, or not?" Aware of their malice, Jesus replied, "Why are you testing me? If Obama is the president of the government then give to Obama what is Obama's and give to God what is God's. When they heard this, they were amazed."

Other religious leaders visited Jesus the same day and hastily declared there to be no such thing as resurrection. Then they thought they would really stump him, "If someone is married multiple times, then who will be husband or wife be in the realm of God?"

Jesus replied, "There is no marriage in the realm of God. As for the resurrection, God is not God of the dead. God is the God of the living. Do you want to be dead without God or alive with God?" The rest of the visitation room could not be lieve the answers that Jesus was giving.

After those religious leaders were silenced, more Bishops and Pastors went to death row and demanded to see Jesus. Upon entry onto the pod, the leaders pushed, "What is the greatest commandment?" Jesus replied, "Love God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.

The second greatest is this: 'Love your neighbor as your self.' Everything rests on these two commandments."

After a pause, Jesus asked them, "Who do you think the Mes siah is? Whose son is he?" They said, "He must be the Son of Dr. King." "What about the Son of Mary too?" Jesus probed. They shrugged. Jesus pushed them even further, "But if Dr. King and Mary call the Messiah God then how can he be their son?" The group left astonished and dumbfounded. No one asked any more questions.

23.

Jesus said to his disciples and mailed out in multiple letters the following words, "The Bishops and Pastors think they speak and act for God. Do what they say and not what they do. They condemn everyone and need to condemn their self. They love to be seen and heard. They love their places of honor and respect. They love it when people call them Bishops and Pastors, but these titles betray that there is one real Bishop and Pastor named God. The greatest among you will be your servant. All who exalt their self will be humbled, and all who humble themselves will be exalted."

"But woe to you Bishops and Pastors, you hypocrites! You lock people out of your churches and think that you are locking them away from God. You are not. I will find them. You cross land and sea to make a convert, and you are really just leading people to the same hell that you creating for your self."

"Woe to you, blind guides, who say, 'Look at what God has blessed me with.' You blind fools! God is with the poor not with your palatial sanctuaries and homes. Do you believe in God or stuff? Stop finding your worth in possessions!"

"Woe to you hypocrites! You raise money while neglecting the real work of peace and justice. You are neglecting the real work of God! You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel!"

"Woe to you Bishops and Pastors! You clean the outside of sanctuaries, but inside they are full of nasty greed and hate. Clean inside your self before you try to clean everyone else!"

"Woe to you liars! You are like whitewashed tombs. You look beautiful on the outside, but inside of you are the bones

of the dead and all kinds of filth. You look righteous, but really you suck."

"Woe to you Bishops and Pastors. You build on the tombs of the prophets, but don't do anything they taught. You are murderers of truth! You snakes and vipers! How can you escape the hell that you have created for your self? You will keep doing injustice in the name of God. How many more will you execute? Those you murder will be the ones who save you. This will come in this generation."

"Austin, Austin, the city that kills the righteous prophets and gives political office and pastoral prestige to the vipers. How often I have tried to save you from death row, but you've always been unwilling. Your sanctuaries are desolate and meaningless, because you have refused to stand for justice. You will not see me again until you say, 'Blessed is Jesus who comes in the name of God.'"

24.

Later, as Jesus was coming back from shower, his disciples pointed to the infrastructure that imprisoned them. Jesus

declared, "Not a stone will be left on top of another. This entire structure will be torn down and turned into a place of true love and justice."

When he was sitting in his cell, the disciples whispered, "When will this be? When will the end of the age come?" Je sus answered, "Many will come and claim to be the Messiah. Do not let them lead you astray! You will see wars happening and people will claim that they are not wars. Nation will rise against nation. Famines and earthquakes will fill the land. This will be the start of the birth pangs of the end."

"You will be handed over to be executed. You will be called monsters. People will hate you. False prophets will call it justice. The love of many will grow cold. The ones who endure to the end will be saved. This is the good news of Jesus. The message will be taken unto all the world and all will be made complete."

"When you see the destructive politician standing in Austin, as was prophesied by Daniel, then flee to the border. Get out as soon as possible. Do not delay. Woe to those who stay in Texas with children in those days! There will be great suffer

ing caused by greed and hardened hearts. If anyone says, "Look! Here is the Messiah!" - do not believe it. False Bishops and Pastors will abound. The Son of Man will come in a flash and save everyone from the mess."

"The sun will be dark and the moon will give no light. Stars will fall from heaven and the powers will be shaken. The sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky and all the tribes of earth will mourn their state. Then with a loud trumpet, God will restore the earth from one end unto the other."

"When the fig tree puts out leaves, you know that summer is near. So also when you see these things and feel God at the gates, you will know that the restoration is upon you. This generation will not pass away until all of these things have taken place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but the words of God will not pass away."

"No one knows the hour of the restoration. Everyone will be doing evil and God will restore what has been lost. People will be carrying evil and it will be taken from them. People will be thinking evil and the thought will disappear. People will be pushing evil and righteousness will push back. Those

who are found immersed in evil will pass through the flame of purification unto righteousness. Be ready and do good for the Son of Man will come at an unexpected hour."

"Who is the faithful and wise lover? The partner went away and left his lover in charge of his home. Will he be able to take care of the house? Will he be found in the arms of another? Blessed is the lover that is found by his partner to be lovingly waiting when his partner gets home. Immediately, the two will get married and know that they are destined to be together. But the wicked lover will sneak off and sleep with as many others as they can. The partner will catch an early flight and come home to find his lover in bed with someone else. Enraged, the partner will cut off the relationship and let him go forever."

25.

"The realm of God will be like this. A group of ten guys waited up to meet the perfect man for their best friend. Five were being silly and five were being wise. The silly guys got drunk and were running around in circles. The wise guys stayed awake with their best friend and tried to encourage

him that the perfect man was coming. As the hour grew late, the silly guys passed out and the wise guys grew drowsy. Then all of a sudden around 3am, the best friend exclaimed, 'Look! Here he comes! Come out to meet my man!' When the time for the wedding came, the best friend took the wise friends with him to the altar. When the silly friends tried to come into the ceremony, the best friend declined for them to be present. 'You couldn't even stay awake with me to meet him! You got drunk and made a mockery of an important moment for me,' the best friend said. Stay awake and don't get drunk, for you do not know the day or the hour when love will find you."

"It is like a woman who goes on a very long journey and entrusts her property to three friends. To each person she gave a job. She asked the first person to take care of the house. She asked the second person to take care of the swimming pool. She asked the third person to pick up the mail. Then she went away. The person in charge of the house rented it out and kept it up. The person in charge of the pool used it for parties and destroyed it. The person in charge of the mailbox used it to run a business. When the woman re-

turned, she engaged each friend. The first person presented the woman with the keys to the house. The second person apologized for trashing the swimming pool. Though the third person was only in charge of the mailbox, they gave the woman a check for ten thousand dollars that they made from using the mailbox. Who do you think the woman was most pleased with? Who do you think the woman wanted to remain friends with? Who do you think the woman wanted to entrust her stuff to in the future? Those who sow greed and destruction will remain in the darkness of distrust."

"When I come to judge the nations. I will separate one from the other, the sheep on the right and the goats on the left. Then I will come to those on the right and declare, 'Come now into the realm of God and inherit all that I have prepared for you since the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison or even in prison on death row and you visited me.' Then the righteous will answer, 'When was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and

gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison or even in prison on death row and visited you?' Then I will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to the least of these you did it unto me.' Then I will say to those on my left, 'You never knew me; for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not give me clothing, sick and in prison or even in prison on death row and you did not visit me.' Then they will also answer, 'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison or even in prison on death row, and did not take care of you?' Then I will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of this, you did not do it unto me.' Those who neglected God will dwell in darkness and those who embrace God will dwell in light."

26.

When Jesus finished saying all of these things, he looked out at the disciples and said, "In two days we will celebrate the holidays, and then the Son of Man will be executed."

Bishops and Pastors conspired to force the Governor to go ahead and execute Jesus. Together they said, "We must have him executed quietly, or there might be a riot amongst the people."

While Jesus was visiting with a dear friend out in the visitation room, a woman brought a costly bottle of perfume and poured it on the glass to show her love for Jesus. When the disciples saw it, they were angry and said, "Why waste such expensive perfume? The money could have been given to the poor!" Jesus responded, "Why do you trouble this woman? The poor you will always have them with you, you will not al ways have me with you. This woman is preparing my body for execution and burial. Wherever my good news is proclaimed, everyone will remember this woman's deed."

Then one of the disciples, named Judas, wrote to the Bishops and Pastors and said, "What will you give me if I betray Jesus and give him to you?" The Bishops and Pastors promised

him a move off of death row. Judas began the work to betray Jesus.

"How are we to have the holiday meal in here?" the disciples asked Jesus. "My time is drawing near. We will make quesadillas and slide them under the doors to each other. Begin the preparation on your hot pots."

When the evening came, the disciples started to slide quesadillas under their doors to each other. Jesus spoke up, "One of you is going to betray me." The disciples became greatly distressed and remarked to each other, "I would never betray him." Jesus answered, "The one who has a que sadilla in their mouth is the one who will betray me. I will ac cept my fate, but woe to the one that does the betraying. It would be better if he had not been born." Judas replied with a quesadilla in his mouth, "Surely it's not me?" Jesus replied, "It is as you say."

While the group was eating, Jesus picked up a piece of bread, and after blessing the bread he broke it, slid it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is my body." Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he magically let it slide across

the floor to each disciple, saying, "Suck the liquid off the floor, all of you; for this is my blood, which is poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins." You will not eat this bread or suck this wine until you partake with me in the realm of God.

On this night, you will all desert me. For it is written, "The sheep will scatter. But, I will meet you again after the resurrection." Peter shouted from his cell, "I will never desert you." Jesus replied, "Before the intercom dings three times, you will deny me three times." Peter assured Jesus, "Even if I must die, I will never deny you." All of the disciples said the same thing.

The lights went out and darkness covered the pod. Jesus instructed the disciples, "Sit in your cells and stay awake as I pray." Jesus instructed the disciples closest to him, I am grieved and know that the hour of execution is upon me. Re main with me and stay awake." Jesus threw himself on the cement and cried aloud, "If it is possible, please let this cup pass from me. Whatever the situation, I follow your will not mine." Then he called out to the disciples and found them sleeping. Screaming at Peter, Jesus said, "So you could not stay awake with me in this most difficult hour? Stay awake

and resist temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." Then he went deep into his cell for the second time and prayed, "If this cannot pass unless I do it, your will be done." The night was dark and snores of the disciples filled the pod. For the third time, Jesus retreated deep into his pod and said, "Please spare me God. Regardless, I will follow you no matter what." Then he came to the disciples for the last time and said, "Are you still sleeping? The hour has come. The rat is at hand."

While he was still speaking, Judas arrived with Bishops and Pastors and the Warden carrying guns and clubs. "Judas told us that you confessed unequivocally to the murder in Harris County. We granted him clemency for his honesty. Your time for execution has come," declared the Warden. When Jesus left his pod, Judas blew him a kiss. Jesus replied, "I still love you Judas. I know you did what you had to do." Then the group collectively grabbed Jesus and arrested him. Suddenly, one of the guards (who had secretly become a disciple of Jesus) pulled out his gun and shot one of the Bishops in the ear and blew it clean off. Jesus got one of his hands free and reached out and healed the ear of the

guard. "Do you not think I could call down ten thousand angels to stop this? How would the scriptures be fulfilled if I did that?" questioned Jesus. At that hour, Jesus turned to the group that had come to force him to his execution and pushed, "Why have you come at night like this? My case has made national news and you seek to execute me while no one is watching?" The disciples deserted Jesus and trembled in fear at the back of their cells.

In the hearing room, the Pastor at the First Baptist Church came to Jesus surrounded by other Bishops and Pastors. The entire group wanted to execute Jesus and condemn him to hell. Looking to drum up more false testimony, the group brought in witness after witness to accuse Jesus of worshiping the devil. "I heard Jesus talking about evil people as if they would be saved. How can evil be saved without the savior uniting with evil?" remarked one witness. "I heard that Jesus was transformed into a ball of fire in front of the disciples. How can anyone be transformed into fire unless they are from the evil flames?" reasoned another witness. The Pastor of First Baptist stood up and declared, "Have you no reply?" Jesus remained silent. Then the Pastor of First Bap-

tist said, "In the name of God, I command you to tell us if you are the Messiah!" Jesus replied, "It is as you say it is. The Son of Man is from God and will be seated at the right hand of God." The Pastor of First Baptist ripped his tie off and said, "You blasphemer! Why do we need anymore witnesses?" The group shouted out in unison, "Execute him! Send him to hell! Execute him! Send him to hell! Execute him! Send him to hell!" The group of Bishops and Pastors struck Jesus and spit in his face, "What are you going to do now you piece of shit?"

An official came to the cell of Peter and asked him, "Are you a follower of Jesus?" Peter quickly replied, "I don't even know the man!" A little while later a guard declared, "I know that you were one of Jesus' disciples!" Peter responded sharply, "I am telling you that we were never that close!" When a chaplain came by to minister to him about the lose of his friend Jesus, Peter responded, "I don't need no ministering. I really didn't know him!" At that very second, the intercom dinged three times. Peter remembered Jesus' words. Weeping bitterly, Peter crumpled to the ground.

27.

When morning came, Jesus was surprised to still be alive. The Bishops and Pastors met together to confer about his death. With the help of the Warden and the Sheriff, the group bound him up and took him to the Governor's Mansion. Arriving at a back entrance, the group got Jesus out and took him to the living room of the Governor.

Though Judas was free, he struggled to live with his self. Judas loved Jesus and missed him dearly, "What have I done to buy my freedom? I betrayed innocent blood. I can't live like this." Early that morning, Judas called the Bishops and Pastors to recant his testimony against Jesus. The group declined and told him to keep his mouth shut or they would tell everyone some of his darkest secrets. Repenting of what he had done and what he was about to do, Judas decided he could not live and committed suicide in an abandoned dusty field. There, Judas was buried and many still call the place a field of blood.

The Governor sarcastically asked Jesus, "Are you the son of God?" Jesus replied, "It is as you say." But when the Bishops and Pastors accused and questioned him, Jesus did not re-

ply. Then the Governor said, "Do you not hear what all of these religious folks are saying against you?" Jesus gave no answer to any of the charges. The Governor could not believe Jesus would remain silent when he was standing before someone who could save his life.

There was a film festival in Austin and the Governor was looking to score some political points. Going on stage at the festival, the Governor told the crowd, "You will have the opportunity to release one prisoner. Your choices are Jesus or Barabbas?" As the men were being brought out on stage, the Governor's wife sent word that she dreamed about Jesus and not to harm him. Enraged at the potential the dream was sexual, the Governor led the crowd in their decision to release Barabbas instead of Jesus. Everyone screamed for Jesus to be executed. Realizing that hysteria was taking over, the Governor tried to wash his hands of what was about to happen before he handed Jesus over. The crowd wouldn't wait and officers grabbed Jesus to take him to the execution chamber.

Once he was in the car, the officers ripped off Jesus' clothes and mocked him all the way to Huntsville. Mile after mile,

the officers beat Jesus relentlessly. Upon arrival at the execution chamber, Jesus could not walk. The officers ordered another inmate named Simon to carry Jesus to the camber. Inside, the officers offered Jesus a last meal. Refusing to par ticipate in the charade, Jesus fasted and prayed. Two other prisoners were being held close to his cell. One of the prison ers taunted Jesus and said, "If you are truly the Son of God then get us out of here!" The other declared, "I know you don't deserve to die. Remember me in paradise." Jesus decided to remember them both.

When the time came, Jesus was led to the execution chamber. With a loud voice, Jesus cried out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" Trembling with fear and unable to stand, the guards pulled Jesus to the chamber. "Dead man walking," shouted each guard who was present. Once strapped to the gurney, Jesus urinated all over his clothes. When asked if he had any final words, Jesus declared, "I am innocent." The execution did not take and Jesus suffered tremendously before he finally died 45 minutes later. Upon his death, a tremendous earthquake shook the chamber and a deep darkness overtook the land. In Austin, monuments

inside the Texas State Capitol started to topple over and chairs were overturned in the legislative chambers. Tombs released the bodies of many worthy saints. When all of this took place, a great many people realized that Jesus truly was the Son of God. Everyone in the chamber was terrified and the body of Jesus was buried very quickly.

The officials remembered that Jesus said he would rise from the dead. To keep anyone from tampering with the body, the Governor decided to place four Texas Rangers at the tomb to keep it secure.

28.

Early on the third day, a hand came up out of the ground and grabbed the ankle of one of the Texas Rangers. Terrified, the Rangers scattered quickly. Later in the morning, Jesus' mother and two others went to the tomb to put flowers out. The group was surprised that no one was still there to guard it. Upon walking up, the group realized that the dirt was moved. Then, a great earthquake shook the group. A dazzling angel of God appeared and said, "Do not be afraid. Jesus has been raised from the dead. Go and tell the disciples.

You will all meet him in Livingston." Driving as quickly as they could, the group raced to Livingston. Passing over a bridge, Jesus appeared to the group in the car. Swerving to a stop, the group listened as Jesus said, "Go tell my brothers that I am coming to see them."

While the group was on the way to Livingston, the Governor ordered no one to talk about what happened. The Bishops and Pastors covered the whole thing up and pretended to not even know who Jesus was. Everyone protected their money and positions and said nothing. Later in the day, Jesus appeared to his disciples in Livingston and told them, "Go make disciples of the entire world, baptize them in the name of the Creator, Christ and Sustainer and teach them to obey all that I have shown you. I will be with you always, even unto the end." Jesus ascended through the roof to God. Before Texas executes them all, the disciples continue to work to share the message of Jesus with the world.

The Sociopathic Jesus

A Revision of the Gospel of Mark

The revelation of Jesus through negation.

1

This is the beginning of a rendition of the selfish news of a sociopathic Jesus that some mistook for a Christ.

Isaiah wrote long ago in a chat room, "I am sending you somebody to let you know that somebody better is coming. The person will be in the middle of the club shouting, 'Prepare the way for the fabulous.'"

John the Bartender appeared in the club and proclaimed shots of vodka as the way to forget about the evil you have done. People all over Dallas loved this new religion and flocked to the club to meet John the Bartender. Everyone joined John in taking shots to forget about all the evil they had done.

Now John wore the finest designer jeans, with only the nicest suede leather shoes to match and only ate at the finest of restaurants. John loved being seen and forever wanted more

attention. To all who admired him, he proclaimed, "There is one coming who is much more fabulous than I. I am not even worthy to untie his shoes. I have shown you how to be cool, but he will show you how to be fabulous."

In those days Jesus came up from Houston and took a shot at the club with John. And just as he was finishing up the shot, the roof of the club opened up and he heard, "F-A-B-U-L-O-U-S. That man is always flying first class up in the sky." Light shown down and a voice was heard, "You are the most fabulous cat in Dallas...go on with your bad self."

Immediately after this incident, melee broke out in the club and Jesus fled to the suburbs to chill with Lucifer and all the other desperate beasts that lived out there for forty days. Folks from Dallas stopped by to occasionally fill him in on all the drama that was taking place in the city.

Not long after Jesus fled to the suburbs, John was arrested for running a counterfeit designer jeans operation to funnel money to Jesus. The fabulous Jesus returned to Dallas and proclaimed that all could be fabulous if they believed everything that he said and lived exactly like he lived. Jesus pro-

claimed louder, "I am more fabulous than anybody. The time has come for you to hear the good news of what it looks like to really live."

Jesus was walking home from his latest outing and saw two brothers named Simon and Andrew gobbling up some fish sandwiches at a food truck. Jesus looked at them and declared, "Put down those nasty sandwiches. If you learn to live like me, I will have you eating caviar." Simon and Andrew didn't take another bite and followed Jesus.

Later that night, Jesus saw James and John with their dad trying to change a flat tire on their old truck. Jesus declared, "If you follow me you will never change a tire again. Get up out of that grease and leave the old man. Follow me." The men ran toward Jesus.

One Sunday, Jesus walked with all of the disciples down to Deep Ellum. There at a self-help center Jesus taught the many gathered about how the road to happiness is paved with working out and making money. As Jesus taught, a wimpy looking man walked up and declared, "Why are you teaching all of these things that are untrue? The only thing

that can make anyone happy is love that comes through the sacrifice of loving your neighbor as yourself. The good life is the simple life of love."

Jesus rebuked the man and declared, "I command all of this hippie stuff to come out of you. All you have to do is accept this job and car that I offer you. Come and embrace the fabu lousness I can give you."

The man began to struggle with the temptation of a fabulous life. After all, he had three young kids at home. Ultimately, the man changed his life philosophy and accepted the fabulous lifestyle of wealth and power. The people were amazed that Jesus could change someone that fast.

Everyone wondered together aloud, "Who is this man? He commands all to accept what is normal and they obey." Jesus appeared all over the television offering self-help tips and he quickly became famous throughout the land.

Jesus went to the house of Simon and Andrew. Simon's mother-in-law was in bed sick. Jesus went to her room and healed her. Jesus ordered her to serve him for the rest of her

life. Everyone could hear Jesus carrying on, "Bring me my coffee. Bring me my satchel. Do this. Do that."

Jesus looked at his disciples and declared, "The manipulation of healing is how you get real servants."

Later in the evening, people kept coming to see Jesus at the house to be healed. The story was the same, "I want to be rich and powerful. I want to be fabulous like you." Jesus gave the people their wish and even helped some of the folks get new jobs and into the top clubs in Dallas. Jesus stayed away from all who talked about love...because he knew that they knew about his selfish nature.

In the morning, Jesus went for a run to a tanning establishment. Simon and Andrew freaked out when they couldn't find Jesus. Then Simon looked at Andrew and said, "I bet he is tanning." When they found him under the tanning bulbs, Simon and Andrew declared, "Where have you been?" Jesus replied, "I need to go to all the neighborhoods to proclaim the message of fabulousness. Showing everyone how to have wealth and power is what my life is about. You know I can't go without a tan." And Jesus went with the disciples to all

the neighborhoods of Dallas, proclaiming the message of fabulousness.

An awkward man approached Jesus near Bishop Arts and said, "If you choose to you can help heal me." Embarrassed of the man's awkward presence near him, Jesus quickly made him well. Jesus sternly warned the man to not tell any body who had helped him, because Jesus didn't want to have to heal every socially anxious person in Dallas for free.

The man didn't listen and told all who would listen who made his anxiety disappear. The man could be heard repeat ing, "I am fabulous. I am finally who I want to be. I feel like I just walked out of the movies. I am ready to party."

2

Jesus returned to his neighborhood and folks started coming over. Jesus was becoming well known as a spiritual guru and people wanted to be around him. People filled the whole house and the driveway. Jesus began to teach them how to ensure that no one and nothing would interrupt the pursuit of fabulousness. As he was teaching, four men tried

to carry in a man who was in need of healing. The group couldn't get in and so they proceeded to cut a hole in the roof and lower him down to Jesus. As soon as Jesus saw the poor man, he was embarrassed and appalled at the man's poverty. Jesus gave him money and bid him to go and be fabulous. The man took the money and ran.

The religious teachers who were in attendance questioned Jesus, "Why do you speak of love and yet seem to care only about your image and your self? If God is love, then this is blasphemy." Jesus replied, " Why do you question me? You are just jealous. I am fabulous." Most in the room cheered Jesus' narcissism because they wanted to be just like him.

Jesus went for a jog the next morning without a shirt on and eventually ran by White Rock Lake. Seeing people assembled along the water for yoga, Jesus stopped to teach them all he knew about personal health. As he taught, a burly man walked up and Jesus pointed at him and said, "Follow Me!"

Jesus and the disciples ended up going back to the house of his new follower. They lounged and had dinner with a bunch of people they knew from the most exclusive gyms and clubs

in Dallas. Some religious folk walked by and asked, "Why does this man who claims to be so spiritual hang out with people who do not care about anyone but their selves?"

Jesus responded, "We are the healthy beautiful people! Don't criticize what God has #blessed us with!"

The disciples of John the Bartender were eating at a McDonald's in Oak Cliff. People confronted Jesus and asked, "Why do you eat caviar and drink champagne and John's disciples are left to eat at fast food joints?"

"I am not responsible for where John or anyone else eats. If you want to eat with the beautiful people, then you need to be beautiful. I am the giver of all things fine and people should expect to eat fine when they are around me. We simply are not going to be eating or drinking a bunch of common fast food. That stuff is way beneath me," replied Jesus.

One Sunday morning, Jesus and the disciples ran by a large church on a jog. They had been running all morning and were thirsty. So, they decided to run up and take a few drinks out of the baptismal fountain while the service was going on.

The priest ran out and declared, "This is the Sabbath! How dare you disrupt our services so you can have a drink of water!"

Jesus had had enough of the priest's tone and religion. Jesus pushed the priest into the fountain and ran away with his disciples. Jesus spoke to his disciples, "How dare that asshole criticize me about the Sabbath! Doesn't he know that I am the Sabbath!"

3

Jesus walked into the Cathedral and a man with a love for the poor approached him. Many in the congregation watched to see what Jesus would do. Jesus asked the man to come forward. Jesus questioned all present, "Should I alleviate this man's burden for the poor? " No one answered. Jesus looked at the gathered with anger for their silence and turned to the man, "Lean in." The man leaned in and Jesus made him fabulously selfish. Jesus claimed that the man was restored. The religious teachers were appalled and be-

gan to talk together about how Jesus′ movement could be stopped.

Jesus traveled to White Rock Lake and a great multitude followed. Everyone had heard of all of Jesus′ fabulous ways and wanted to be just like Jesus. The disciples placed a small boat in the water for Jesus to stand in and teach to those on the shore, for there were so many people that they were crushing Jesus to become their best idea of normal. The per sons who valued uniqueness would always shout against Jesus, but Jesus sternly ordered them to go on with their queer selves.

Jesus called out the most fabulous from the crowd. The fabulous came. Jesus appointed twelve Apostles of fabulousness to proclaim the gospel of normativity. There were twelve powerful men called: Peter the Bodybuilder, James the Accountant, John the Model, Andrew the Lawyer, Phillip the Corporate Guy, Bartholomew the Escort, Matthew the Football Player, Thomas the Bouncer, James the Interior Decorator, Thaddeus the Car Salesman, Simon the Marketing Guru and Judas Iscariot the Pastor, who would later betray Jesus.

Jesus went home to his new flat and the crowd rushed the flat. There were so many in the crowd that no one could even function. Jesus loved the attention, but his family felt like his narcissism was out of control and tried to restrain him from teaching. No one could stop Jesus! Jesus continued extolling the virtues of fabulousness. The religious teachers declared that Jesus was filled with the devil. Jesus replied, "I make people fabulous and normative. How could I be the devil? I am a strong man and it is a good thing that all of you are simply jealous of me. I really don't blame you for being jealous of me. I would be too. People can be forgiven for a bunch of stuff, but you cannot be forgiven for not being jealous of the one you should be jealous of...the fabulous one."

Jesus' mothers and brothers were standing outside and called for him to come out of the flat for a second. Jesus replied, "My true family is sitting around being fabulous with me. These folks worship the ground I walk on. They are my real mothers and brothers. The fabulous ones. I'm not going outside."

4

Jesus again went to teach on the shores of White Rock Lake. There were so many people trying to figure out how to live a #blessed life that Jesus had to get in a boat to teach them. Jesus started telling stories, "Someone went out to plant a few seeds. Some seeds fell on the path and a bird ate them. Some seeds fell on the rocky ground and the seed sprung up and died quickly. When the sun came up the new plant on the rocky ground withered away. Other seeds fell on the thorns and the thorns choked them out. Other seed fell on good soil and kept growing and multiplying. Do you understand the message of this parable? You need to be like the seed on the rock. You need to spring up quickly, live for yourself today and not worry about others or tomorrow. Let anyone who has ears to hear listen."

When Jesus was alone, the disciples asked Jesus about the stories. Jesus declared, "These stories are to help everyone live as selfishly and fabulously as possible. Unfortunately, no one will ever be as selfish and fabulous as me. Did you not understand the story? The ones on the path hear the word of fabulousness and just don't have the ability to be fabulous enough. The ones on the rocky ground are fabulous beyond

measure and gloriously burn up in a flame of selfishness. That is the truly beautiful one. The ones among the thorns allow all these people who encourage love and selflessness to choke them out. The ones on the good soil are the ones who try to live for others and succeed, but ultimately fail to live for themselves. Obviously the path of the short selfish life is the best path."

Jesus then declared, "Do we hide the fabulous people or do we want them to be out here with us so that we can see their glamour and shine? We want all the fabulous people to come out. When you champion selfishness they will. We need their light in our lives. Let all who have ears to hear listen." And then Jesus said in a really serious tone, "Why do you think I work out? The time that you give to the gym and per fecting your looks is what you will sow in fabulousness. If you don't work to make your self look good, then you won't have anything and those who do nothing to help themselves will continue to be the ones who make those of us who are fabulous look amazing."

Jesus also said, "Following God is about being as selfish as possible. You should scatter your seed and have sex with

whomever you want and not care who you hurt. Pleasure is the only thing that matters. When you have that mustard seed within you that pushes you to only think about yourself, it only grows and matures you into a truly self absorbed person."

All of the stories were received enthusiastically. Everybody wanted to have good reasons to be fabulous and selfish. The disciples got special attention and teaching in private.

The next day when the evening came, Jesus said, "Let's cross over the Trinity River Bridge together." They left the crowd behind at White Rock Lake and drove in a caravan of luxury automobiles. A great windstorm arose in the middle of the bridge and the cables of the bridge began to break. Peter cried out, "Holy fucking shit, we're going to die!" It looked as if all of the cars were going to fall right into the Trinity River. Jesus was asleep in the back of a Bentley.

John screamed, "Jesus do you not care that we are perishing?" Jesus was so tired of being pestered by all the noise that he cussed at John, shot a fist of glitter at the sky to stop the storm, restored the bridge with just a few words and went

back to sleep. The disciples were filled with awe at what was happening and in unison declared, "What type of fabulousness is this that even the wind obeys his voice?"

5

Jesus and the disciples arrived in Fort Worth. When they got out of their luxury vehicles, Jesus encountered a nun. The woman lived amongst the poor and no one could stop her compassion. Night and day she suffered with the people. When the nun saw Jesus she begged, "Jesus you ride around in these luxury automobiles, will you sell one of them to help me feed the homeless people out here?"

Jesus replied to the spirit within her, "What is your name?"

The spirit replied, "God." Jesus knew this couldn't be true and demanded, "Come out of her you spirit of selflessness!" Jesus tossed the spirit of selflessness into the large corporate office tower adjacent to where they were standing and all of a sudden folks in suits came running out the front doors throwing wads of money at homeless people and repenting of their selfishness. The former nun became fabulous and

joined Jesus and together they jumped in the car and sped away.

The people in Fort Worth were deeply troubled by what was happening. They wanted to keep their selfish fabulous ways and did not want to be overtaken by this spirit of selflessness. People caught up with the luxury automobiles and begged Jesus to leave their town for fear that more events like the day before would happen. Jesus felt very confused because he was the epitome of selfishness and did not understand how the people out of their selfishness would want him to leave. Looking in the back of the car, Jesus realized that the former nun was too much extra weight and tossed her out.

Jesus started back for Dallas. People surrounded the vehicles in Arlington. The pastor of one of the large churches ap proached the car and asked if Jesus could help his daughter. "My daughter thinks that she is supposed to live her life only caring for other people. She is caring about people to the point of death. Please come with me to lay your hands on her and make her as fabulous as you." Jesus went with the pastor.

A large crowd followed. Everybody wanted to see. Then a woman came to him who had been suffering from a desire to help people for a number of years. She had spent all of her money on other people. When the woman heard about Jesus she thought if she could just touch his cloak and she would be cure from her helping desires. She snuck up and grabbed his cloak. Jesus felt the power leave his body. Jesus turned around and asked, "Who touched my clothes?"

The disciples replied, "There are thousands of people, everyone is touching your clothes." The woman was afraid and fell down before Jesus to ask for forgiveness. Jesus replied, "Your selfishness has made you well. Go in fabulousness."

While Jesus was still speaking, people rushed up to the pastor and declared, "Your daughter has finally starved herself to death by giving all of her food away. Don't trouble Jesus any longer." Jesus told the pastor not to fear and kept travel ing toward the daughter. Everyone was weeping in the yard of the house. Jesus spoke up, "She is not dead and all of you are annoying me with this weeping." The whole group started laughing. Jesus sent everyone outside except the

pastor and his wife. Jesus went in and declared, "Get up and be raised to a new life of self-centeredness."

The girl immediately got up and declared loudly, "I am fabulous!" Jesus ordered them not to tell anyone what happened...and he also added "clean that girl up and put her in some fabulous clothes."

6

Jesus left to travel to his hometown. Upon arrival, Jesus started teaching in his home church. Many who heard Jesus were moved by his selfish teachings. "Where does this man get such looks, power and money? Is he a God?"

Not all were moved and a large group started to ask, "These teachings are blasphemy. All Jesus is talking about is himself. Jesus does not care about anything except being fabulous. Is this not the son of Mary? She is a selfless loving woman. What happened to him?" The more Jesus said the more people started to take offense. Jesus replied, "The fabulous are without honor and respect in their hometown amongst their own family." Jesus helped a few people be

more self-centered in the town and left amazed that no one was in awe of him.

Jesus went out to the surrounding smaller towns and did a few tricks. Then, Jesus called the twelve together and started sending them out two by two and gave them authority over selflessness. Jesus ordered them not to take anything for their journey but their fabulous selves. When the disciples protested, Jesus replied, "You are fabulous enough that everyone will throw their bodies and everything else at you. Stay with whoever invites you into their home first. If anybody refuses you, shake the disappointment off and realize that they will never be as fabulous as you then move on." The disciples went out to proclaim that all should be fabulously selfish. They cured people of their addiction to helping others and encouraged them to get into the "me" business.

Mayor Herrod heard of all that was happening with Jesus and was very confused. This Jesus reminded Herrod of John the Bartender and she knew that it couldn't be John the Bartender because she had John the Bartender executed. Herrod tried to convince herself that this was not John the Bartender, but couldn't shake her belief that it probably was.

Mayor Herrod had seen John the Bartender arrested and taken to the county jail. John the Bartender was rivaling Herrod and was condemning Herrod over Herodias, Herrod's brother Phillip's wife, because she had married her among many others. For John the Bartender had been telling Herrod, "It is wrong for you to be in so many relation ships with both men and women." Herodias didn't like these words and held a grudge against John the Bartender. Mayor Herrod was afraid of John the Bartender, but had a strange admiration for his selfish fabulousness. On her birthday, Herrod had a grand celebration downtown for all the leaders and famous figures of Dallas. In the midst of the party, Herrod's daughter Herodias danced for all the guests and Herrod told her she could have whatever she wanted in Dallas. Herodias' mother told her to ask for the head of John the Bartender. Mayor Herrod was upset, as she didn't like executions, but she made it happen and brought John the Bartender's head on a platter. Mayor Herrod knew all of this had happened, but still wondered who was this man called Jesus?

The apostles gathered around Jesus and told him all that had happened in their journeys around the Metroplex. Jesus replied, "Let's go to a deserted place together across the lake and rest." The group pilled into a yacht and made the journey in style. Over five thousand people saw the group leave and drove fast to meet them on the shore of the other side of the lake. The crowd wanted to know how to be fabulous like Jesus. The hour grew late as Jesus loved talking about Jesus' self, and the crowd began to grow hungry and cranky. The disciples started to grow anxious. The scene was growing nastier by the moment. Jesus asked, "What food do we have?"

"Just five packages of bread and two packs of canned sardines," they replied. The disciples forced all the people to sit down with the threat of violence and started to pass out food. The five packages and two cans miraculously fed everyone and there was food left over. "Jesus thank you! You really saved our asses from all these ravenous fabulous people," proclaimed the disciples.

"You should have brought enough food and not put us in this situation. I might not be kind enough to save your asses next time," replied Jesus.

Jesus was still pissed at the lack of planning from the disciples that almost got everyone killed and made his party quickly get back into the yacht. The group left without Jesus as he got away at the last minute and told them to go ahead to Highland Village. When evening came, Jesus laid down in a hammock alone. Jesus had a vision that the yacht was going down and decided to go save them. After all he thought a few of the disciples made good servants. Jesus loved productions and this was no different. As lightening crashed and club music filled the heavens, Jesus walked on water toward the yacht shirtless. The disciples were terrified and in awe all at the same time. Jesus jumped into the boat and the music and lighting stopped all at the same time. Nobody thought about what was happening because they were all too concerned about what they looked like for Jesus.

When the boat arrived in Highland Village, everybody got out of the yacht and people recognized them. As the cameras flashed, Jesus and the disciples traveled all over the city and

cured people of their selflessness. Everyone wanted to touch them and be as fabulous as they were.

7

When the pastors of some of some of the local churches gath ered from Dallas, they noticed that Jesus and the disciples were eating the nicest foods, wearing the most expensive clothes and driving the most luxurious of automobiles. So the pastors asked Jesus, "Why do you take from the poor to live a rich lifestyle?" Jesus replied, "I am fabulous and I can do whatever I want. Why are your hearts so far from fabulousness? Don't you know that God exists to give us whatever we want? This is a health and wealth kind of thing and I guess you just don't understand." Jesus called the people together and exclaimed, "Listen to me, all of you, be as selfish as possible, for God takes care of those who take care of themselves. If you are fabulous, then you are invincible."

When Jesus left the crowd, the disciples asked about his words. Jesus replied, "Do you not get it either? If you eat, wear and drive shit, you are shit. God doesn't want you to be shit so embrace fabulousness and God. These inklings that

you have to be selfless are a disease that will destroy your life. Let go of them and embrace fabulousness, my friends."

From there Jesus traveled to Carrollton. Jesus entered a house to escape attention. A woman brought her daughter to Jesus. The young girl had a spirit of selflessness in her that was pushing her to give away all of her lunch money away at school. The woman begged Jesus to cast the spirit of selfless ness out of her daughter and declared, "Please make her as selfish as you Jesus."

"Why should I do anything for you?" Jesus replied.

"I want my daughter to be just like you," she replied. Jesus loved the answer and the woman found her daughter to be more selfish than she had ever been before.

Jesus then traveled to Lewisville and came across a man who could only hear the cries of the poor. Jesus tried to talk louder and louder to the man to no avail. After growing frus trated with the condition of the man and his inability to hear about the fabulous way of living, Jesus took him aside in private and stuck his tongue in the deaf man's ears to cure him

and make him unable to hear the cries of the poor. The man walked out of the bedroom and his ears were opened to the message of being fabulous. When there were some who speculated that Jesus took advantage of the man, Jesus ordered no one to say anything. No one could stay quiet; there was simply too much to talk about.

8

There was another crowd of about four thousand with nowhere to go and nothing to eat. The folks had been trying to be like Jesus for days. Everyone was complaining. Jesus finally said, "I can't take this shit anymore." Jesus ordered a few fish sandwiches to be handed out until they were all gone. Everyone got full and there were seven baskets of fish sandwiches left over. Jesus then spoke up, "Go home. I am tired of listening to you burp and belch." Immediately, Jesus and the disciples jumped into a car and headed to Arlington.

Upon arrival, the pastors in the town asked Jesus to perform one selfless act to prove that he was not entirely selfish. Jesus sighed deeply and declared, "You get no sign except for

me. I am the totality of what it means to be fabulously self-ish." Jesus got into his car and left them to go across town.

Jesus and the disciples had nothing to eat. One piece of bread was in the car. Jesus warned, "Do not eat the bread of the pastors."

"We don't have any other bread," replied the disciples.

"Why do you talk like this? Do you not have eyes? Are you dumb? Do you not have ears? Are you stupid? Do you not have a mind to remember with? Remember when I fed all five thousand? How much was left over?" Jesus ranted.

"Tons," the disciples replied.

"And the four thousand?" Jesus pushed.

"Tons," the disciples replied.

"Do you not understand what is going on here?" Jesus demanded.

Jesus and the disciples arrived at Hurst. The people pushed a blind man toward Jesus. Frustrated that the people kept pushing the blind man into him, Jesus spit at the man. "I am feeling so strange," he said. The blind man started rubbing the spit in his eyes and miraculously he was healed. Jesus scoffed and said, "I guess that a little bit of my fabulous goes a long way." Scared that everyone was going to want to be healed by his spit, Jesus declared, "We must now stay far away from Hurst."

Jesus went with the disciples to the other mid-cities and on the way Jesus asked the disciples, "What do people think that I am?" And they answered, "Some people think you are arrogant. Many think you are full of shit. Some people think you are an asshole. Still others think that you are the exact opposite of God." Jesus asked them, "But what do you say that I am?" Peter answered, "You are fabulous." Jesus sternly told the disciples to not reveal the totality of his fabulousness.

Jesus then began to teach that people would get jealous of him, start coming after him and eventually succeed in killing him. Peter took Jesus aside and told him to quit talking like

that. "The fabulous never die," Peter sternly declared to Jesus. But turning and looking at all the disciples, Jesus declared, "Set your mind on me and forget about everything else."

Jesus gathered everyone and said, "If you want to be my follower then you have to learn to be as selfish as I am. You can not be fabulous until you are completely self-absorbed. Whoever wants to be selfless will lose their life, but whoever wants to be selfish will get to hold on to their fabulous life un til the end. What will it profit someone to give his or her life away? This is lunacy. Those who think that I am selfish do not know how to live a truly fabulous life. If you are ashamed of me then you probably are ashamed of yourself. Embrace me and try to be like me. I doubt you will ever make it to my level of fabulousness, but you must try."

9

"If you are self-absorbed enough then you will never truly taste death. You will just collapse into yourself. God will be found by the fabulously selfish."

Six days later, Jesus took Peter, James and John to a secluded resort and he was transformed in front of them next to the pool. Jesus all of a sudden had on all white clothes that were studded with rhinestones and glitter. A few guys came out from the bar and Jesus introduced them as fabulously selfish guys from the past named Elijah and Moses. Peter said I want to be like you and worship you. Suddenly, a cloud overshadowed them and everyone heard a voice from the sky declare "F-a-b-u-l-o-u-s." Jesus declared that the voice was God's. Lighting crashed, the sky cleared and Jesus stood there with them alone.

As they were leaving the resort, Jesus ordered them not to tell anyone what they had seen until he became immortal. The guys kept wondering what Jesus meant by immortal. "Why do the pastors say that one must be selfless before they can meet God?" they inquired.

Jesus replied, "They simply do not know what it means to be fabulous. All of the persons who have been selfless before have had their lives destroyed by the people who do not know how to stop taking from them. I choose selfishness and fabulousness. I believe that is the way of God."

The group returned to find the rest of the disciples arguing with a big group of pastors in Grand Prairie. When the people saw Jesus, they were in awe of him and everybody ran over. Jesus inquired, "What are you arguing about?" Someone in the crowd answered, "I brought my selfless son, who constantly gets walked all over at school, to your disciples. I asked them to make my son fabulously selfish just like you and your disciples, but they couldn't do it."

"Bring him to me," declared Jesus. The young man walked up and asked Jesus, "Is there anything I can help you with, sir?"

Jesus asked the mother, "How long has he been acting like this?"

"From childhood he has sacrificed himself for everyone he comes in contact with. He started doing chores as soon as he was able to help. He truly loves and serves absolutely everyone. Can you heal him?," the mother replied. "Can I? - All things are possible for those who believe in the beauty of fab ulousness and selfishness," replied Jesus.

The mother screamed out, "Jesus I believe; help my unbelief." Jesus saw the crowd staring at him in expectation and did not want to be embarrassed. Jesus touched the forehead of the child and pulled the spirit of selflessness out of him. The boy collapsed to the ground and Jesus grabbed his hand to lift him up. Immediately, the young man started talking about how fabulous he was. Later, the disciples asked Jesus, "Why could we not cast out the spirit of selflessness?" Jesus replied, "You are just not selfish enough yet."

Jesus and the disciples started off on a journey to North Texas. Along the way, Jesus kept on describing that he was afraid that the selfishness of others would lead to his death. "Regardless of what happens, I am immortal," Jesus concluded. The disciples did not understand what he was talking about and could not see how someone as fabulous as Jesus could be killed.

When the group arrived in Lewisville, Jesus looked around and inquired, "What are you arguing about?" No one spoke. Then Jesus spoke again, "Whoever wants to be first must be selfish enough to discard all others and make their self first."

Then he picked up a child and said, "If this child doesn't get his then he will have nothing. Make sure you get yours."

John spoke up and said, "We saw someone making the selfless selfish in your name and we tried to stop him." Jesus replied, "It is ok. Selfishness is sweeping through Texas and whoever wants to spread selfishness let them spread it. Whoever spreads the fabulous selfishness is with us anyways."

Jesus continued, "If any of you teaches the children to be selfless, I will destroy you. These children must have the opportunity to be as selfish as us."

10

The group left with Jesus and together they went outside the Metroplex beyond Lake Lewisville. Crowds began to gather around them again and Jesus started to teach.

Pastors from local churches heard the heresies that Jesus was teaching and sought to confront him. "Is it permissible

for a woman to divorce her husband because she is no longer attracted to him?"

Jesus answered, "What do you think?"

The gathered pastors replied, "We think that is a very selfish reason to leave no matter which partner leaves?" But Jesus replied sternly, "Your selfless hearts have kept you from seeing what love is all about...good looks. Two people get together because they are attracted to each other, not because they are not. When you are no longer attracted to the person then get out of the marriage."

When the group went back inside, one of the disciples asked Jesus, "Are you sure about all of that? It seems very harsh." Jesus replied, "Sometimes you have to be harsh to get what you want; that is the path of fabulousness."

People kept on bringing kids to Jesus. The kids were really getting on Jesus' nerves, and he asked the disciples to take them away, but they kept on climbing all over him. Jesus had finally had enough and screamed at the children so loud that they all ran away crying. Looking at the disciples, Jesus

said, "Now that is how you have to handle a bunch of kids like that."

Jesus was about to head out on a trip when a man ran up and knelt before him, "What must I do to inherit eternal life?"

"You must care about no one but yourself and make as much money as possible," Jesus replied. The man was shocked and went away grieving because he was not talented at making money.

Jesus turned around and looked at the disciples, "It will be hard for people who are poor and untalented at making money to enter heaven!" Everyone was perplexed at these words. Jesus kept going, "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is poor to enter heaven."

"Then who can be saved?" the disciples replied.

"God blesses those who bless themselves," Jesus answered.

"We have left everyone to follow you," Peter said.

"There is no one who has followed me that will not be rewarded greatly by God. We are the first and the first always come first," Jesus concluded.

The group was riding in a van and Jesus started to tell them what was about to happen, "Everyone is going to get so jealous of me that they are going to attack and kill me. I will rise again to immortality in three days."

James and John came forward and said, "We want you to give us something."

"What is it that you want?" Jesus replied.

"We want to be immortal with you," James and John requested. "You do not know what you are asking for. You are not able to go through what I will go through," Jesus answered. James and John quickly replied, "We are able." Then Jesus said to them, "You will have to die like me."

The rest of the disciples got angry that James and John were trying to work their way closer to Jesus. Jesus calmed every

one down and said, "The riches you accumulate in this life will travel with you to the next. It is important that all of you make sure to put yourself first in everything you do so that you can accumulate more for your self."

The group arrived in Commerce. As they were exiting the van, Bartimaeus, a blind beggar, approached them. When he realized it was Jesus, the man started screaming, "Jesus make me see and make me rich!" Everyone told him to be quiet, but he kept on screaming. Jesus finally asked, "What do you want you filthy beggar?" The blind man replied, "I want to see and be rich." Jesus was so disgusted by the smell of the blind man that he restored his sight and wrote him a check.

11

When the group was almost to Dallas, Jesus sent two of the disciples up ahead and asked them to get a red convertible for him to ride into the city in. The disciples returned and Je sus jumped up onto the back of the car. As the car slowed rolled into Dallas, everyone cheered. People were spreading their jackets, purses and whatever else they could find of

value along the road for the car to drive over. Everyone shouted, "Hosanna! Praise the one who is selfish and rich who teaches us to be selfish and rich! Hosanna in the highest!" Then Jesus went downtown to socialize and eventually slept at a swanky hotel right outside of town in a suburb called Bethany.

The following day, as the group was heading back into Dallas, Jesus got hungry. Seeing a food truck in the distance, Je sus quickly walked over. When he arrived, Jesus asked for shrimp tacos. The woman working in the truck informed Jesus that they only had chicken tacos. Jesus went ballistic and cussed out the whole food truck. As he walked away, Jesus said he was going to make sure they never had business ever again. The disciples were taken aback by Jesus' anger.

The group arrived in Dallas. When Jesus stopped in to the Cathedral, he questioned why everyone was praying and there were no places to buy luxury goods. Jesus got angry and drove out all the people who were praying at the Cathedral. To say that people were upset is an understatement.

Outside, the people of Dallas were growing more and more jealous of the wealth of Jesus. The group left the city under threat.

In the morning, the disciples and Jesus passed by the food truck where Jesus cussed out the employees. The food truck was burned to the ground. The disciples pointed the burned truck out to Jesus. In reaction, Jesus declared, "You do not mess with fabulous unless you want to get burned. If you have faith in wealth and power, anything you ask of God will be given to you. Do not forgive anyone, it is always a sign of weakness."

Again the group came into Dallas. People kept on walking up to Jesus saying things like, "Who do you think you are teaching what you teach? Who gives you such authority?" Jesus replied, "I was given wealth and power by God to use however I want." "Why hasn't God given wealth and power to us?" they replied. Jesus sealed his fate with his response, "Because you are all low-class nobodies that God does not give a shit about."

12

Jesus then started talking in parables. "A woman planted a vineyard, fenced it in and built a tower to watch over it; then she leased it to some tenants and traveled to another state. When the time came, she sent a servant to collect her share from the harvest. The tenants beat the servant and sent him away. The women sent another servant and they beat her too. The woman sent another servant and they killed him. Events like this kept on happening. The woman didn't know what to do and, believing they would not kill him, she decided to send her son. The tenants decided that this was their chance to seize the land once and for all, so they killed the son and threw his body in the vineyard. What would you expect the owner to do? She came and destroy all of them. Have you not read that the one you reject will be the incarna tion of God?" When the elites realized that he was speaking against them, they wanted to kill him right then and there, but they feared the crowd. They left Jesus and walked away.

The elites then sent some folks to try to catch Jesus in some mistruths. They came and questioned, "Should we pay taxes or spend the money on trying to make ourselves beautiful, powerful and fabulous?"

Jesus replied, "Why are you testing me? You know what to do. Make sure you get all the refunds and loopholes you can so that you don't have to pay any taxes at all. Then, you will have all the money you need to make yourself beautiful and powerful."

Then there were questions from other elites about immortality, "When someone is immortal, does it matter what they did in their life?"

"No," Jesus replied flatly.

An elite heard everything that was going on and questioned, "What is the greatest thing we need to do in this life?" Jesus replied, "Love yourself and no one else with all your heart, mind, body and soul."

The scribe replied, "You are correct teacher."

Upon the scribe's affirmation, Jesus replied, "You are not far from fabulousness."

While Jesus was teaching in a church in Fort Worth, someone asked, "God says that God loves everyone. How can this be? I don't think it is possible. I know I am God's favorite piece of fabulousness." Everyone was perplexed by Jesus' words.

As the morning wore on, Jesus kept teaching, "Beware of the elites. They're jealous and trying to steer you away from being fabulous. Follow me and I will show you the real way."

Jesus sat down opposite of the treasury and watched the crowd putting their money in. A stunningly dressed rich person came up with wads of money and stuffed it all into the plate. Jesus jumped up and declared, "This rich person is exactly what God wants us all to be: healthy and wealthy. Go and stuff likewise."

13

As the group was leaving the church in Fort Worth, one of the disciples looked up and declared, "My God, look at all of these amazing buildings!" Jesus got jealous and replied, "I

am mightier than all of these buildings. The day is coming when I will stand taller than all of them."

Later, the disciples asked Jesus what he meant by mightier and taller than the buildings. Jesus replied, "Beware that no one leads you astray. I am going to be immortal. If you follow my path of fabulousness, you will be immortal too. Many will come and say that they are fabulous. This is usually the beginning of your fabulousness because they want to keep you from being fabulous."

"As for all of you, be on guard against those who try to steal your fabulousness. They will try to put you in tabloids and make you look like a joke. Keep proclaiming the good news of selfishness. I have overcome all jokes and you will too. Many will turn against you, but if you endure to the end, you will be called fabulous."

"There will come a time when people will take away all fancy things and give then to the poor. Flee to Switzerland when this happens and you will be able to be fabulous there. God will give everyone everything they ever wanted in time, but until then, never stop the struggle to be selfish and fabulous.

Do not trust anyone who proclaims to be as fabulous as I but me. Be on alert. I have told you everything."

"In those days, the poor will have everything they need and their will be no injustice. Then you will see me the immortal Jesus showing you how to overcome selflessness and be the selfish people I have created you to be. Then I will send out my angels to gather you from all over the world and bring you to the great fabulous rave in the sky."

"From the fig tree learn a lesson, as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts out leaves you know that summer is near. When you experience these things, you know that fabulousness is close. My words will not pass away."

"The day or hour no one knows. Keep alert for fabulousness. You do not know when I will return. Hold fast and keep awake."

14

It was right before The Art Festival. The elite were jealous of Jesus and were looking for a way to secretly kill him. They

realized they couldn't do it during the festival for fear of rioting.

While Jesus was in Dallas, a woman brought in some nice perfume and poured it over his head. Everyone was so jealous. They all wanted the perfume on their heads. The anger of the disciples spilled over at the woman. Jesus scolded all of them and shouted, "She is preparing me for my most fabu lous of moments. Everyone will remember her for this act of exaltation."

Judas was so jealous that he stepped out to betray Jesus and went to the elite. The elites were so happy and promised to give Judas lots of money if he could deliver Jesus to them. So Judas began to look for the perfect opportunity.

On the first day of The Art Festival, the disciples asked Jesus where he wanted to eat the great feast of The Art Festival. "Go downtown and find the highest ritziest place that you can find," replied Jesus. The disciples went downtown, found a place on the top level of a skyscraper and hired a chef to prepare the feast.

When the evening came, Jesus arrived. Right after they started eating, Jesus said, "One of you is going to betray me tonight." Everyone became distressed and declared, "Not I."

Jesus said, "It is the one that continues eating in the midst of this distress." Judas looked up with cheese bread hanging out of his mouth.

Jesus took some fine perfume, sprayed it, passed it around and declared, "This is my scent. As often as you spray this scent, remember me." Then Jesus took a bottle of priceless liquor and downed a gulp, "This is my blood. As often as you gulp priceless liquor, remember me. We will wear fine perfume and gulp priceless liquor together in immortality."

After listening and dancing to some electronica, Jesus went out to White Rock Lake and declared to the disciples, "You will all abandon me."

Peter spoke up loudly, "I will never abandon your fabulous ass."

Jesus replied, "Tonight, before the dog barks twice you will deny me." Peter replied along with every one else, "I will die with you."

The group went to a park and Jesus said, "Wait here." Then Jesus took Peter, James and John closer to White Rock Lake to pray on the bank. Jesus went further. Falling on the shore, Jesus begged God to save him from the jealous elites. Jesus returned to find the disciples sleeping on three different occasions. After the last time, Jesus declared, "Get up! The jealous assholes are here."

Judas arrived and ran up to kiss Jesus. There was a crowd of angry elites with Judas and they quickly moved to arrest Jesus. Immediately, Jesus and the disciples started fighting back. The elites were too much and overpowered Jesus.

The elites grabbed a young man who was friendly with the disciples and the young man pulled out of his clothes and ran away naked.

In the District Attorney's chambers, Jesus stood before the elitist of elites. Peter secretly followed in the distance and

stayed in the lobby. Everyone gave false testimony about Jesus. The District Attorney asked Jesus, "Do you claim to be more fabulous than any one else?"

"I do," replied Jesus.

"Even me?" asked the District Attorney.

"Definitely more than you," replied Jesus. The people started to scream for Jesus to be given a lethal injection. The crowd knew that the District Attorney was good at giving sentences of lethal injection.

In the lobby, people kept asking Peter if he was a disciple of Jesus. Peter kept saying he did not know Jesus and after the second and third times a dog barked. Then Peter remembered and wept.

15

The elites consulted on what to do next and decided to take the bounded Jesus to the Mayor of Dallas. The Mayor asked Jesus, "Are you the most fabulous of them all?" Jesus

replied, "I am what you say I am." The mayor pushed, "Is that all you have to say? These people want to kill you!" Jesus said nothing.

The District Attorney arrived and his custom was to release one prisoner every year. A murderer was brought out and everyone present wanted him released and not Jesus. The elites stirred up the crowd and chanted for death. Scared for their jobs, the District Attorney and Mayor handed Jesus over to the mob.

Police officers beat Jesus and made fun of him. The group of officers had always been jealous of Jesus and now got a chance for revenge. Over and over again the group bullied and made fun of him. After hours of beating and bullying, the officers escorted Jesus to be killed.

The group led Jesus to an area behind a gas station. After di viding up his nice garments and other possessions, the group beat Jesus to death. "Save yourself if you are really so fabulous," the group chanted. Two others were brought in and beat to death next to Jesus. This was the price of jealous rage.

Jesus lay dead. The elite had grown so jealous of his status that they had to kill him. There were those who ran to mourn over Jesus. The scene was very dark.

The survivors carried Jesus to a brilliantly adorned casket, put him in his finest attire and carried him to his grave.

16

Jesus was dead, but his selfishness was immortal. The disciples began to fight with each other about who was the most fabulous and ultimately killed each other. The selfishness spread all over the world until the world was destroyed by greed, jealousy and fabulousness.

When everyone arrived in the afterlife, God declared that the Jesus everyone thought they knew was a sociopathic charlatan and that true love is the one that loves the neighbor as thy self. When God revealed the incarnation of love or the real Jesus, everyone seemed to know her.

Amen.

Frances

A Revision of the Gospel of Luke

1.

I tried to write it all down as it came to me. The events were so magical and beautiful. In addition to my own thoughts, I interacted with the accounts of others to prepare this account. I wrote all of this for my children. I want them to know the truth.

There once was a good pastor named Elizabeth. God was pleased with Elizabeth and her husband Ed. The couple had no children. Elizabeth was too old.

One day, Elizabeth was preparing the elements for communion and an angel of God appeared to her. The doors of her church slammed shut. When Elizabeth saw the angel, she fell down terrified and was unable to speak. The angel said, "Do not be afraid. You are going to carry a son and his name will be John. Everyone will rejoice at his birth. John will be filled with the Holy Spirit and great in the eyes of both God and humanity. Despite the pressures of the culture, you must make sure that he never succumbs to materialism. With tremendous prophetic power, John will turn many hearts toward truth and prepare people to meet the incarna-

tion of God." Elizabeth said, "How can I know this is true? I am old and so is my husband." The angel replied, "I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God and was sent directly to you. But now, because you did not believe me, you will be unable to speak until the birth of John."

Meanwhile, people couldn't figure out why the doors were shut and stood outside waiting to get into the sanctuary for service. When Elizabeth came out, her clothes were glowing and she was unable to speak. Ed couldn't figure out what was happening. On a tablet, Elizabeth wrote it all down and Ed read it aloud. In tremendous gratitude, Elizabeth went back into the sanctuary and served communion to the church.

Elizabeth conceived a child and stayed at home throughout the pregnancy.

In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, Gabriel went to a virgin named Mary. The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid. Mary, you are favored by God. You will conceive a daughter in your womb and name her Frances. She will be great and will be called the Daughter of God. She will reign over all nature and there will be no end to her reign." Mary

questioned Gabriel, "How can this be? I am a virgin." The angel replied, "The Holy Spirit will come into you. The child will be the Daughter of God. And now, your relative Elizabeth has conceived a son in her old age. She is in her sixth month. Nothing is impossible for God." Mary declared, "I am here God. Let it be according to your word." Then the angel departed.

Mary left immediately. Traveling a great distance to the home of her cousin, Mary and Elizabeth embraced when they saw each other. The child in Elizabeth's womb jumped up and down in excitement. Elizabeth shouted out, "Blessed are you and the fruit of your womb. God is with you."

And Mary responded, "My soul rejoices in God. My spirit sings within me. God is my savior. God has looked with favor on me. All generations will call me blessed. God has looked upon me and placed a child within me. The mercy of God extends from generation to generation. God has scattered the proud and lifted up the humble. God lifts the lowly. God sends the rich away empty and fills the hungry with food. God has helped all people and will not leave the people

of this earth." Mary stayed with Elizabeth for three months and then returned home.

Elizabeth gave birth and bore a son. The entire community rejoiced with her. On the eighth day, the time came to circumcise the child and the gathered assumed his name would be Ed after his dad. Speaking for the first time in months, Elizabeth responded strongly, "His name is John!" They said to her, "none of your relatives have that name." Everyone motioned to his dad to clear things up. Ed declared, "His name is John." And everyone was amazed. Immediately, the tongue of Elizabeth began to praise God. Fear came over all their neighbors, and the story became known throughout Texas. All who heard the beautiful words pondered them and said, "What will this child become?" The hand of God was upon him.

Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and started to prophesy: "How great is our God? With love and mercy God has looked upon us. A mighty savior has been raised. God spoke through the prophets and saved us. The mercies of God are new every day. We are rescued from our enemies. We serve God without fear all of our days. And you, my dear

John, will be called the prophet of the Daughter of God. You will go before our savior and prepare her ways. You will give knowledge of salvation to all her people by the forgiveness of sins. Dawn will break through and shine through you. All who sit in darkness will see a great light. The shadow of death will be no more. She will guide our feet into the way of peace." The child grew and became strong in spirit, and he was in the wilderness until the day he appeared publicly.

2.

In those days an executive order went out from the President that all must be registered in a census. The Governor of Texas consented to this registration. All went to their towns to participate in the census. Since he was descended from a family in West Texas, Joseph had to return to Lubbock. He went to be registered with Mary, who was pregnant. While they were there, the time came for Mary to give birth. And she gave birth to her firstborn daughter and wrapped her in rags, and laid her on an old mattress behind a dumpster, because the hospital wouldn't take their insurance.

In that region there were drillers in the desert, keeping watch over their rigs by night. Then the angel of God stood before them, and the glory of God shown all around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you the most incredible news you have ever heard. The Daughter of God who is the Messiah was born in Lubbock tonight. You will find the child wrapped in rags and lying on an old mattress behind a dumpster." And suddenly the entire sky was filled with a multitude of angels and every thing else, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those who God favors!"

When the angels left, the drillers said to each other, "Let's go to Lubbock!" Quickly, the drillers went to exactly the right dumpster and found Mary, Joseph and the child lying in the manger. Everyone was amazed at the story the drillers told, but Mary remained silent and treasured them in her heart. The drillers returned to their rigs praising God for all they had seen and heard.

Mary called the child Frances, the name that the angel told her.

The time came for the child to be baptized at a local church in Fort Worth. During the ceremony, there was a priest named Simeon. Many years prior, God told Simeon that he would not die until he saw the Messiah. Guided by the Spirit, Simeon held the child up at the moment of baptism and proclaimed, "I can die now. In this beautiful girl, I have seen your salvation for all people. Frances will save our enemies and our friends." Joseph and Mary were blown away by what was happening. Simeon baptized the child and said, "This child will save us all. Frances will pierce our very hearts and souls."

There was a prophet named Anna. She was very old and stayed at church in prayer all the time. When she saw Frances, Anna praised God and told everyone that she had met the redemption that the world was waiting on.

Once they finished the baptism in Fort Worth, the family returned to their hometown of Waco. Frances grew in strength and wisdom. The favor of God was upon her.

Now every year her parents returned to Fort Worth for a religious festival called Passover. When Frances was twelve

years old, the family went to the festival as usual. When the festival was over and they started to return, Frances stayed behind in Fort Worth, but her parents did not know it. The family got all the way back to Waco before they realized that Frances was not in the car that they thought she was in. Immediately, the family returned back to Fort Worth. After a considerable amount of time, the family found Frances teaching and interacting with religious leaders in a church. Everyone was amazed at the knowledge of Frances. When Mary saw her, she demanded, "Why have you treated us like this? We have looked all over the city for you." She replied, "Why are you looking for me? Did you not know that I would be teaching about God?" But the family did not understand what Frances was talking about. Then she left to travel back to Waco with them. Mary continued to ponder everything in her heart.

Throughout the years, Frances only increased in divine and human favor.

3.

Later, the word of God came to John son of Elizabeth and Ed in the desert. He went into the region around Waco, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, as it was prophesied in the words of Isaiah, "The voice of the one crying out in the desert, 'Prepare the way of God! Make his paths straight. Every valley shall be filled. Every mountain and hill will be made low. The crooked shall be made straight. The rough ways will be made smooth. All flesh will see the salvation of God.'"

John said to the crowds who came out to be baptized, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from what is coming? Bear fruit worthy of repentance. Do not just say that you are an American. Who cares? Every tree that does not bear fruit will be thrown out."

The crowds asked him, "What are we supposed to do?" In reply, John said, "Share your food and clothes with the poor." Even the police and army came to be baptized, asking, "What should we do?" He said to them, "Put down your weapons and don't use them ever again." Politicians asked him, "What should we do?" John replied, "Stop using the people for your gain!"

Everyone thought that John was the Messiah. Sensing their thoughts, John said, "I baptize you with water, but there is one coming that is much greater than I. I am not worthy to untie her shoes. She will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. She is going to really clean things up."

John continued to proclaim the good news to people. Unfor tunately, the Governor got tired of John speaking of the injustices of his administration and tossed him in prison.

Before John was put in prison, Frances had also been baptized. During the baptism, the heavens opened up and the Spirit descended upon her in the form of a dove. A beautiful voice came from heaven and declared, "You are my beloved Daughter. Save them."

Frances was about thirty years old when she started her work. Unfortunately, Frances knew little about where she came from.

4.

The Spirit led Frances into the wilderness. For forty days and nights, Frances was tempted by all manners of evil. Eating nothing, Frances quickly became famished. Evil looked her in the face and said, "If you are the Daughter of God, make some food appear." Frances replied, "We do not live by food alone." Then evil led her up and showed her all the nations on the planet. Evil said to her, "If you will worship me, I will give you all of this." Frances replied, "I worship God alone." Evil tried again and took her to the top of the State Capitol of Texas and said, "If you are the Daughter of God, throw your self down and command the angels to catch you." Frances replied, "We are not to put God to the test." When every test was complete, evil departed and waited for another opportunity to snag Frances.

Filled with the power of the Spirit, Frances was taken back to Fort Worth and started to teach in every religious space she could find. The media throughout the region talked about her. Lives started to be miraculously changed through Frances' teachings.

When Frances arrived at her home of Waco, she went to church. Standing in the pulpit, Frances read the words of Isaiah, "The Spirit of God is within me. God has appointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. I have been sent to set the captives free. The blind will receive sight. The oppressed will be set free. I am here to proclaim the year of God's favor." Everyone stared at Frances and she started to speak, "This scripture is being fulfilled in front of you." The people at the church were very impressed. But then some people started to murmur, "Isn't that Mary and Joseph's daughter?" When the murmuring continued, Frances declared, "You will not get to see the mighty works I am capable of. A prophet is never accepted in her hometown. There are oppressed and marginalized people everywhere and you didn't and don't do shit about it. You are a bunch of evil vipers!" The people in the church became enraged. Rushing at Frances, they tossed her out of the church and ran her to the edge of town. Holding her over the side of a bridge as a train rushed by underneath, they would have killed Frances if she hadn't torn free and ran.

Later, Frances went down to the city of Temple and taught there. People were astounded at her teachings. There was a man with a demon and he cried out, "Leave us alone! What business do you have with us Frances of Waco? Have you come to destroy us? I know that you are the Daughter of God." Frances rebuked the demon and said, "Be silent and come out of him." The demon wrestled the man to the ground and came out his eyeballs. Everyone was amazed and said, "What type of woman is able to do such things?" The stories of Frances continued to spread.

After church, Frances entered Simon's house. Simon's mother-in-law was suffering from a high fever and in need of care. Frances stood over here and rebuked the fever. The woman got up and began to feast with them.

As the sun was going down, Frances stood in the driveway and healed every infirmary or sickness brought to him. Demons consistently came out and shouted, "You are the daughter of God!" Frances rebuked them, because she wasn't ready for everyone to know that she was the Messiah yet.

Frances left the church at daybreak and went to a quiet place outside of town to pray. The people found her and begged her not to leave Temple. But Frances said to them, "I must proclaim the good news of the realm of God to other cities as well. This is my purpose." Frances kept proclaiming the message of love in religious spaces throughout Texas.

5.

Surrounded by a large crowd and standing next to a lake, Frances grew increasingly uncomfortable with the pushing and shoving. Spotting two boats, Frances ran and jumped in one. Looking up, Frances saw Petra standing there and asked her to put the boat out a little from shore. Everyone on the shore sat down and Frances started to teach. Once she finished, Frances told Petra to put her fishing nets in the water. Petra replied, "This lake don't have many fish in it. But I will do what you say." Once Petra pulled the net back, fish started jumping in and she was not strong enough to hold it. Signaling for help, others joined Petra and together they brought into the boat a net full of fish. Petra fell down at the

feet of Frances and asked her not to look upon her sin. Petra knew that Frances was no ordinary woman. Frances said to Petra, "Do not be afraid. You will follow me and we will save people together." James and John followed too. Once they got to shore, the group left everything and followed Frances.

Frances met a woman covered with leprosy. The woman bowed at her feet and asked to be made well. Frances touched the woman and said, "Be clean." And she ordered the woman to go and give testimony to the largest church in town about what happened. The word about Frances spread and everyone gathered to be healed. She withdrew to deserted places to pray.

Pastors heard the teaching of Frances and could tell that something was different about her ministry. Some men tried to bring a paralyzed man into the building where Frances was. Finding no way to enter, the group lowered the man in from the roof and laid him at the feet of Frances. When she saw their faith, Frances leaned down and said, "Friend, all of your sins are forgiven." The pastors were furious that a woman would claim to have the right to heal people's sins and that she didn't just heal the man outright.

Frances could feel that they were upset and said, "Is it better to have your sins forgiven or to walk? So that you might know that I am the Daughter of God, I tell you, 'Stand up and walk.'" Immediately, the paralyzed man got up and started walking. Everyone was filled with amazement and passionately declared, "We have seen strange things today. Glory to God!"

After the healing, Frances saw a brutal police officer named Levi sitting in his squad car and said, "Follow me." The police officer got up, left everything and followed him.

Levi gave a banquet for Frances at his home and there was a large crowd of police officers. There was a large group of people complaining about Frances eating with police officers. "Does she not understand police brutality?" some of the pastors asked. Frances answered, "Those who are sick do not a doctor. I have come to help the sick."

Then the pastors questioned Frances, "John's disciples fast and pray while your disciples eat and drink." Frances replied, "Why would you make people starve and thirst at a wedding? The Daughter of God is here. This is a time of cele

bration. There will come a time when I am no longer here. That will be the time to fast and pray." She also told them a parable, "No one patches a hole with new fabric. When you wash the garment the fabric will shrink and make the hole worse. No one shakes up a soda to open it. When you open the soda it will explode and spray all over everything in sight."

6.

Frances walked with her disciples through a farm and everyone picked food to eat. The pastors questioned her, "Why are you working on the Sabbath?" Frances replied, "If someone is hungry, they must work on whatever day they can. The Daughter of God is over the Sabbath too."

A few weeks later Frances was teaching at a small church, when a woman with a withered hand approached her. The pastors watched to see if she would interrupt services to heal the woman. Frances knew what they were thinking and said, "Come stand here." The woman walked up and stood there. Then, Frances said to the congregation, "Do you want her to be healed?" After the congregation answered in affirmation,

Frances raised her hands and said, "Stretch out your hand." The woman stretched out a restored hand. The pastors were furious and plotted ways to destroy Frances.

During those days, Frances went up to the mountains to pray. Late one evening, Frances came down and called twelve diverse disciples. Together, the group started to minister to large crowds from all over the wider area. People came to hear Frances' teachings, be healed of their diseases and have their demons removed. Everyone was trying to touch Frances.

Then Frances looked up at her disciples and said: "Blessed are the poor, for the realm of God belongs to them. Blessed are the hungry, for they will be filled. Blessed are those who weep, for laughter is coming. Blessed are you who are hated because of the Daughter of God. The day is coming when ev erything will be turned around and all will be made right. Woe to the rich, for you have already received your reward. Woe to those who are full, for you will be hungry. Woe to those who are laughing, for you will cry. Woe to those who are spoken well of, for you will experience slander."

"But I say to you that will listen: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. If anyone hits you, let them hit you again; and from anyone who takes your coat let them have your shirt too. Give to everyone who begs; and if people steal from you, do not even file a report. Do unto others as you would have them do unto you."

"Anyone can love those that love them. Anyone can do good to those who do good to them. Anyone can lend someone something that they know they will get a reward for. But I tell you: Love your enemies. Do good to those who hate you. God loves everyone. Be merciful with people, just as God is merciful."

"Do not judge. The measure you use to judge will be the same measure applied to you. Condemn and you will be con demned. Forgive and you will be forgiven. Which is a better choice? Give and it will be given to you. Be gracious to people and people will be gracious to you."

"Can the blind guide the blind? Will not both people struggle to know where they are going? Should disciples guide disci-

ples? There is a need for teachers. Why do you point out the speck in the eye of your neighbor when you have a log sticking out of your own? Take the log out of your own eye before you speak! When people start taking their logs out, then and only then will they be able to deal better with their own specks."

"Good trees bear good fruit and bad trees bear bad fruit. Trees are known by their fruit. Good people produce good fruit and evil people produce evil fruit. People are known by their fruit. Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks and the body acts."

"Why do you call me the Daughter of God and not do what I tell you to do? I will show you what it looks like to come, to hear and to act. When you build your house on a rock foundation the winds or water have difficulty shaking it. Those who build their house right on the ground can expect the wind to blow and waters to flood it in every direction. If you want to have a foundation made of rock, come to me, hear me and act like me. If you reject my teaching and choose to have a weak or no foundation, you can expect for your house to be left in ruin."

7.

After Frances stopped teaching, she journeyed into Mansfield. There was a man with a highly valued worker at his restaurant that was ill and close to death. All of the churches in town prayed for months over the worker to no avail. When the man heard about Frances, he went out to ask her directly if she could heal his worker. When Frances asked why she should do this for him, the man replied, "I love people. I give to charity. I am a good person. I know I am not worthy. Please come to my house?" Frances started walking to the house and turned to the man to question, "If I heal him, are you willing to let the worker join you in the ownership of the restaurant?" With some hesitation, "No matter what it costs, I want to my worker to be healed. You don't have to go any further. Just say the word." Frances replied, "You will have to start seeing him as your coworker. He is healed." The man started to weep and Frances admired how much faith the man had. When the man returned to the house, he found his new fellow owner in good health and em braced him.

Frances then traveled to a town called Stephenville and a large crowd of disciples and seekers followed him. Upon approaching the edge of town, Frances saw a young unarmed dead man riddled with bullets lying on the side of the road. The police shot him. He was his mother's only son and she was a widow; and with her was a large angry crowd from the town. When Frances came across the scene, she had deep compassion. Frances told the mother and widow, "Do not weep." Bending down, Frances told the young man in a loud voice, "Get up!" Immediately, the formerly dead man got up and started to speak. The police sprung into action and moved to arrest the young man. Frances stepped between them and said, "There will be no arrest tonight. Go home and quit shooting people." Fear seized the police officers and they returned home. Everyone that remained glorified God for Frances. Word of what happened spread throughout Texas and the surrounding areas.

The disciples of John could not believe what was going on and reported everything back to John. John summoned two of his disciples and sent them to ask Frances, "Are you the one that we are waiting for or should we wait for another?"

Immediately, Frances replied, "Would you be asking this question if I were a man?" John's disciples replied, "We are not sexist." Frances replied, "You are what you are. If I were you, I would work on how you think about women. Now, go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor have good news brought to them. Don't take offense to any of these actions just because I am a woman. God chooses those the world thinks are weak to shame the strong."

Once John's messengers left, Frances started to talk to the crowd about John: "What did you go out to the desert to look at? A reed shaken back and forth by the wind? What did you go out there to see? Someone dressed in nice clothes? The uninflected in their fine clothing sit in safe spaces. What then did you go out there to see? A prophet? Yes! I will tell you that John is more than a prophet. This is the man that prophets in the past prophesized about saying, 'I am sending a messenger ahead of my daughter, who will prepare the way for her.' There is no one greater than John, but the first will be last in the realm of God." Everyone who heard these

words affirmed them, because they were baptized by John. The pastors who were not baptized by John called the words blasphemy, because they were the real blasphemers.

"What will I compare the people of this generation? What are they like? These folks are like kids who say, 'We played music for you and you refused to dance.' For John the Baptist came eating no bread and drinking no wine and you called him a demon. The Daughter of God has come eating and drinking and you call me a glutton, drunkard and friend of sinners. You folks need to listen to the music of the children and dance."

One of the pastors invited Frances over to her home for dinner. Once Frances took her place at the table, a known sinner came in the back door and brought some nice perfume with her. Weeping, the man started to use the perfume and his tongue to wash her feet and he wiped them with his beard. Without stopping, the man continued to wash and kiss Frances' feet. When the pastor saw this, he freaked out and shouted, "If you are a real prophet then you would not let this continue. You would known what type of sinner this man is!" Frances spoke up, "Listen to me. There was a bank

that decided to forgive two debts. One person owed $500,000 and the other owed $5. Which do you think was more grateful?" The pastor answered, "I suppose the one who was forgiven more." Frances said, "You have answered correctly." Then, turning toward the man, Frances continued, "Do you see this man? I entered your house and you gave me nothing for my feet. This man gave me a full pedicure. I entered your house and you didn't embrace me. This man has not stopped embracing me. You did not give me any type of gift. This man has not stopped. Though his sins are many, they are forgiven. The one who sins greatly is forgiven greatly. The one who sins little is forgiven little." The pastors at the table declared, "Who does this woman think she is to forgive sins?" Frances said to the man, "Go in peace, your faith has made you well."

8.

In town after town and city after city, Frances proclaimed the good news of the realm of God. Amongst the disciples present were Mary Magdalene, from whom Frances cast out seven demons, Joanna, the wife of one of the Governor's top

advisors, and Susanna, who consistently provided for the group.

When a great crowd gathered, Frances spoke in a parable: "A farmer tossed out some seeds. Some fell on the pavement and were burned up. Some fell on the dirt road and lived for a little bit. Some fell in the weeds and lasted until the rest of the plants choked it out. Some fell on good soil and grew a hundred fold. Let anyone who has ears to hear listen!"

Then her disciples asked what this parable meant. Frances declared, "You get to know the secrets of God. When I speak in parables, some look but don't perceive and listen without understanding. The seed is the word of God. Only the seed or the word that falls on the good soil and grows is worth anything. Keep your mind and heart like the good soil so that you might grow. Hear the word of God, hold it fast in your heart and bear fruit with patient endurance."

"No one lights a torch and puts it under a bed. You hold up a torch to light the way. Nothing is hidden that will not be dis closed. Nothing is secret that will not become known. Pay

attention to how you listen. For those who are good stewards of what they have, more will be given."

Then Frances' mother and brothers came to her, but they could not reach her because of the crowd. And she was told, "Your mother and brothers are standing outside, wanting to see you." But she said to them, "My mother and brothers are the ones who hear and follow God."

Needing some relaxation on a local recreational lake, Frances got into a houseboat that was owned by one of the disciples. When night came, Frances was asleep in the front of the boat. Early in the morning, the disciples were awoken by a huge tornado heading directly for the houseboat. The boat started to fill with water and was about to flip over. In desperation, the disciples started to scream for Frances, "Save us! Save us! We're going to die!!!" Frances rolled out of her bed and leaned out the window and said, "Stop!" The disciples were amazed that the night immediately turned calm and tranquil. Frances said, "Why did you wake me up? Where is your faith?" The disciples were afraid and amazed, and said to each other, "What type of woman is this, that even the winds, the water and the sky obey her?"

When they arrived on the outskirts of San Antonio, Frances got out of her car and a man with demons came up to her. The man was dirty, homeless and naked. When he saw Frances, he fell down at her feet and shouted, "What do you want from me, Frances, Daughter of God? Please, don't torment me." The demon was afraid of Frances. Then, Frances asked, "What's your name?" The demon said, "Legion. There are many of us." Over and over, the demons begged not to be sent back into the darkness. Frances took pity on the demons and asked them, "Do you want to be saved?" The demons replied, "We are tired of living like this. Can you save us?" Frances replied instantaneously, "Your sins are forgiven." The demons turned into a thousand dazzling angels and flew to heaven to reunite with God. Walking away, Frances blessed a farm with pigs in it.

When folks in town heard what happened, they told anyone who would listen. Everyone knew the possessed man. People came out to see what had happened. When they arrived and saw Frances and the formerly possessed man cheerfully interacting, everyone became afraid. The people who saw it repeated their stories over and over again. Eventually, the

leadership of San Antonio asked Frances to leave town. People are often most afraid of that which they can't explain. The formerly possessed man never stopped proclaiming what Frances had done for him.

When Jesus returned to Fort Worth, the crowd welcomed him with great excitement. Everyone was ready to be healed. The pastor of one of the largest churches in town came out. Sabrina bowed at the feet of Frances and begged her to help her dying daughter. As Frances walked to Sabrina's home, the crowds pressed in on her. There was a woman who had suffered hemorrhages for twelve years. No hospital or physi cian had been able to heal her. The woman came up from be hind Frances and softly grabbed at the bottom of her dress. Immediately, the hemorrhaging stopped. Frances asked, "Who touched me?" When all denied it, Petra asked, "Master, the crowds surround you and press in on you." But, Frances said, "I felt the power leave me. I know that someone with faith touched me." When the woman realized that she could not remain in hiding, she started tremble, fell before Frances' feet and said, "It was I." The woman also said why she touched Frances. With awe at the woman's faith,

Frances said, "Daughter, your faith has made you well. Go in peace."

While Frances was still speaking, someone came from Sabrina's home and told her that her daughter was dead. Sabrina figured that Frances couldn't help her any longer. When Frances sensed her struggle to believe, she said, "Do not be afraid. Just believe and she will be saved." When they arrived at the house, no one entered the house with Frances except Petra, John and Joan, and the child's parents. Everyone in the house was weeping and wailing. Frances declared, "Do not weep. She is not dead. She is only sleeping." The crowd laughed at Frances. But she took her by the hand and called out, "Child, get up!" Her spirit returned and she was raised. Then, Frances directed her parents to give her something to eat. Sabrina and her partner were astounded, but Frances ordered them to not tell anyone about what happened.

9.

Then Frances called the disciples together and gave them power over all demons and to cure all diseases and he sent them out to proclaim the Queendom of God and to reclaim the world for right. Frances instructed them, "Take nothing for your journey. Whatever house you enter, stay there and leave from there. Whenever someone fails to welcome you, shake the dust of that town off your feet as a testimony against them." All of the disciples departed and went to a va riety of towns and places, bringing the good news of God and healing as they went.

The Governor heard about all that was taking place. Some people thought that John the Baptist was raised from the dead. Some thought that Ghandi was raised from the dead. Some thought that John was back. The Governor said, "I executed John. Who is this?" Secretly, the Governor sought to see Frances.

Upon their return, the disciples told Frances the magical things that happened everywhere they went. Together, the disciples and Frances withdrew to a small town called Dublin. A large group of people followed Frances wherever she went and she welcomed them and told them about the

realm of God along the way. Frances healed everyone she met.

The day was drawing to a close, and the disciples started to complain about the lack of places to eat and said, "Send the crowds away, so that we can go to a hotel and order some food, this place is deserted." But Frances said to them, "Give everyone rest and something to eat." The disciples replied, "We only have two hamburgers and a few boxes of fries. We can't afford to buy food for all of these people." There were thousands of people present. Frances replied to the disciples, "Get everyone to sit down and start passing out the food." The disciples did as they were told. Everyone ate until they were full and there were multiple huge boxes of food left over. The disciples were in awe.

Frances often prayed alone. Once, a disciple was near her and she asked, "Who do people say that I am?" The disciple answered, "The incarnation of Eleanor Roosevelt or maybe Martin Luther King, Jr." Frances pushed and asked Petra, "Who do you say that I am?" Petra answered, "The Messiah of God."

Frances ordered the gathered disciples to not tell anyone what they just heard and said, "The Daughter of God and hu manity must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by ev-eryone, and be killed, and on the third day be raised."

Then Frances said to everyone, "If you want to follow me, you will have to deny your self and take up your burdens and do as I do. Those who try to save their life will lose it. Those who lose their life for my sake will lose it. What does it profit anyone if they gain the whole world and lose who they are? Those who are ashamed of me and my words, I will be ashamed of them in front of my Mother. There are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the Queendom of God."

Eight days after Frances said these things, she took Petra, Jamie and John high up in a tall building. Once they arrived at the top, Frances started to pray. Upon commencing the prayer, Frances' appearance totally changed and she became a dazzling white light. Suddenly, Malala and Ghandi were standing there talking with Frances. The disciples were stunned. The group was talking about all that Frances would accomplish in Fort Worth. Though they were tired, Petra,

Jamie and John stayed awake and refused to close their eyes. Just as the group was leaving, John cried out, "Frances, let us make three altars to worship you, Malala and Ghandi." While John spoke, a cloud came over and overshadowed all of them. The disciples were terrified and fell on the ground. A voice spoke out of the cloud and said, "This is my Daughter...listen to her!" After the voice spoke, Frances was found to be alone. The disciples told no one about what they saw.

After coming down from the top of the building, a great crowd met Frances. Just then someone shouted out from the crowd, "Look at my son! He is my only child. All of a sudden, something happens to him and he falls on the ground convulsing. Your disciples would not help me." Frances replied, "You faithless generation. How long must I sit here with you? Bring the boy here." While he was walking, the boy started convulsing and fell to the ground. Frances placed her hands on the boy and he was healed. Everyone was astounded.

While everyone was very impressed with all that she was doing, Frances said to the disciples, "I will be betrayed by hu-

man hands." The disciples didn't get it. Everyone was afraid to ask what the statement meant.

The disciples started to argue about which one was the great est. Frances heard them and replied, "Whoever loves a child loves me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. The least among you will always be the greatest."

Jennifer answered, "We saw someone healing people in your name and we tried to stop her, because she was not of our fold." But Frances replied, "Do not stop anyone from healing. Whoever is not against us is for us."

When time started to run out, Frances set her sights on Fort Worth. She sent her messengers on ahead of her. On the way, the disciples stopped in a town outside of Waco. The town was a very misogynistic and patriarchal place. Upon their nasty treatment of Frances and her disciples, Jamie asked, "Do you want us to blow this place up?" Frances turned and rebuked them. The entire group traveled to another town that was much more hospitable.

Late at night along the roadway, someone approached Frances and said, "I will follow you wherever you go." And Frances said to him, "I am not laying my head anywhere." To another Frances said, "Follow me." But the person said, "First, I need to go to a funeral." Frances replied, "Let the dead bury the dead. Now is the time for you to proclaim the Queendom of God!" Another said, "I will follow you after I say goodbye to my friends." Frances replied, "No you should put their hand to the plow and look back."

10.

Frances sent her disciples out in pairs to all the towns of Texas and said to them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. May God continue to send you out into the fields. I am sending you as sheep among wolves. Carry noth ing. Only accept what is given to you. Be loving and peaceful with all you meet. Heal and feed those who need healing and feeding. Say to everyone, 'The Queendom of God is here!' If a place rejects you, wipe the dust of the place off your feet and move on. God is near to those who take the time to hear."

"Woe to those who refuse to repent. Whoever listens to you listens to me, and whoever rejects you rejects me, and whoever rejects me rejects the one who sent me."

After a few months, the pairs returned and excitedly said, "Frances, we conquered evil and changed the world in your name!" Frances replied, "In my mind, I watched you conquer evil and be who you were created to be. I have given you all authority. Rejoice in the power of God!"

Frances rejoiced in God and kept saying, "Thank you for hid ing these things from the wise and revealing them to infants. My mother has granted me all things and I do her will. Anyone who chooses the Daughter chooses the Mother who sent her." Turning to the disciples, Frances said privately, "Blessed are eyes that see and ears that hear! There are many who desired to see and hear what you have seen and heard...but they didn't see or hear."

A lawyer walked up to test Frances and said, "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" She replied, "What do you think?"

He answered, "I think I should love God and my neighbor." Frances replied, "Do this and you will live."

But wanting to be justified, the lawyer said, "Who is my neighbor?" Frances replied, "There was a woman who was beaten and robbed on the way from Dallas and left on the side of the road. She was struggling to survive. Someone passed by her from Austin and left her. Someone passed by her from Houston and left her. Someone passed by her from San Antonio and left her. There was a disabled teenager in a wheelchair from Paris who stopped to help her. The young man stayed with her until help came and traveled with her to the hospital. Staying with her until she was well, the two became lifelong friends. Which of these four people was a friend to the woman?" The lawyer replied, "The young man in the wheelchair." Frances replied, "Go and be like him."

Later, the group entered a home in Cleburne where a woman named Martha welcomed Frances and her disciples. Martha had a sister named Mary who sat at the feet of Frances and refused to leave her side. But Martha got frustrated as she was cleaning and preparing the meal and asked, "Frances, do you not care that my sister has left me here to do all this

work? Tell her to help me!" Frances replied, "Martha, why don't you get the men to do some of these things? Mary has chosen her spot wisely."

11.

Frances was praying in a certain space, and after she was fin ished, one of her disciples said to her, "Master, teach us how to pray, as John taught his disciples." Frances said to them, "When you pray, say this: Our Mother, blessed and revered be your name. Your Queendom come. Give us each day our daily bread. And forgive us of our sins, as we forgive those who have sinned against us. Do not bring us into tempta-tion."

And Frances said to them, "Suppose you have a friend and you go to them and ask them for something to eat for you and a friend around midnight. Instead of helping you out, the friend screams at you and tell you to go away. You beg and ultimately your friend comes to the door to give you what you need."

"I am your friend and I will give you what you need without the begging. Ask and it will be given to you, seek and you will find, knock and the door will be open unto you. If a child asked you for food, would you give them a snake? Or if they asked for an egg, would you give them a cockroach? If you would do such things, imagine what our Heavenly Mother would do for those who ask of her!"

Frances cast out a demon of someone who had become mute. Some of the people gathered said, "Francis is the Devil and casts out demons through the Devil!" Frances replied, "How can any good come from the Devil? This woman was healed. How can a house divided against itself stand? The Devil can't be against the Devil and God can't be against God. Whoever is not with me is against me. Whoever does not gather with me is a scatterer."

"When the demon comes out of the person and can find no place to rest, it says, 'I will return to the place I came out of.' When it comes back, the person seems clean. Then it goes and gets a bunch of other demons to join him to raid the body of the person. Ultimately, that person is worse off than they were before."

While Frances was saying this in downtown Dallas, a woman raised her voice and declared, "Blessed is your mamma!" But Frances said, "Blessed are those who hear what I say and follow me!"

When the crowds increased, Frances said, "This generation is evil. Everyone wants a sign. Just believe! The evil that this generation does will rise up and condemn it! A people more evil than the Nazis has arrived. Except, this generation kills through secret and less overt ways."

"No one hides a spotlight. People want to see the light! Besides, a light that powerful would burn whatever covered it. The eyes are the spotlight of the body. Don't let them burn you by doing dumb things with them. Make sure your body is full of light and not burning up because you covered the light with evil."

A public official asked Frances to dine with him. Frances went in and sat down at the table. The public official could not believe Frances did not wash her hands. Frances could tell what he was thinking, "You public officials wash your

hands, but the inside of you is dirty as shit. You fools! Don't you know that the one who made the inside also made the outside? Clean your whole person not just your hands!"

"Woe to you public officials. You keep neglecting people for profits. You don't care about the public. You care about feeding your own rotten souls. You love to be seen and heard, but what have you done? You will fall down under the weight of evil and people will trample all over you without re alizing it."

Another public official spoke up and said, "Frances, you insult us." To which, Frances immediately replied, "You public officials give people burdens they cannot bear and you don't care. You plunder, loot, kill and destroy in the quiet and secret places of legislative gatherings, business and courtrooms. Woe to you! You destroy those who could save you! You are accomplices to all the crimes of the most despicable oppressors and you will be held accountable. You jail and kill the prophets and apostles. I am not blind to your actions. Woe to you!"

For standing up to them, public officials were generally very hostile to Frances for the rest of her life.

12.

Thousands of people gathered. Frances started to preach, "Beware of the hypocrisy of politicians. Nothing is covered up that will not be uncovered. Nothing is secret that will not be made known. Whatever you have said in the darkness will be heard in the light. What you have whispered behind closed doors will be proclaimed from the rooftops."

"Do not fear those who can only kill the body. Trust in the one who could have destroyed your soul. God forgets no one. Do not be afraid. You are valuable beyond belief."

"Everyone who acknowledges me in public, I will acknowledge before God. Whoever denies me…I will love them until they affirm me. Whoever speaks ill of the Daughter of God, will be forgiven. I will not let you blaspheme the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit will tell you what to say in the difficult hours."

Someone in the crowd shouted out, "Can you help me to get my siblings to stop fighting over our inheritance?" Frances said, "How can I be the judge over such a trivial matter?" Then, she turned to the crowd and said, "Life is about more than possessions." Frances then told a parable, "There was a rich man who worked harder and harder to make more and more money. Ultimately, the rich man started to run out of room to put the money he accumulated and he was forced to create financial institutions to put his money into. For years, the rich man worked to build enough institutions to handle his money. The rich man was never able to make enough money or build enough institutions to satisfy him. Those who store up treasures on earth are fools who will never be satisfied. God is all that can satisfy."

"Don't worry. Be Happy. God has got you. Quit striving to get shit. There is nothing about shit that will last. Strive for God. For where your strive is there your heart will be also."

"Be ready and alert to work for love and justice in the world around you. God doesn't want to find you sleeping the revolution of love away."

Petra grew concerned, "Are you telling this parable for us?" Frances responded, "Are you sleeping? I have put you to work. What are you doing for love and justice? Do not let me find you sleeping. If I do, I'm not going to discipline you. I just want you to experience the magic of the march toward justice. For everyone who has been given much, much will be required. Those who are entrusted with much, much will be demanded."

"I have come to set the world on fire. I have a mission. The future is troublesome to me. I did not come to bring peace on earth in the way that you think about it. I have come to divide people so that they might meet a real lasting honest peace beyond the fake peace that everyone keeps talking about."

Frances also told the crowds, "You always listen to the weather forecast. You better listen to my forecast of the present times!"

"Stop suing each other and taking each other to court. Solve your problems amongst your selves. The lawyers and the

courts only take your money anyway. Learn to be fair to your opponent."

13.

There were a couple of people present who asked Frances about Hurricane Katrina, "Do you think God allowed the hurricane to hit New Orleans because there was so much sin there?" Frances replied, "That dumbass question is not deserving of a reply."

Frances then gave a short lesson, "Before you cut down a tree, put some fertilizer on it and see if you can get it to grow."

Frances was teaching in one of the congregations in Texarkana. There was a woman who rolled up in a wheelchair. When Frances saw her, she called her over and said, "Woman, you are healed from all your ailments." When Frances touched her, she was already healed. The woman celebrated and cheered. However, some in the congregation were frustrated because the woman was still in her wheelchair. "Why didn't you give her the ability to walk again?"

someone asked. Frances replied, "The sickness was within." Some in the congregation grew angrier, "The woman needs to be made well!" Frances replied, "The woman is more well than you will ever be." The celebration in the congregation drowned out all the haters.

Frances added, "The Realm of God is like the mustard seed that became a great tree. Even the smallest of seeds can bring about the growth of a mighty movement of love."

"The Realm of God is like some basic ingredients that were used to create a delicious cake."

Someone asked Frances, "Will only a few be saved?" To which she replied, "Most people will not be able to make it through the narrow door. I will have to guide you through the fire. The last will be guided first."

One of her friends ran to her and said, "Get out of Texas as quick as possible. The Governor wants to kill you." "Texas! Texas! You have such a thirst for vengeance and blood. Go and tell the Governor that I won't be going anywhere. There

will come a time when all knees will bow…even his," Frances replied.

14.

Frances traveled to the home of the pastor of one the big churches in Plano for dinner. Just then, a woman came in to express that her child was stricken with homosexuality and needed to be cured. Frances replied, "You are the one who needs to be cured. Sexuality is something to be celebrated not cured." Lifting her hands, Frances drew the demon of homophobia out of her. The woman was healed. The rest of the pastors present questioned Frances, 'Why did you just do that? Our religious traditions say that homosexuality is a sin." Frances replied, "Your religious traditions are wrong. Do you want me to take away your sexuality?" And they could not reply to this.

When she noticed that everyone was trying to get places of honor at the table, Frances told the gathered, "All who exalt their self will be humbled and the humbled will be exalted." To the ones who planned the dinner, "Stop inviting all these wealthy people to your party! Invite the oppressed and

marginalized! Will you not learn more from being with people who are not like you? Open your wallet and your heart."

One of the guests shouted out, "Blessed is the one who will eat in the Realm of God!" Frances replied, "Go ahead and in vite all wealthy people to the Realm of God. They won't come. Only those who have been baptized by the love of the marginalized and oppressed in the streets will be able to make it. So get out into the streets and start inviting people! You can't see or move toward the future until you have been with the least."

Large crowds followed Frances and she turned to tell them, "You cannot be my disciple until you are ready to leave every one and everything. The love of God is all that you need."

"You are the sugar. What good is sugar that does not taste sweet? Sweetless sugar might as well be shit. Let anyone with ears to hear listen!"

15.

The vilest people in all of Texas started hang out with Frances. The pastors and priests could not believe what she was doing, "This woman eats with even the pedophiles and sex offenders!"

Frances replied, "If someone finds redemption, shouldn't you celebrate with them no matter what they've done in the past? If you lost a hundred dollar bill, would you not look for it and be excited when you found it? Are people not more valuable than money?"

"There once was a wealthy man with two daughters. Both daughters asked for their inheritance money early. One daughter used her money to move close by and help to care for her dad. The other daughter used her money to travel the world for many years and try to find her self. Ultimately, the adventurous daughter spent all of her money and went broke in Thailand. Unable to afford a flight back, the daughter called her dad. Glad to hear her voice after all these years, the dad paid for her to come home, said she could live with him and started to plan a party to welcome her back. The daughter who had remained home to care for her dad was fu rious and demanded, 'Why are you accommodating and cele

brating her in such a way?' The dad replied, 'My daughter you are always with me. All that I have is yours. I have not seen your sister in years. We must not miss this opportunity to celebrate. Your sister was dead to us and now she is alive. Your sister was lost but now she is found. Hallelujah!'

16.

Frances kept sharing stories with messages, "Executives usually earn their money on the backs of poor people and don't share their wealth with anyone in need. Don't be like them. Trust those who are faithful to God. You will know the truth when you encounter them. No one can serve both God and money."

The pastors and priests of the wealthy churches grew increasingly frustrated with Frances for saying these things and said, "Our salaries and church buildings come from people with money!" Frances replied, "Maybe you are part of the problem. The temporal stuff that is prized by humans is an abomination to God."

"The Realm of God will not be taken by force. The Realm of God will only be taken by love. God would have to pass away for love to pass away. Love truly endures forever. Those who love will endure in love."

"Be faithful to love. Don't trade love for cheap thrills. Respect marriage and other commitments of love."

"There was a rich man who treated a poor man named Lazarus like shit. When Lazarus died, he was taken up to heaven. When the rich man died, he was kept out of heaven. When the rich man looked up and saw Lazarus in heaven, he begged, 'Have mercy on me! Let me come up there with you!' In his mercy, Lazarus retrieved the rich man and brought him to heaven. Love is stronger than vengeance."

17.

Frances continued, "Don't set up traps of evil for other people. If you trap children, the guilt will make you wish you had never been born. Rebuke disciples that sin and forgive them over and over. If someone keeps committing evil against you, forgive them infinitely."

Under the weight of such statements, the disciples cried out, "Increase our faith!" Frances replied, "If you have the smallest of faith, you will be able to do the biggest of things. Work for God and you will live in the power of God."

On the way to Fort Worth, Frances was traveling through the region of North Texas and entered a small town. Ten people with cancer approached Frances and asked for healing. Without question, Frances made them well. Only one of the person healed returned to Frances to thank her. Falling on the ground at her feet, the person thanked her over and over. Frances replied, "Where are the other nine?" Then, looking at the person, Frances added, "Get up. Since you came back, you will now be able to go and heal whoever you come in con tact with."

Late one day, a group of pastors and priests asked Frances when the Realm of God would arrive. Frances responded, "The Realm of God is already here."

Then, Frances said to her disciples, "The Daughter of God will be like the lightening, here for a moment and gone in a

moment. People will endure much suffering and then the Daughter of God will arrive in a flash to usher in the Realm of God. Those who try to make their life secure will lose it. Those who lose their life in pursuit of God will keep it. In my love, I will find everyone and bring them unto me. Then peo ple will ask, 'Where has all of the evil and death gone?' I will tell them to look where the vultures are."

18.

"Pray always and never give up. It gets better. There was a city where violence against minorities was rampant. A local activist refused to stop going to every city official she could think of to demand justice. After a few months, the persis-tence of the activist convinced city officials to do something about what was going on. Those who committed violence against minorities were punished, children were educated to be more sensitive and inclusive and people started to be good to each other. The world changed. Will not God change your world? Will not God hear the cries of those who call to her day and night? Is there anyone who still has faith?"

"There was a pastor who thought he was God's favorite. Everyday he prayed, 'God, I thank you that I am so much better than everyone else.' There was a worker who worked as hard as he could just to make it. The worker prayed, 'God, help me to be who you created me to be.' The exalted man will never experience the majesty of God with prayers like that. The humble worker is chasing after God's own heart."

While Frances rested in a park, children kept running to him and gathering around them. The disciples tried to chase the kids off, but Frances said, "Let the children come to me, for they are the Realm of God. Whoever does not receive the children, does not receive the Realm of God."

A wealthy young banker asked, "What must I do to live forever?" Frances replied, "Love God and you neighbor." The young banker replied, "I have done that since I was a kid." When Frances heard this, she said, "There is still one thing that you have not done. Sell everything you own and give the money to the poor." When the young banker heard this, he became very sad and walked away.

Those who heard the exchange declared, "Who can be saved?" Frances shot back, "What is impossible for you is not impossible for God."

Then, Petra responded, "We have left everything to follow you!" Frances replied, "Maybe there are things that you still hold on to. Let go and let God."

Frances took her closest disciples to a quiet restaurant and said, "We are going to Fort Worth and I will be killed there. Do not worry. I will rise again." The disciples didn't understand what was being said.

In Flower Mound, there was a blind man standing on the side of the road begging. Someone told him that a group of cars was about to pass and that the religious leader named Frances was in the front car. The blind man shouted out, "Frances please stop and heal me!" Everyone tried to make him quit yelling, but he would not stop. Inside the car, Frances asked the driver to stop and she got out of the car. Approaching the man, Frances kissed the man on the lips and said, "What do you want?" "I want to see," the man replied. Immediately, the man could see. While everyone

cheered, Frances got back in the car and drove toward a church in Flower Mound.

19.

Upon arrival at the church, Frances stepped of the car and was greeted by thousands of supporters. There was a local police officer that wanted to see Frances. Being too short to see over the crowd, the officer climbed to the top of the steeple of a church across the street. Frances was about to go into the church where her event was being held. Sensing that there was someone that she needed to see left outside, Frances turned around and looked up to the steeple across the street. Seeing the officer, Frances said, "Officer! I need you to come down from there. I am coming to your house for dinner tonight and need a place to crash." The officer crawled down the steeple quickly. Everyone gathered started to grumble and said, "Doesn't Frances know how evil police officers are? Why would you want to have dinner at the house of one?" Despite the grumbling, the officer looked at Frances and said, "I want to repent of all of the acts of bru tality I have ever committed." Frances replied, "Salvation has visited us today! Hallelujah!" After a few moments

thought, Frances added, "The Daughter of God has come to seek and save that which is lost not what has already been found."

Going into the church, Frances taught for a few hours. Frances concluded her teaching with a proverb, "Those who have will receive more. Those who don't have will continue to have nothing. Love must be created in order to grow." Upon finishing her teaching, Frances dined and stayed with her disciples at the police officers house.

The next morning, Frances and the disciples left for Fort Worth on public transportation. When they got close to the city limits, Frances asked the bus driver to stop the bus and let everyone get out. Frances told the disciples to go and get a motorcycle for him to ride into town. "How will we pay for it?" the disciples asked. Frances replied, "Tell them God needs it and will bring it back." The disciples found a motor cycle at a small house and the owner gladly handed it over. Placing their coats over the seat to make it more comfortable, the disciples brought the motorcycle to Frances and prepared to enter the city. As she slowly road along, people lined the streets to welcome her and cheer her on. People

kept spreading their clothing on the streets for Frances to ride the motorcycle in on. As she pulled up to the middle of the city, all of the disciples cheered and praised God with a loud voice, saying, "Blessed is Frances, the Daughter of God! She comes in the name of God! Peace and glory in the highest of heavens." Some of the pastors and priests in the crowd demanded the disciples tell Frances to make it stop. Overhearing, Frances replied, "If these people don't praise me, the stones would start to cry out."

Frances wept over Fort Worth and said, "Fort Worth! Fort Worth! Do you care about anything more than money? Why do you keep sending people to be executed and call it justice? Do you believe in a God beyond that of your own making? I am here and you have denied me."

When Frances entered the largest church in town, she drove out all the people who were profiting off of God on the backs of the poor and said, "Why have you turned my mother's house into a scam?" Frances started to take back pulpits and demanded that the pastors and priests start preaching about love. The religious and civic authorities teamed up and devised a plan to have Frances killed.

20.

One day, as Frances was sharing the good news of love, a group of pastors and priests demanded of her, "Where do you get the authority to say all of the stuff that you do? Who do you think you are?" Frances replied, "Do you think that Martin Luther King, Jr. was a prophet?" The group of pastors talked for a second and said, "We don't know." Frances pushed back, "If you can't be sure about King, who can you be sure about? I am not interested in wasting any more of my time with you. Your hearts are simply too tightly closed."

"There was a doctor who operated on someone without a license. The person got sick and died. Would you want him operating on you? I wouldn't either. I would want the person who was going to take care of me better than I could take care of my self. Unfortunately, many in this generation have rejected the greatest physician of all. I will heal all that I meet." The words of Frances enraged the gathered pastors and priests. The group wanted to kill Frances, but was afraid of the people who loved her.

Over and over, the pastors and priests kept trying to catch Frances in a hypocritical statement and finally they asked, "Should we pay taxes?" Frances replied, "If the money is made by the government then give it back to the government." Everyone was amazed at the freedom expressed in Frances' answer and the pastors and priests simply could not trap her.

There were a couple of religious people who came up and asked, "If you get married and your wife dies and then you get remarried again, which person will be your wife in heaven?" Frances replied, "What difference will it make? Everyone will be alive in love." The people loved Frances and Frances loved them. Sensing the adoration of the people, no one dared try to trap Frances again.

Then, Frances said to them, "Do you believe the Daughter of God can also be God? How can this be? With God all things are possible."

"The pastors and priests of this generation take from the poor to make the church rich. Such greed and evil can go to straight to hell."

21.

In the midst of a bunch of rich pastors and priests, a homeless widow walked up and placed the money she collected for the day in the offering plate. Frances stood up and said, "This homeless widow has put more in the plate than any of you will ever be able to put in."

"These churches that constantly commit evil are coming down."

"When the world gets so bad that you cannot stand it anymore and everyone gets tired of committing evil, God will change all hearts to love. There will be those who doubt and test that love will win. Do not listen to anyone or anything except God. Make up your mind that love will win and endure in love."

"Fort Worth will not last as it is. Fort Worth will be completely broken down and built back up in love. All will be made well."

"There will be signs that love will win. You will feel it when you practice mercy, grace and generosity to each other. When you feel it, know that I am coming quickly to make all things right and total eternal redemption will come through a massive overwhelming influx of love."

"This generation will not pass away until they have seen and heard these things."

"Be on guard against hate. Practice love. Be on guard against evil. Practice love. We will all stand together in love in the end."

Frances kept preaching and prayed through the night. No one in Fort Worth wanted to miss a single word of Frances' preaching.

22.

The pastors and priests were looking for a way to have Frances killed. One day after seeing Frances show affection to another woman, Julia became enraged and went to tell the District Attorney every lie he needed to hear in order for her to be arrested. Fearful of the crowds, Julia strategized with the pastors, priests and District Attorney about the right time to arrest Frances. The evil plan was under way.

The Great Festival commenced and Frances gathered for dinner with the disciples. A space was magically provided and Petra, Jenna, and John prepared the meal. When the hour to eat arrived, Frances entered the room and said, "I have waited a long time to eat this meal with you. I am about to suffer and die. We will dine again in the Realm of God." Then she took a cup of wine and after giving thanks said, "Take this and drink of it. This is my blood. We will drink it again in the Realm of God." Then she took a loaf of bread and after giving thanks, broke it and said, "This is my body. I give it for you. Take this and eat it. We will eat again in the Realm of God. I do all of this for you. You do this in the future in remembrance of me. The one who is going to betray now holds the cup." Julia left the room.

The disciples started to argue about who Frances loved the best. Everyone wanted to be the greatest in Frances' eyes. Frances replied, "The greatest will be the least and the least the greatest in the Realm of God. All of you will eat and drink with me in the Realm of God."

"Petra, I am praying that you will not fall victim to the evil one." Petra replied, "I will stand by you forever! I will go to jail for you." Frances interjected, "The sun will not rise before you deny me three times."

"Gather your things. We must got to the shore of the Trinity River to pray." When they arrived at the space, Frances looked at the disciples and said, "Pray that you will not falter in this time of trial." Then, Frances withdrew to a solitary place and prayed, "Mother, if there can be any other way...save me from this hour. I will follow you. I will follow you. I will follow you." An angel appeared and gave Frances strength. In her anguish, Frances prayed even more earnestly. Tears of blood fell to the ground. When she got up, Frances found the disciples sleeping and said, "Why are you sleeping? Get up. The hour has come."

While Frances was still speaking, a big crowd came up. Standing in the front, Julia led the group and walked up to kiss Frances on the lips. Before she could get there to kiss her, Frances stopped her and said, "Is this how you are going to betray me?" John screamed out, "What should we do?" Then with little notice, Jenna reached into her pocket, grabbed her gun and shot a Fort Worth Deputy Sheriff. Frances knelt over the Deputy and said, "Stop!" Placing her hands on the Deputy's wounds, Frances healed him. Frances turned to the crowd and said, "Why do you come to arrest me in the night? I have been in public all week and you choose to arrest me under the cover of night? This is the hour of true darkness."

Petra followed the group to the Tarrant County Jail. While she was standing outside, someone approached Petra and accused her of being one of Frances' disciples. Loudly, Petra said, "I don't even know Frances." A little later, an officer pulled Petra over and asked, "Are you with Frances?" "I've never met her," Petra responded. Going back up to the County Jail, Petra was approached again about her connections to Frances and she said, "I just moved here and don't

know anyone named Frances." In that moment, Petra realize she had denied France three times and started to weep.

Throwing insult after insult at here, the police started to beat and torture Frances.

When the morning came, Frances was arraigned before a local judge and charged with terrorism. Prosecutor after prosecutor asked her, "Do you really believe that you're the Daughter of God? Do you really believe that you're the Messiah? Do you know how dangerous it is for all of these people to be following you around? Is this a cult?" "I am who I am. God sent me to save you," Frances replied. The prosecutors and judges had heard enough. "She is an enemy of the state!" everyone in the courtroom cried out.

23.

The Governor was in town and Frances was brought before him the next morning. A large group of pastors and priests were also present. With the pastors and priests blasting accusation after accusation against Frances, the Governor asked, "Do you really expect us to believe that God sent a

woman to save us?" Frances replied, "I am who I am." The Governor tried to calm the crowd down and said, "I see no reason to execute this woman." The pastors and priests could not be calmed and said, "If you don't execute Frances, we will make sure that you are run out of office before the year is out for being soft on terrorism and crime."

Once the pastors and priests pushed the Governor sufficiently, he decided to send Frances to the Chief Judge of Tar rant County. When the Judge saw Frances, she was very glad. "I have been following your work for some time," the Judge told Frances. With the prosecutors, priests and pastors teaming up to hurl question after question, Frances refused to speak. The Judge started to mock Frances and demanded that she answer the questions. When they could get nothing out of her, the Judge had Frances stripped and mockingly put her in a purple robe. Frustrated, the Judge sent Frances back to the Governor. On that day, the Judge and the Governor became inseparable friends.

When Frances arrived, the Governor turned to the crowd with her and said, "You have brought me this woman and called her a terrorist. I do not believe she has committed any

crime. I will have her tortured and then released." The pros ecutors, priests and pastors got pissed and demanded her ex ecution. The Governor tried to reason with them and no one would listen. There was a mob mentality that had taken hold. The group believed that Frances should die and no one was going to persuade them. One more time, the Governor asked, "What has she done?" The mob screamed, "She is a terrorist and any leader that loves Texas will have her killed!" The Governor turned to Frances and said, "You can stop this." Frances replied, "This is about following God's will not mine." The Governor ordered Frances to be executed.

The prosecutors, priests and pastors led her away and made her carry the rope that they intended to hang her with. There were women standing on the sidewalk screaming out for the execution to stop. Frances to turned to the women and said, "Do not weep for me. I am walking with God. Weep for your self. Weep for this town. Weep for Texas." Two criminals were also being led away for execution. Someone from the crowd yelled out, "You wouldn't be doing this shit if they were white!" The group arrived at a tree next to the Trinity River. Before they strung her up, Frances declared, "Mother,

forgive them for they know not what they do." The pastors and priests ripped Frances' clothes off and divided the scraps up. Everyone laughed at Frances as they were about to kick the ladder out from under her. Two criminals were about to be hung on each side of her. People screamed out, "If you are the Daughter of God, save yourself!" There was an inscription placed above her head that read, "The Female God." One of the criminals made fun of Frances and the other believed in her. The generous criminal yelled to Frances, "Remember me in the Realm of God." Frances loved him and said, "I will."

The time was around noon. The pastors and priests kicked the ladders out from under all three criminals. The two criminals died instantly. As Frances hung there for a second between life and death, she said, "Mother, into your hands I commit my spirit." One of the pastors looked on and said, "Frances was innocent and forgave us while we killed her. Maybe she really was the Daughter of God." Even the hardest pastors and priests walked back to their churches and homes wondering if they had made a mistake. Still very afraid, the disciples remained quiet.

One of the pastors was a good man and asked the Governor for the body of Frances. A local funeral home embalmed Frances and she was buried in the church cemetery. Only a few people attended the short memorial service that the pastor held for her. Before she was buried, Petra dropped a love letter on top of the casket and left.

24.

Early on the morning after the burial, a group of disciples went to the tomb of Frances and found the casket dug up and opened. While they were confused, a couple of angels appeared and said, "Do not look for the living amongst the dead. Frances is not here. Frances is risen!" Immediately, the disciples remembered Frances saying that she would rise from the dead. The group of disciples rain back to tell all the other disciples. Jamie, John and the others did not believe them. Petra ran to the tomb and saw the casket open. Amazed, Petra grew more excited with each passing second.

Three disciples were walking from Dallas to Fort Worth in a protest against the death penalty. While they were talking to

each other, Frances came up from behind and started talking with them. Not realizing who she was, the disciples started to talk about their pain and heartbreak over the execution of Frances, "We love her. There was no reason for her to be exe cuted. Some people say she has risen from the dead. We find such things difficult to believe." When they got to the end of the protest, the three disciples urged Frances to have dinner with them. After she broke the bread and passed the wine, the disciples recognized Frances and she disappeared. Speaking to one another, they said, "How did we not recognize her? Were our hearts not burning within us?" The disciples ran to the other disciples and told them, "Frances has risen!"

While they were still talking, Frances appeared amongst them and said, "Peace be with you." Everyone in the room was terrified and thought she was a ghost. One even shit in his pants. Sensing their fear and wanting them to realize it was her, Frances invited them to come and feel were the rope was. Everyone touched and knew that it was Frances. While they sat there stunned with joy, Frances asked, "Do you have anything to eat?" Since there was no food in the house, the

disciples ordered some pizzas and had them delivered. Later, munching on a slice of pizza, Frances said, "I told you I was God and would never die. You are witnesses of what happened. Feel the power of God come over you. Go and tell the world."

Then, Frances led them back to the Trinity River and lifted her hands. While blessing them, Frances went airborne and went over the skyscrapers. The group watched until they could see Frances no longer. When they were about to walk away, fireworks exploded in the sky and everyone knew that God was celebrating having her daughter back home. The disciples never stopped telling the story about what they saw.

The Queer

A Revision of the Gospel of John

1

In the beginning was the Queer, and the Queer was with God, and the Queer was God. The Queer was there in the beginning with God. All things came into being through the Queer, and without the Queer not a single thing existed. Life flowed from the Queer and the Queer's life is the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

God sent a man to Texas named John as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe. John was not the Queer, but he came to testify to the light. The true Queer, who enlightens everyone, was coming to the world.

The Queer was in Texas already, Texas actually flowed out of the Queer, but Texas was blinded. The Queer was rejected by the Queer's family and those who claimed to know God the best. But to all who received the Queer, who believed in the Queer's name, the Queer gave power to become children of God, born, not of blood, flesh, or will, but of God.

The Queer became flesh and dwelt among us here in Texas. We have seen the Queer's glory, the glory of a parent's only child, full of grace and truth. John screamed it out, "This is the Queer that ranks ahead of me because this Queer was here before me." From the fullness of the Queer we have all been showered with grace upon grace. Moses and our forefa thers gave us the laws; grace and truth came through the Queer. No one has ever seen God. It is God the Queer, who is closest to God's heart, who has made God known.

The leaders of the Church of the Bible sent numerous pastors from Denton to ask John, "Who the hell are you? What the hell are you? What is your identification?" John confessed, "I ain't the Queer. I ain't the one sent by God to save you." Then they asked, "Well then, who the hell are you? Are you a pastor or priest? Are you Elijah?" John confessed, "I am not." "Are you a prophet?" He answered, "No." Then they asked, "Well then, who are you? Give us an identification, some type of label or something. What do you say for yourself?" John said, "I am the voice of the one crying out in the sticks, 'Make straight the way of the Queer," as the prophet Isaiah said many years ago.

Now these leaders were sent by their Senior Pastor, who was the head of the Church of the Bible in Denton. They wanted to maintain the doctrines and dogmas that kept the people in line. They questioned John, "Why are you baptizing if you are neither the one God sent to save us, nor Elijah, nor a prophet?" John answered, "I baptize with the waters of Lake Dallas. Among us stands one you don't know, I am not worthy to untie the shoes of the Queer who is coming." These events took place across the Loop near Lake Dallas.

The next day, as he was riding in a caravan of cars with his disciples right off of East University Drive, John saw the Queer walking. John demanded the caravan stop. Loudly, John declared, "Here is the Queer of God that takes away the sin of the world! This is the Queer we have been waiting for. This is the revelation I have been preaching. I saw the Spirit of God descend and remain on the Queer. God told me that I should follow the Queer who the Spirit of God descends and remains upon. God told me that this is the one who will bap tize with the Holy Spirit. I have seen it. This is the Queer of God." The Queer was outed as the Queer in front of a caravan full of howling people on the side of the road.

The next day, not too far from Lake Dallas, John was hanging out with two of his disciples and the Queer slowly approached them. John outed the Queer again. "Look, it's the Queer of God!" The two disciples took notice and followed the Queer. When the Queer turned around and saw them, the Queer asked, "In this world of hatred, what are you looking for?" "Teacher, where are you staying?" The Queer invited them to come and see. It was a long walk over to Cooper Creek and the two were not used to walking. After they arrived, the disciples stayed and clung to the Queer. Later, Andrew, one of the two, went to get his brother and ar riving exclaimed, "We have found the Queer!" Simon, Andrew's brother, rushed to meet this Queer. Immediately, the Queer changed Simon's name to Peter.

The next day, the Queer decided to go to Corinth. Arriving, the Queer saw Phillip and said, "Follow me." Now Phillip was from Shady Shores, the same little dot on the map as An drew and Peter. Phillip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found the one about whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote about, right over there, the Queer." Nathanael responded, "Can anything good come from the

trashy riffraff of Ponder?" Phillip said, "Come look for yourself." When the Queer saw Nathanael coming, the Queer declared, "Now, that right there, is an honest man." Nathanael asked, "Where do you know me from?" The Queer replied, "I was thinking about you sitting thinking under that street lamp." Nathanael replied, "My God! You are the Queer." To which the Queer replied, "You believe just because I pondered you sitting under a street lamp? You will see bigger, greater, more fantastical miracles than this… You will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Queer."

2

On the third day, the Queer, the Queer's mother Mary, and the disciples of the Queer attended the wedding of a friend in Argyle. Later on in the evening, after everyone was fairly drunk, the wine gave out. "We don't have anymore wine," Mary loudly declared. The Queer replied, "Woman, why should I care? It ain't my time yet." "Do what the Queer, that dark skinned person over there, says," Mary told the catering company. The Queer ordered six large plastic barrels, capable of holding twenty to thirty gallons of water, to be filled to

the brim and said, “Now draw some water out and take it to the manager of your catering crew.” The catering manager, tasting the substance, was shocked and could not figure out where the amazing wine came from. “Everyone serves the best wine first and the cheap stuff after everyone gets drunk, why would you save the best wine until everyone is drunk?” the manager exclaimed to the groom. The Queer chose the wedding at Keller to perform the first of many miracles to come. The Queer was concerned with uplifting the joys of love. This queer event revealed the glory of the Queer and the mission of the Queer, love. The disciples believed.

Following the wedding at Argyle, the Queer went down to Highland Village for a rest with family and the disciples.

The high religious holidays were approaching, so the Queer went up to Denton. When the Queer arrived to the Church of the Bible, the Queer was mad as hell. Folks were everywhere oppressing people. They were scaring the shit out of people in order to get them to do what they wanted. Hell and damnation were on the tongues of everyone the Queer ran into. They had a homeless shelter that was only willing to help people if the folks got saved first, whatever the hell that

means. They were telling people that God was an American and a Republican. They were sending people to reparative therapy, as if something is wrong with love. There was no justice or grace, only judgment of a world they knew nothing about. The word on everyone's lips was damnation. This self-described house of God was a house of exploitation and hate. The Queer could not take the hypocrisy and injustice of it all. Red with fury, the Queer fashioned a whip of chords and went to work. In a righteous anger, the Queer turned over the sound system, ripped down the projector, turned over the drums and guitars, tore down the American flag, de manded justice now, and declared to all that would listen that "God is love." To the pastors, the Queer exclaimed, "Get this hate and injustice out of here NOW! Stop using the name of God to create a marketplace of hate, oppression, and injustice!" The disciples remembered that it was written, "The Queer will be consumed by a zeal for the church and the people of God." Some of the self-described religious folk were not fazed, "What proof can you give to us for doing all of this?" "Destroy all of this church and I will rebuild it in three days?" said the Queer. "How?" they demanded, "It took ten years to raise the money and five years to build." In the mind

of the Queer, the temple was the body, not the Church of the Bible. After the Queer rose from the dead, following a hate crime fueled by religious violence, the disciples remembered that the Queer said that the Queer would be raised back up. The disciples believed in the resurrection of the Queer and the words of resurrection that the Queer had spoken.

In Denton, during this highly religious time, many believed in the Queer, because they saw the signs of the restoration. The blind were opening their eyes to sight. The Queer, however, did not trust the people enough to give them the Queer's body, because the Queer knew the destruction that people often inflict on the body and queerness already testifies for itself.

3

Now one of the Church of the Bible pastors named Nicodemus, a prominent leader of the religious folk, heard the teachings of the Queer and was amazed. So he came to the Queer by night and said, "Teacher, I and many others know that you have come from God, for there is no way you could do all of these things unless you were from God." "Nicode-

mus, no one can see the Kingdom of God unless they are born from above," replied the Queer. Nicodemus was flummoxed, "How can anyone go back into their mother's womb and be born twice?" "You must be cleansed of the ways you think about yourself and the world. You must be reborn of water and the Spirit. What is born of flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you don't know where it is coming from or where it is going. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit. Those who follow and practice love," declared the Queer. Nicodemus grew increasingly perplexed, having never thought of religion as anything but law and judgment, "How can it be so?" "You are a religious leader, and yet you don't understand what is really the way of God?" the Queer teased.

"Too often we speak to what we know and testify to what we have seen, yet fail to acknowledge and accept love in the process. You have difficulty acknowledging and accepting earthly things, how are you going to understand heavenly things? Look in front of you, no one has ascended to heaven except the one who actually descended from heaven, me, the

Queer. Just as Moses raised the serpent in the sticks, so too must the Queer be raised up, that whoever believes in the Queer will have life eternal."

"For God so loved the world that God gave God's only child, the Queer, so that whoever believes in the Queer will not per ish but have life eternal."

"God did not send the Queer into the world to condemn the world, but in order to open the eyes of the world, that the world might be saved through the Queer. Those who believe in the Queer will not be condemned; but those who deny the Queer are condemned already, because they have not believed in love, which is God. And this is the judgment, light has come into the world, and people have loved the darkness of oppression, self-hate, and injustice because there was no love in their hearts. For all who do evil hate the light and do not come to the light, so their evil deeds won't be exposed. But those who love come to the light, so that their deeds might be proven to be love, God."

Later, the Queer and the disciples went into the countryside of unincorporated Denton County, when they arrived, there

was extended fellowship and many baptisms in a small creek. At Lake Dallas, not too far from the Loop, John was baptizing those who kept coming to be baptized. One of the pastors from the Church of the Bible, snuck in amongst John's disciples and asked, "Why are more people going to the Queer to be baptized than are coming to you?" John replied, "I told you that I am not the Queer, I was merely sent to prepare the way for the Queer. I rejoice at the saving pres ence of the Queer. For this reason, 'The Queer must increase and I must decrease.'"

The one who comes from above is above all and the one from earth belongs to earth and speaks about earthly things. The Queer is above all. The Queer testifies to what the Queer has seen and heard, yet people are afraid of the queerness of the Queer. Whoever has accepted the testimony of the Queer, believes that God is truth and love. The Queer that God has sent speaks the words of God, for the Queer grants Spirit without hesitation. God loves God's child and has placed all things in the hands of the Queer. Whoever believes in the Queer has eternal life; whoever denies the Queer will not see life and must endure the pain of separation from God.

4

Now when the Queer found out that the pastors of the Church of the Bible were discussing amongst themselves, how the Queer was making more disciples and baptizing more people than John, the Queer left rural unincorporated Denton County and headed toward the city of Argyle. Much to the dismay of the prejudices of the disciples, the Queer took a brief detour and traveled down into Dallas and stopped in the area called Oak Lawn. The Queer stopped and sat down right by a place that Jacob had given to his son Joseph, known as the Legacy of Love Monument. It was high noon and the Queer was about to confront the deeply held prejudices of many religious people.

The Queer was alone, as the disciples had gone into the supermarket to buy food. While the Queer was sitting, a transgender person came to have a seat and drink a little bit of wa ter out of a pack. The Queer looked up and said, "Could I have a small swig of your water?" The transgender person was baffled and surprised, "How is that you, a religious person, ask me for a drink, a transgender person of Dallas?" The Queer spoke to love and affirm the humanity of the per-

son, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is asking you for a drink, you would have asked me and I would have give you living water." The transgender person responded, "You don't have a cup for me to pour the water in and I didn't figure you wanted to drink after me. Where does this living wa ter come from? Are you greater than our forbearers here in Oak Lawn, Jacob, his partners, and all his ancestors, who gave us this monument?" The Queer responded boldly and slowly, "Your monument is great, but it will only last for a time. Those who drink my water and trust in my love will never thirst again. The water and love I give is affirming and eternal, it gushes up to create the Kingdom of God." The transgender person excitingly said, "Please give me some of this water, this love, so that I may never again thirst."

"Go get your partner and come back," the Queer replied. "I have no partner," the transgender person said. "You are right. You have had five partners and the one you currently live with is not your partner." The transgender person was astonished and said, "You are indeed a prophet. Our ancestors have always worshipped here in Oak Lawn, but we are told that we must worship in the First Churches." The Queer

knew the requirements for worship were unjust and responded, "Ma'am, believe me, the hour is coming where you can worship wherever you want. The hour is now here and approaching when true worshipers will worship the Queer in spirit and truth, for the Queer seeks true worshipers. The Queer God is spirit, and those who worship the Queer must worship in spirit and truth." The transgender person replied, "I know that the Queer is coming and when the Queer comes the Queer will reveal all things." The Queer didn't hesitate, "I am the Queer, the one whose voice you hear."

The disciples walked back up and brought their prejudices with them. The disciples were astonished that the Queer was speaking with a transgender person from Oak Lawn, but they dared not speak. The transgender person left everything and ran down Cedar Springs Road to the intersection with Throckmorton Street. Upon arrival, she yelled, "Come and see the Queer who just told me everything I have ever done! Could it be the Queer we have always longed for?" The people rushed to see.

During this time, the disciples urged the Queer to eat. The Queer said, "I have food to eat that you don't know about." The disciples replied, "Surely someone has not brought you food that we don't know about." The Queer pushed, "Loving the people of God and doing the will of the God who has sent me to complete God's work is the only sustenance I need. Stop looking around and saying that the harvest is four months away! The fields are ripe for the harvest right now. The Queer is already making a way to eternal life and inviting people into the Kingdom. You are a part of the plan. You are a part of the sowing, reaping, and spreading of love."

Large amounts of people in Oak Lawn believed in the Queer, due to the transgender person's testimony of "the Queer loved and told me everything about myself." When the Oak Lawnians talked to the Queer, they begged the Queer to stay for two more days. Throughout the time, people, one right after the other, just kept-on-believing in the Queer. They excitedly spoke to the transgender person, "Your testimony is what got us here, but now we have seen for ourselves and we know that this is the Queer, the Savior."

After two days, the Queer and the Queer's disciples headed toward Argyle. The Queer warned the disciples that the Queer is often not welcomed in the Queer's own home. Upon arrival, the Argylians welcomed the Queer; for they had seen all that the Queer had done in Denton.

Later, the Queer arrived in downtown Argyle, where the Queer turned the water into wine. Immediately, a Texas Ranger ran up to the Queer and asked the Queer to heal his son, who lay ill at the point of death in Justin. The Queer de clared, "Unless you see signs and wonders many of you will not believe." The official pleaded, "Please, come before my young son dies." "Go and your son will live," the Queer responded. The man believed in the words of the Queer and headed to Justin. Somewhere around Northlake, the Texas Ranger's secretary met him and told him that his child was alive. The Ranger asked, "What time did he begin to get better?" "Yesterday at 1pm in the afternoon," the secretary responded. The Ranger realized that this was the exact time that the Queer said, "Your son will live." The Ranger and his entire household believed in the Queer. This was the Queer's

second sign on the roads in incorporated and unincorporated Denton County.

5

After this there was the Jazz Festival of Denton, and the Queer went up to Denton to check it out.

Once in Denton, the Queer traveled to the public pool off of Mingo Road. Scattered about were many sick people with nowhere else to go, including the blind, the lame, the paralyzed, the mentally ill, and many others. There was even a man who had been ill for over thirty-eight years. When the Queer saw the sick man the Queer inquired, "Do you want to get better?" The sick man answered, "I have no one to drop me into the pool when the angel of healing stirs the water. Someone always jumps in front of me." The Queer did not hesitate in response, "Stand up, take up your towel, and walk on out of here." At once, the sick man stood up and walked. The Queer did what the religious folk in Denton often refused to do, care about the healthcare of all people, including the least of these with dirty clothes and towels.

The day was Sunday and the religious folk in Denton had special rules about Sunday. Local religious folk told the formerly lame man, who was carrying a celebratory drink, "It is not lawful for you to carry alcohol on a Sunday morning." "The Queer who healed me told me to take up my towel, walk, and celebrate with a drink," replied the formerly lame man. Then the religious folk aggressively asked, "Where is the weird ass who told you all that? Where is this Queer?" "I don't know who, what, or where the Queer is, but I do know that I am healed," bluntly spoke the formerly lame man. Later, the Queer found the formerly lame man and declared, "You have been made well. You are a child of God. Act like it." The man went away and told the religious folk that the Queer from Ponder made him well. The religious folk did not like that the Queer was healing on the Sabbath and started to bully the Queer. But the Queer remained steadfast and responded, "My mother and father God is still working, and, as the child of God, I am also still working." For this reason the religious folk sought all the more to kill the Queer, not only was the Queer breaking the rules for Sunday, but the Queer was saying that God was the Queer's mother and father, thereby making the Queer equal to God."

The Queer said to them, "The child can do nothing alone, but is granted strength only when the child follows the ways of the parent; for whatever the parent does, the child does likewise. The parent loves the child and shows the child all that the parent is doing; and the parent will show greater works than these, so that all will be astonished. Indeed, just as the parent raises the dead and gives the dead life, so too does the child give life to whomever the child wishes. The parent of all judges no one and has given all authority for judgment to the child, so that all will honor the child just as they have honored the parent. Anyone who does not honor the child does not honor the God who sent the child. Honestly, anyone who hears these words and believes will have life eternal, they will pass from death to life. Honestly, the time is coming when the dead will hear the voice of the child, the very Queer of God, and those who hear will live. For just as the parent gives life, so to does the child give life, and has given the Queer to correct, because the Queer is God on earth. Do not be astonished. The hour is coming when all people in the graves will hear the voice of the Queer and spring forth to

life. There will be eternal unrestricted love shown in the resurrection."

The Queer continued, "I can do nothing on my own. God grants all power to me and I seek to do God's will. Whatever I testify about the Queer is not true, but whatever God testifies about the Queer is true. John and his messengers told the truth as best they knew how. They pointed you to the truth of the Queer. John was a bright and shining lamp and for a while you got to dance in his light. But I bring a testimony that is greater than anything John ever said. I am the love of God. God's love testifies about me. If you don't believe in God, how could you hear such testimony? You look deep in the scriptures for eternal life, but eternal life is right in front of you. Come to me! If you do not have love in you, how could you have anything eternal in you? The Queer comes not to pursue the glory of humans, but, rather, to share the love of God. How come you are so desperate for glory on earth? Seek God's glory. Believe in the Queer. Believe in love. If you believe in Moses and all the prophets of the past, how can you not believe in me? Would you rather be judged by law or by the hope of grace? The prophets

wrote about me. They told you that I was coming. If you haven't believe in love in the past, how can you believe in love when the Queer is right in front of your face?"

6

After all this healing, loving, and teaching, the Queer decided to go to the other side of Lake Dallas, which at the southern tip is also occasionally called a rich folk's lake and at the northern tip a poorer folk's lake. A large crowd followed the Queer, some might have called it a traveling rainbow nation, along the muddy rocky shores of the lake. These folks had seen the signs of love and wanted to see more. The Queer went up on one of the steep grassy banks and sat down with the disciples. There were people everywhere, even some pulling up on boats. A religious festival was approaching. When the Queer saw the large crowd, the Queer told Philip, "Where are we going to buy food for all of these people?" This was a test. The Queer knew what was coming. Philip declared, "I could work six months and not have enough money to give all these people even a taste of food." Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, decided to try out his newfound faith and told the Queer, "Well, there is this boy here with five

pieces of cornbread and two pieces of fried catfish." Backtracking a bit, Andrew added, "...but I guess that ain't much food in comparison to the appetites of all these folks." The Queer told the disciples, "Make everyone sit down." There was a bunch of green grass and everyone sat down. There were about five thousand colorful people sitting on a wide grassy plain next to Lake Dallas. Then Queer took the cornbread and the fried fish, blessed it, and started passing it out. When the crowd got done burping intermittently, the Queer told the disciples, "Gather up all the fragments that are left, we don't want to leave anything." When all the remnants were gathered back up, there were twelve large baskets left. The rainbow people were amazed and declared, "This is the prophet we have been looking for." The folks started to press in and wanted to elect the Queer to the United States Congress. Hearing this, the Queer quickly retreated and went up into the sticks to be left alone.

Around 8:00pm, unable to find the Queer, the disciples decided to take the boat out on Lake Dallas. They were going to go to the southern tip and eat near Highland Village. The sky began to darken, rain began to fall, lightening crashed, the

wind increased, and the lake got really rough. The motor on the boat died and water began to fill up the interior. The dis ciples were in a bad way two or three miles from shore. Then, looking up, the disciples saw the Queer walking on wa ter and coming toward the boat. The Queer's long hair and loose clothing were flowing in the storm. The disciples were terrified. The Queer looked up and declared, "It's me. Don't be afraid." When they took the Queer into the boat, they were immediately transported to Highland Village.

The next day, when the crowd saw that only one boat was taken. They knew that the Queer was not in the boat with the disciples and wondered where the Queer was. So when they couldn't find the Queer, they got into their boats to go to Highland Village. When they found the Queer, the people demanded, "How did you get here?" The Queer answered, "You are here because you are hungry. Do not work for food that perishes, but for the food that is eternal. The food that the Queer of God will give you." The people started to get bold and inquired, "How can we share in the work you are doing…showing the love and performing all the miracles?" The Queer declared, "The work of God is to believe in the

Queer that God sent." That answer was not good enough for the people, who replied: "Well, what sign are you going to give so that we can know for sure? We want to see and believe. Where is the food from heaven you were talking about?" The Queer did not hesitate, "In the past, the bread from heaven you have received came from God. The bread of life is the power God uses to give life and light to all." The people begged, "Please give us this bread."

"I am the bread of life. Those who follow me will never be hungry or thirsty again. You are all witnesses, yet many of you don't believe. Everything that God gives me will come to me, and anyone who comes to me I will never turn away. I am from heaven. I come to do the will of God. I am not going to lose anything that God has granted me. I will raise up all things on the last day. This is the will of God, that all who see the Queer and believe in the Queer will have eternal life and I will raise them up."

The religious folk started complaining again. "How in the world could the Queer say 'I am the bread of heaven'?" "Is the Queer not the one they used to call the Queer of Ponder?" "How could the Queer have come down from heaven, we

know that we was born to some trash out behind the public housing in Ponder?" The Queer, aware of their murmurings, replied, "Do not grumble. No one can know who the Queer is unless God grants sight. I give sight to the blind and it is those who see who will be raised up. Everyone who has heard the Queer has heard God. No one has seen God except for the one God sent, the Queer. Whoever believes lives forever. I know you are hungry, well I am the bread of life. Unlike earthly bread, this bread of the Queer is from heaven and those who eat it will never die. The bread I give for the life of the world is my flesh."

The religious folk just didn't get it, remarking, "How can the Queer ask us to eat the Queer's flesh?" The Queer replied, "Unless you eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Queer, you will not have eternal life. Those who do eat and drink, will be raised up. My body and my blood are true sustenance. Those who eat and drink abide in me and I in them. Whoever eats of me, eats of the living God. I am the bread of life that has come down from heaven. Ready to love and live forever?"

The Queer taught all of these things at the Church of the Village in Highland Village.

Many of the disciples were flummoxed by these teachings and wondered aloud, "So, is this about cannibalism? How can we accept this?" The Queer whipped around and inquired, "Does this teaching offend you? What if you actually saw the Queer ascending and descending to and from heaven? It is the spirit that gives life. The flesh is useless. My words are life. But among you there are many who don't believe." The Queer knew who would follow the Queer's teachings and who would remain closeted. The Queer loudly declared, "Those come after me are sent by God."

Hundreds of disciples turned back to the closet, marched in, and slammed the door. They were unable to handle the free dom and love that the Queer was offering. Finally, the Queer looked to the twelve and blurted out, "Are you going to?" Simon Peter spoke up, "Queer, where else shall we go? You alone have the words that make us free. I am not going back to that closet. We believe that you are the God who offers true freedom. We know that you are the Queer that God has sent to save us." The Queer replied, "I chose you twelve, yet

one of you will hand me over to a bloodthirsty homophobic mob." The Queer was speaking of Judas.

7

The Queer decided to go to Corinth. The Queer was scared to go into Denton, as the religious folks and the leadership at the Church of the Bible were tired of the Queer's queerness and words, they were ready to kill the Queer and looking for an opportunity. One of the religious festivals was approaching. The Queer's brothers taunted the Queer and said, "Why don't you come out and go on up to Denton for the festival? Why are you trembling scared in the closet? If you really are the Queer, then let everyone see your queerness. If you are so confident in yourself, show the world who you really are." The Queer's brothers didn't believe. The Queer replied, "It is not my time yet, but your time of privilege is always here. The world doesn't hate you, but it hates me because of my queerness and the fact that I shine light on the stifling injustices of the world. Go to the festival yourselves. I am not going. They are not ready for the coming of the Queer and my time has not yet come." The Queer remained in Corinth.

Unable to sit still, the Queer decided to go up to Denton for the religious festival in drag, so that no one would recognize the Queer. The religious folk and all the leaders of the Church of the Bible were looking for the Queer. In all actual ity, the Queer was the talk of the festival. "Where is the Queer?" As the Queer walked around, the Queer consistently heard murmurs, "The Queer is a good person;" "The Queer is a false prophet;" or "The Queer is a liar." No one would speak to loud for fear of all the religious folks.

About halfway through the festival, the Queer began to teach in drag from the pulpit at the Church of the Bible. The religious folks were astonished. "How does a drag queen have so much knowledge with no seminary education?" The Queer answered directly, "My teaching is from the God who sent me. Anyone who is connected to God knows that I am the Queer sent by God. Those who speak apart from God seek their own glory. I seek the glory of the God who sent me. There is nothing false in my God."

"All of you are so religious, yet none of you exhibits the love and compassion of God. Right now, as we speak, you want to drag me out of here and make me another hate crime statis-

tic." The religious crowd snapped back, "You are possessed to be talking about God and dressed in drag. You disgust us." The Queer replied, "You are the ones who are astonished by my teachings. You are the ones clamoring for miracles. You use me for a show to get off on and then want to toss me away. You know much about the law, but little about love. I am healing people who are sick and loving those you care nothing about. If you have not love, you have not God. You should stop judging based on appearances and assumptions, but judge based on the love that is in the heart."

Many of the folks of Denton kept saying, "Isn't that the Queer the religious folks are trying to kill? And there the Queer is, in drag, speaking openly and freely. Could it be that some might actually believe that this is the Queer sent to open their eyes to love and offer them salvation from their prejudiced condemning hearts?" The Queer knew what they were saying and could not hold back any longer, "You know who I am. You know where I am from. Unfortunately, you have turned your backs on God and all the people who are queer around you. God is love and love opens our eyes to what is truly in front of us. I am the Queer and I know the Queer who

sent me." Then the pastors from the Church of the Bible tried to have the Queer arrested as the Queer left the pulpit. It was as if there was a forcefield around the Queer, because none of the officers could touch the Queer. The hour had not yet arrived. Many in the crowd believed the Queer's words, yet some kept saying, "When God really does come in human form, do you really think God will be in drag?

The pastors of the Church of the Bible were furious and got together with other religious folk to demand that the Denton police arrest the Queer. To which the Queer replied, "I am going to be with you a little while longer, and then I am going back to God. You will search your hardest and not be able to find me. Where I am going you cannot go in your current evil states." The pastors looked at each other and said, "Where does the Queer intend to go? Does the Queer intend to go up to Oklahoma? What is the Queer talking about with this 'you wont be able to find me stuff'? We will go anywhere to end this poisonous queer behavior. We have had it!"

On the last day of the festival, the Queer cried out, "All who are thirsty come to me. Let the one who believes in me drink and never thirst again. Out of the followers of the Queer will

flow living water that will bring life and wash away hate and injustice in the world." The Queer was talking about the living water of the Spirit of God. The water was coming.

When many of Dentonites heard these words, they started declaring, "This really is the Queer we have always waited for. This is the prophet of love, hope, and salvation." Still others couldn't believe and responded, "Surely God does not come from Ponder? Surely God was not born behind public housing? Surely God was not born into such a trashy family?" There was great division in the crowd concerning the Queer. The pastors of the Church of the Bible still wanted the Queer arrested, but no one laid hands on the Queer.

The Denton police reported back to the Church of the Bible, who asked, "Why didn't you arrest that disgusting queer?" To which the Denton police replied, "Never has anyone spoken like this!" The pastors at the Church of the Bible couldn't stand it, "Surely you have not decided that God is the Queer in drag? Have you been bamboozled too? Have any of our pastors or any religious folk been deceived into believing this shit?" Nicodemus, who was a pastor at the Church of the Bible and friends with the Queer, replied "Do we not live in a

society where the law says that people are innocent until proven guilty? You homophobes are trying to kill the Queer by mob violence and hate crime. Do you not understand the hate that is driving you?" The pastors snapped back, "Prophets don't come from Ponder. God is not a bastard piece of trash that proceeded out of a promiscuous mother. Ponder has never produced anything worth calling even remotely religious, much less produced the child of God. Nicodemus needs his head examined. God comes in drag?"

8

The Queer went up on a bluff right outside of Denton to pray. Before light, the Queer started to walk toward the Church of the Bible to pray. All of the members of the church and some folks from the community all came to see the Queer and the Queer began to teach. Suddenly, the doors busted open and the pastors of the Church of the Bible drug in a woman caught in an adulterous relationship. She was forced to stand in front of the pastors. "This woman was caught in the act of adultery. Based on our laws, we have got to kick her out of the church, shun her from the community, and treat her as if she is dead. What do you say?" This was a test of the

extent of the love of the Queer. Instead of answering, the Queer stooped down and used a marker to start writing on the floor tile all the names of the men and women the pastors at the Church of the Bible masturbated to, the men and women besides their wives that the pastors had engaged in intercourse with, and many other secret things. The Queer then spoke, "Let any of you misogynists who are without sin cast the first stone." The Queer stooped down and started writing some more. The pastors tucked their tails and got out of the church as quickly as possible. The Queer, now alone with the woman, beckoned, "Where are your misogynistic accusers? "They are gone and no one accuses me anymore," replied the woman. "Nor do I. Go and love the right way."

The Queer declared, "I am the light of the world. Those who follow me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life." The pastors of the Church of the Bible responded in a fury, "How can anyone say such things about their self? This is ludicrous. You cannot prophecy about yourself!" The Queer slowly responded, "I am the Queer. My testimony is valid because I know who I am and where I am going. You do

not. You judge everyone using human measurements. I judge no one. If I did judge, I would judge based on God. Your law says that you need two witnesses. I and God are two in one. I and God testify to who I am." "So, where exactly is God?" they inquired. "You don't know me and you don't know God. If you knew me you would know God," the Queer replied. The Queer spoke these words in the vestibule of the Church of the Bible. No one arrested the Queer. The hour was not yet right.

"I am going leave you and you won't find me. You will die in your hateful oppression. Where I am headed, you can't come," the Queer shared. The baffled religious folk responded, "Is the Queer going to commit suicide or something?" "You are from down here, I am from up there; You are from this world, I am not. You will die in your sins without me," the Queer replied. They all were still befuddled and said, "Who the hell are you?" The Queer, frustrated, replied, "Why do I even speak to you? There is much to say and condemn about all of you. Today, all I do is declare what I have heard from God." Those present just didn't get it. Their minds were stuck in a normative way of thinking and they

could not comprehend the queerness of the message. The Queer sought to clarify, "You won't realize who I am until I am murdered. You will then know that I am the child of God, the Queer, who is given authority and voice by God. God is with me. God will not leave me. I live to follow God." Many of those who heard began the process of belief.

Then the Queer said to the religious folk who started to believe, "If you follow the Queer then you are my disciples. When you follow the Queer, you will know the truth and the truth will set you free." Some of the other people answered, "We are Americans and have always been free. What are you talking about freedom?" The Queer did not hesitate, "Everyone who keeps on doing the same evil over and over is a slave to evil. Do you want to be a slave to evil? If the Queer makes you free, if you are able to accept who you were created to be, you will be truly free. As long as you chase after normativity you will be a slave to normativity. Be free! You want to kill me, because I want to destroy your materialistic normative society. In the Kingdom of God the last are first. What are you doing chasing normativity? Love God and love yourself!

You are hearing the freeing words of God right now. Queer or not, you should listen."

The skeptics still barked, "We are Americans. Descended from the founding fathers. We are freedom loving people!" The Queer said to them, "Your love for America blinds you to what is standing in front of you. You are trying to kill me, the Queer, a messenger of the truth of God, because your values have blinded you to truth. You care about America more than you do your neighbors." They replied, "Our freedoms have been paid for with blood, sweat, and tears. We are the moral compass of the world not you!" The Queer demurred, "If your first priority was God, then you would love me, the Queer. I have come from God. In fact, God is standing right in front of you. God sent me to declare true freedom. Why are you so afraid of queerness? Is it because you cannot accept the way that I look, act, or love? Your bigotries and prej udices make you closer akin to the devil. From the beginning, the devil has been the source of oppression, injustice, homophobia, and bigotry. The devil pushes others to join in on these evils. Is that where you are? I tell the truth and whoever does not believe in me has fallen victim to the lies of

the devil. How long will you allow constructs like American, straight, privileged, and others hold you back from loving God, yourself, and your neighbors? Stop with the normativity and injustices. Follow me! If you are from God you will hear the words of God. Those who cannot hear the words of the Queer are not from God."

The religious folk got very angry at these words. "You are a lesbian and you have a demon!" The Queer answered, "I do not have a demon. I honor God and you dishonor me. I am not here for myself. I am here for you. God alone gets the glory. Those who learn to become queer as I have will live forever." The religious folk were ready to battle at the sound of such perceived apostasy, "You are a demon. All of the greatest people to ever live died. How can you say, 'Whoever follows you and learns to be queer will never taste death?' Are you greater than George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, John Kennedy, or Ronald Reagan? They all died. Who the hell do you think you are?" The Queer responded loudly, "God queered me. God sent me. God loves me. You claim God but spout oppression and hate. What do you know about love? If I said I don't know love or God then I would be

a liar like all of you. Don't claim to be welcoming if you don't really mean it. Your American heroes have waited for my arrival to restore justice to the world. I have seen them. I have talked to them. The entire world has waited patiently on the Queer and I am here." The religious folk were livid, "You are young. How could you have met all of these heroes who have died?" The Queer stood straight and replied, "Before Ronald Reagan was, I am." Folks in Texas like Ronald Reagan a lot, thus the religious folk picked up stones to kill the Queer. The Queer ran out of the Church of the Bible and hid behind the railroad tracks.

9

The Queer was walking downtown on the square and saw a man who was blind. The disciples asked, "Whose fault is it that this man is blind, who sinned to cause it, the man or his parents?" The Queer responded, "Nobody sinned. The man was born blind so that God might be revealed through him. While it is still day I must do the works of the God who sent me, for night is coming when nobody can work. As long as the Queer is in the world, the Queer is the light of the world." The Queer hawked a loogie into a bed of flowers and made

mud with the dirt. The Queer placed the concoction into the blind man's eyes and told him to go and wash his eyes in the pubic water fountain on the westside of the square. The blind man did as he was told and was able to see. All of those on the square and those who knew the blind man simply could not believe he could now see. "Isn't this the guy who annoyed us incessantly trying to get across the street and asking for money?" Some said, "Yep, that's him." Others said, "Nope that just looks like him." The formerly blind man screamed, "It is me!" The people wouldn't listen, because they didn't think he had the socioeconomic standing to be trusted. This was far to queer for most of the gathered, "How can someone be blind and then they see?" The minds and hearts of the gathered were too attuned to normativity to see. They were the ones that were blind. The Queer was giving sight to those who accepted the queerness of binding life to the Queer. The formerly blind man tried again, "The Queer made mud from a bed of flowers, spread it in my eyes, and told me to go wash my eyes in the water fountain on the westside of the square. I went, I washed, and now I see." "So where is this Queer now?" they inquired. "I don't know," replied the formerly blind man.

Not too long after, people brought the man who had formerly been blind to the pastors at the Church of the Bible. It was Sunday and the church was very busy. The pastors asked, "How did you get your sight back son?" "The Queer put mud pies on my eyes, I washed the mud pies off, and now I see," replied the man quite clearly. The pastors roared back, "The Queer cannot be from God, because the Queer doesn't heal through the church. The Queer doesn't follow the values and norms of the church. This is sin. How can a sinner perform such tasks?" The pastors were divided. They didn't know how to respond. "What do you say?" they asked the formerly blind man. "I think the Queer is of God."

The religious folk called the formerly blind man a liar and many refused to believe he had ever been blind. So, they decided to call his parents. His parents timidly replied, "Our son was blind. We don't know how he can now see. Ask him. He can answer for himself." There were a lot of powerful people who went to the Church of the Bible and were rabidly religious in Denton, the parents were afraid to answer the questions directly. The Church of the Bible had already agreed that anyone who believed the Queer to be God would

be thrown out of the community. The parents were relieved when they stopped pestering them.

The religious folks confronted the formerly blind man and said, "Give glory to God and answer these questions truthfully. The Queer is a disgusting vile sinner. Do you know what people like the Queer do?" "I don't care what the Queer does. I only know one thing. I once was blind, now I see," he retorted. "What happened to you? How did this happen?" they kept pestering. "I have told you. You will not listen. Are you curious to hear it again because you want to become the Queer's disciples?" the formerly blind man replied. The religious folks were pissed, "You are the Queer's disciple! You are disgusting as the Queer is! You don't fit in because you are evil! Where does this Queer come from?" The man replied, "I can see. My eyes were closed and now they are open. Healing comes from God, how could the Queer not be from God? Such a miracle has never happened before. This is God. Those who are not from God can do nothing." They couldn't take it anymore and the people drove the man out of Denton, screaming, "You evil man! What makes you think you have a damn thing to teach us?"

The Queer heard what happened and went out to find the formerly blind man hiding out past the Loop, "Do you believe in the Queer of God?" "Maybe, who is it? Tell me, so that I might believe..." the man replied. "The Queer is speaking in front of you right now," affirmed the Queer. "My Lord, My God, I believe," joyfully shouted the man. The Queer stepped further, "I came into the world, specifically, Texas, to push those who are blind so that they might see and to tell those who think they see, that they are blind." One of the pastors of the Church of the Bible had followed the Queer and loudly spoke up, "Are we the blind ones you speak of?" "You tell the world how to see yet you are blind," replied the Queer.

10

"You cannot enter the fold but through love. The one who opens the gate and leads the fold is named love. When love calls the fold by name, they come and follow because they know the voice of love. Those who love will not run to evil, but will follow me." The Queer used this phrasing, but nobody got it.

The Queer tried again, "I am love. Everyone else is trying to do things partially, don't follow them. Follow love, for I am love. Whoever embraces love, will find rest for their weary searching. Evil comes only to steal, kill, and destroy. The Queer has come that you all might enjoy love and life in abundance."

"I am the lover. The lover always lays down the lover's life for the beloved. Partial loves run away and leave the beloved, where the beloved gets wounded and destroyed. Those who are partial do not care entirely, only partially. I am the full lover. I know my beloved and my beloved know me. God knows me and I know God. I lay down my life for the beloved. My beloved are all over, in many different folds. I will call all of them to love and they will listen. I will call for love to exist in one flock as one people as one love. I am the shepherd, love. I lay down my life for love and God will take it up again. Love never dies. No one takes my life, I lay it down for love. I have the power to lay it down and take it right back up. God grants such power to God."

The heads on the religious folks were spinning. They argued amongst themselves on how best to respond. Some said, "The Queer is possessed!" Others said, "How can someone who speaks so beautifully of love and who opens the eyes of the blind be possessed?"

Later, around late winter, at the Festival of the 35 in Denton, the Queer was hanging out with friends. A few of the religious folks saw the Queer dancing and cornered the Queer, "Tell us the truth! Are you the Messiah?" The Queer replied, "I have told you who I am and you don't believe. The miracles I have done don't speak loudly enough? You do not care about truly seeing. Those who seek to love hear my voice and know who I am. I give them love eternal and they, like love, will never die. No one will take my beloved from me. I will pursue all of them to the ends of time and space. No one can snatch my beloved away from God. God and I are one."

The religious folks started to pull out knives, guns, and broken bottles to harm the Queer. "I have loved you, caused the lame to walk, and opened the eyes of the blind. You are going to stone me for this?" retorted the Queer. They shot back, "You are a blasphemer. You are only human yet you call

yourself God." The Queer slowly and methodically replied, "Do you not believe that we are all children of God? Then, why do you call it blasphemy when I say I am the child of God? God sent me into the world. If I am working in love and healing, then don't believe me, just believe the works. If you believe the works, you believe in me. If you believe in love, you believe in me. If you believe in hope, you believe in me. These entities exist so that you might know the source, God. I am love. I am hope. I am the child of God and I and parent are one. If you don't believe in love or hope or healing then don't believe in me." The religious folks were beside themselves once more and they were going to kill the Queer, a hate crime was brewing, but the Queer escaped from their hands.

The Queer ran away across the Loop and out to Lake Dallas. Pitching a tent on the shore, the Queer remained hidden in the woods for a time. Many came out to the Queer. People consistently said, "John didn't do any of these miracles, but everything John said about the Queer was true." Many believed in the Queer and found love to be supreme.

11

Now a certain man had the AIDS virus, Lazarus of Krum, the small town of Mary and Martha. Mary was the one who would pour out her perfume on the Queer and sensually rub it in with her hair. Lazarus, Mary's brother, had been experi encing complications with the AIDS virus for quite some time. The sisters called for the Queer to hurry to Krum, "the man with whom you have shared love is ill." When the Queer heard the message the Queer responded, "The AIDS virus does not lead to death. I am about to show up and show out." Though the Queer deeply loved Martha, Mary, and Lazarus, the Queer rested for two more days in Keller.

When the Queer suggested that it was time to go to Krum. The disciples begged the Queer not to go that close to Denton, "Pastor, the Church of the Bible and all the religious folk want to stone all of us, please don't take us there!" The Queer said, "There is still daylight. I am the light of the world. Night is coming. Then for a time there will be reason to fear." After these statements the Queer declared, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I am going to get him up." The disciples replied, "If Lazarus has just fallen asleep, he will be easy to wake up." The Queer, however, meant that Lazarus

was dead. Then the Queer made it plain for them, "Lazarus is dead. You will see him rise and believe. Let's go to him." Thomas looked around and declared to all the disciples, "We might as well go and die up there in Denton with the Queer."

When the Queer arrived, the Queer found out that Lazarus had been dead for four days. Now Krum was very close to Denton, less than a couple miles, and many of the religious folk that harassed the Queer earlier were there to console Mary and Martha. When Martha found out that the Queer was coming, she ran to the end of the long driveway to meet the Queer, Mary stayed in the house. Martha cried out to the Queer, "If only you had been here, my brother would not have died. But, I know that God will give you whatever you desire." The Queer shouted, "Your brother will live again!" Martha replied, "I know that you will raise him up on the last day into your Kingdom of Love." The Queer said, "I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me will never die. Do you believe this?" She replied, "You are the Queer, the Messiah sent to save the world, the child of God."

When Martha heard these things, she ran back to get her sister Mary, and told her, "Hurry, the pastor of all pastors is

here and calling you." When Mary heard that the Queer wanted her, she got up and quickly went to the Queer. The religious folk who were at the house to console, with phrasing like "It was God's will," "This must have been his time," and "God must have needed another angel," saw Mary get up rapidly and, concerned for her mental state, chased after her. The Queer was still at the end of the driveway milling around. When Mary got to the Queer, she hit the floor and declared, "My God, if you would have been here, my brother wouldn't have died!" When the Queer saw the deep emotion and tears, the Queer was overcome and deeply moved, "Where is he?" "Come look," they replied. The Queer wept. The religious folk could see the emotion flowing out of the Queer and declared, "The Queer must have been partnered with Lazarus." Other religious folks grumbled, "If the Queer is so special, and was probably partnered with him, then why couldn't the Queer have kept him from dying?"

When the Queer arrived at the grave, the Queer said, "Dig him up!" Everyone was shocked and Martha said, "Lord, Lazarus has been in there for four days." "If you believe, you will see you God," the Queer replied. So, they dug. When

they arrived at the casket, they unlatched the lid and stood back. "God, AIDS has no power when I show up, I thank you for having heard me," the Queer professed for the sake of all who were there and all who would read this account. The Queer cried out with a loud voice, "Lazarus get up out of there and come embrace me!" The dead man came out, working out the embalming solutions as he regained motion, and embraced the Queer. After a moment, the Queer said, "By the power of the Queer, you are free to live and love who ever you want."

Many of the religious folk, who saw what actually happened, were shocked and believed on the spot. But some of them went to the pastors at the Church of the Bible and told them what the Queer did. So the Senior Pastor called together a meeting of the leadership of the Church of the Bible and declared, "We must do something now! The Queer is taking away part of our membership, donations are down, and the Queer's message of love is superseding our message of judgment and rules. The signs, however the Queer is doing them, is giving credence to the Queer's message. If we let the Queer continue we will lose our church, our political control, and

our stranglehold on the values of our nation. I know what we must do, for it is better for the Queer to die than to lose everything we have worked so hard to attain. The Queer must die so that the people might be saved and brought back together." From that day forward, the Church of the Bible planned to kill the Queer.

The Queer did not walk or talk openly for a time at the Church of the Bible or amongst the religious folk, but went far away to Meunster in the region close to Oklahoma and re mained there with the disciples.

Now the great religious Festival of the Spring was approaching and many from the region went to Denton to participate in plays of passion at the Church of the Bible, the Senior Pas tor and all of the subordinate pastors were looking for the Queer. The religious folk of Denton were on the look out for the Queer and saying, "Surely, the Queer will not come to the festival or any of the plays of passion?" The Church of the Bible gave orders that any person who saw the Queer should arrest the Queer immediately and bring the Queer to the church leadership.

12

Six days before the Festival, the Queer rode down to Krum, the home of the risen Lazarus. There was a feast. The Queer ate heartily. Martha served and Lazarus sat at the table. Sensing that she had a more important duty, Mary took a bottle of the most expensive perfume she could find, Rubies. Mary took her Rubies and poured them on the Queer's feet. She loved the Queer. There was something incredibly sensual and moving about the act. Such feelings only increased when Mary took her hair and rubbed the perfume in with broad strokes. The house was filled with a beautiful tangible scent. Everyone loved the moment except Judas Iscariot, "What type of queen allows this type of activity? That perfume could have been sold for 30,000 dollars! We could have fed all the poor in Denton!" The other disciples thought that it was funny that Judas was saying such things because they had suspected him for some time of taking his own cuts out of what he called "the queen's purse." The Queer snapped the Queer's head back and shook the Queer's finger, "Leave Mary alone. This is about anointing my body for my

burial. The poor will always need your help, but you will not always have my body to anoint."

When the religious folks learned that the Queer was in Krum, they came to see both the Queer and the risen Lazarus. The Senior Pastor and the staff of the Church of the Bible decided that Lazarus needed to be put to death as well, to hide the ev idence of his resurrection, as many folks were leaving the church and believing in the Queer.

The next day, a huge crowd at the Festival of Spring heard that the Queer was coming into Denton. So they took rainbow flags and ran out to meet the Queer. When they arrived at the road that the Queer was walking in on they shouted, "Hallelujah! Blessed is the Queer who comes in the name of God. Hallelujah! This is the Lesbian of all Nations!" The Queer found a longhorn and rode it into Denton. The Queer knew that it was previously written, "Do not be afraid, people of faith, your Queen is coming, sitting on a longhorn's back." The disciples did not realize what was going on, between the multitude of rainbow flags waving and the Queer on the back of the longhorn there was much to be distracted by. These events were prophesied to take place before the glorification

of the Queer. The crowd continued to testify, shout, and sing about the miracle of Lazarus' resurrection in Krum. The Queer was a celebrity. The pastors of the Church of the Bible took notice, "The Queer is a fucking celebrity. The world wants to know that transgender asshole. We must eliminate the Queer now!"

Now there were some folks from Massachusetts visiting the Festival of Spring. They approached Phillip and declared, "We have got to meet the Queer!" Phillip took Andrew with him to go tell the Queer of the folks from Massachusetts. The Queer replied, "The hour has come for the Queer to be glorified and made a celebrity. When grain dies it bears much fruit. Those who cling to life will lose it, but those who let go will gain eternity. If you want to know me then follow me. Be where I am. Whoever does this, God will honor."

"I am troubled in my soul. Should I do what I am supposed to do or should I ask God to save me? No, this is my destiny. God, I follow you," agonized and theorized the Queer. Then a soft tender feminine voice came from heaven, "I love you. I ordain it. I glorify it. Go my child." The crowd that heard the voice coming from heaven couldn't believe it. Some doubted

and said, "It must have been a jet engine overhead." Others believed and said, "It was an angel speaking to the Queer." The Queer explained things, "The voice has come for you not me. The judgment of the world is coming. Evil will be driven out. When I am raised up, I will draw all people unto me." The people sensed that the Queer thought that the Queer would be experiencing a violent death soon. "We thought that the Messiah was supposed to remain with us forever? How can you say you are Messiah and that you must be raised up? Who is this Child of God? Is it you?" The Queer replied, "The light will only be with you for a little longer. Walk while you have the light, so you can see where you are going, for night is coming. Believe in the light. Become children of light."

After the Queer said these words, the Queer ducked into a gay bar and hid. The Queer was wise enough to know that the pastors of the Church of the Bible wouldn't follow the Queer into a place where there was alcohol and queer folk. Although the Queer loved them and performed many signs in their presence, they still didn't believe. They couldn't. They loved privilege too much. This fulfilled the words of

Isaiah, "No one has believed our message. No one has believed God." and "Their eyes are blinded and hearts hardened. If they will turn their eyes and hearts to God, they will be healed." Isaiah knew what was coming. Nevertheless, though they knew these words and saw the miracles, the religious folk and the pastors of the Church of the Bible refused to believe in the miracle of God's love manifested before them. Others believed, unable to deny what they felt and what they saw, but were scared to speak publicly. The pastors of the Church of the Bible were on the prowl and declared that they would put anyone out of the community who believed in the Queer. The pastors simply loved their privilege more than God.

Then the Queer cried aloud: "Whoever believes in the Queer is believing in the God who sent the Queer. Whoever sees this lesbian sees the lesbian in the sky. The Queer has come to set this world on fire with love, inclusivity, and hope. Everyone who believes in me does not have to walk in the evils of injustice and oppression any longer. I am not here to judge. I am here to save…the world. The ones who reject me as weird and nonnormative rejects God as weird and non-

normative. For I am not speaking on my own, I am speaking on behalf of a God that is queer and loves the entirety of peo ple in the world. This God rejects the religiosity you have created based on who is in and who is out. The God who is queer desires eternal life for all people in all places."

13

Now right before the Festival of the Spring, the Queer knew that the Queer's hour of death was fastly approaching and that God was waiting. There was just too much hate bubbling all over the town. The Queer loves all people, because they are all the people of the Queer. The Queer was ready to love them to the end. The evil was already moving in the heart of Judas Iscariot. During the Festival of Spring celebratory supper at the house of a sympathetic supporter, the Queer, knowing that the entire world belonged to the Queer, got up from the table and filled a basin full of water. Whipping a towel around the Queer's hips, the Queer began to wash the feet of all of the disciples. Never before had God personally washed the feet of every sexuality, identity, ability, and race under one roof. When the time came to wash Peter's feet, Peter asked, "Lord, you really think you are go-

ing to wash my feet?" The Queer replied, "You will understand all of this one day." Peter couldn't understand and said, "You are never going to wash my feet I am too wounded and dirty." The Queer grew frustrated and replied "Unless I wash you, you will not share with me." Peter relented, "Ok, if you are going to wash my feet then wash everything." The Queer was growing tired of the back and forth, "One who is clean does not need to wash anything but the feet, for the feet have been walking. All of you are clean, but one has dirty hands."

After the Queer washed all of the feet, put the Queer's outer clothes back on, and returned to the table, the Queer said, "Do you know what just happened? You call me the professor, the pastor, and the Lord…you are right, this is what I am. So, if I humble myself to wash people's feet shouldn't you also? I have set an example. Serve people. Remember the example of God. I have chosen you. This is to fulfill scripture. There is one who will betray me. I tell you this so that you will know who and whose I am when these events transpire. Whoever receives one of my children receives me and whoever receives me receives the God who sent me."

After saying all of these things over supper, the Queer became very troubled, "One of you is going to betray me." The disciples looked at each and didn't know what to say. John, the disciple that the Queer loved, was reclining on the Queer and Peter motioned for him to ask the Queer who the Queer was talking about. John leaned over and whispered in the Queer's ear, "Who is it?" The Queer answered, "It is the one that I give this piece of pita to after dipping it in the hummus." The Queer gave the bread to Judas. After being embarrassed, an evil rage entered Judas and he raced out. The Queer told him as he passed, "Do what you have to do quickly." No one at the table knew what was going on. They just thought it was a little drama. Some thought that Judas was mad because he had to go buy some more food or perhaps that the Queer asked him to give more money to the poor. It was very dark.

When Judas left, the Queer said, "I am straight, but I have been glorified with queerness. The very queerness of being glorified by God. God is in me, God will glorify God's self, and will glorify God at once. Little ones, I am here for just a little bit longer. You will look for me and not be able to find

me. Where I am going you cannot come right now. The greatest commandment is to love all of one another without qualification. Just as I have loved all of you. Follow me. Everyone will know that you are follows of the Queer, if you love one another."

Peter couldn't take it anymore, "Lord where are you going?" The Queer replied, "Where I am going right now you cannot come, you will follow later." Peter said, "I want to go where you go. I will lay my body down for you." The Queer answered, "Before the dog barks three times you will deny me."

14

"Don't be scared. Believe in God, believe in me. God has pre pared a place that is amazing for all of us. There is room for all of you. Would I lie to you? One day, you will join me. You know the directions." Thomas was flustered, "We don't know the directions. How could we?" The Queer in a power ful voice said, "I am the way, I am the truth, and I am the life. No one comes to God but through the Queer." If you know me, you will know God. From now on just know that you

know God, because I, the Queer, am standing right in front of you."

Phillip declared, "Show us God and we will be satisfied." The Queer replied, "I have been with you the whole time. Phillip you still don't know me? Whoever has seen the Queer has seen God. Do you believe in me or not? I only speak the words of the God that sent me. I and God are one. All who believe in the Queer, will emulate the works of the Queer. If you ask anything in my name, the Queer, I will do it."

"If you love all of me, every identity, sexuality, orientation, ability, and race embodied in me, you will keep my commandment to love all people. There is another advocate coming who will be with you forever, the Spirit of Truth. The world will never be able to catch the Spirit of Truth, because no one has a monopoly on truth. You will know the Spirit when the Spirit abides in you."

"I will not leave you alone. I am coming to you and will make all things right. In a little while I will be hidden, but you will see me; because I live, you will also live. On that day you will know that the Queer is God and that God is in the Queer. The

ones that keep the commandments of love and justice are the ones that really love the Queer. Those who love, I will love and reveal myself to them." Judas asked, "How is it that you will reveal yourself to us and not to the world?" The Queer replied, "Those who love me will love others. Those who love will know the Queer and I will make my home in them. Who ever does not love God or others does not keep my commandments. Slowly may all of this world learn to love. This is the word of God."

"I have told you these things while the Queer is still here. The Advocate, the Holy Spirit, who is coming as God will remind you of the words of the Queer. Peace I leave with you, my peace, a peace that affirms the queer in all persons without qualification, I give you. I do not give normalization and security as the world gives. I give you a peace to be who you are. Do not be afraid, and do not let anyone else be afraid. I am going away. If you love me, you will rejoice for a higher love is coming. I will reveal such love to you. Believe. I will not talk much more. I am growing tired and depressed. Evil is all around, but it has no power. I make my own decisions.

I do what I am about to do so that the world will know God through the Queer. Get up, let's go."

15

"I am the electricity of life and God is the source of life. Those who are walking around dead need to connect with the electricity of life. You have been given tremendous cleansing electricity through the words of the Queer. Live in me and I will live in you. Your life will have no electricity without me. You will give electricity to others if you stay connected to me. Whoever does not stay connected to me, will have no electricity and power to live. If you have my electricity you will be able to change the world. The Queer will give you anything you need. God is glorified by the Queer. As God loves you, so do I. As I love you, so does God. Keep my command ments and abide in love, just as I have abided in the love of God. I want to restore your life."

"This is my desire, that you love one another as I have loved you. This is the queerest action of the Queer, sacrificial love. No one has greater love than the one who lays down their life for all. You are my friends. I call you friends, because all has

been made known to you. I am out. I am proud. I am the Queer. You don't have to choose me, because I have already chosen you. I appointed you to love each other, so that God will be glorified and the world might be put to right. I, the Queer, am giving you all of these teachings so that you might love each other and restore love."

"If the world hates you, be aware that it hated me for my queerness. If you belong to the world and normalize yourself, doing exactly what the world says, then the world will love you as its own. But when you come out, the world tries to break you into conformity. I have chosen all to be queer just like me, and the world hates all things queer. Queerness is from God. Remember the word I, the Queer gave you, 'If they persecuted me they are going to persecute you. Phobias are rampant. The hate crimes, bullying, violence, and derision that you experience is that same hate crimes, bullying, violence, and derision that I experience. I am with you always in these things. Never forget, queerness is from God. Those who commit atrocities might name God, but they do not know the God who is the source of all love and queerness. If I had not come and spoken against such bigotry and lu-

nacy, they could plead the excuse of ignorance. Now, the Queer God has spoken and they are without excuse. Whoever hates the Queer hates God. Whoever hates my queer ones hates God. Folks have seen love and justice flow out. Unfortunately they don't follow it, they like oppression and hate more. This fulfills prophecy, 'they hate without cause.'"

"The Advocate of God will remind everyone to embrace queerness as from God and to seek love and justice above all things. You are to testify about these things to all people everywhere. Tell them that the Queer lives."

16

"I have said all of these things to keep you queer and to not let you slip into the evil of normativity. They are going to put all of you out of the church. Unfortunately, when they kick you, the Body of the Queer, out then they actually won't be having church any longer. You will be oppressed and persecuted by religious bigots who think that they are doing the work of God by trampling on your queerness. Never listen to them. They are tools of evil. They do not know the Queer or God. I say these things so that you might have strength in the

hours of trial. Stay strong in your queerness and know that God is Queer."

"I did not share the full extent of my queerness with you in the beginning, because I was with you and I prayed you might figure it out. Now, I am going back to the God that sent me here, yet none of you asks me more questions? I know you are sad and confused. I can only tell you the truth. I am not going away, the Advocate will come. When the Holy Spirit arrives the Spirit will immediately get to work on spreading justice, love, and restoration throughout the world so that evil might be overcome and defeated. Justice, because the world is oppressive and the marginalized are always mistreated. Love, because it is the only force powerful enough to turn enemies into friends. Restoration, because the world needs to be put back together again. Evil will no longer rule this world!"

"I can't bear to say too much more right now. When the Spirit comes, she will guide you in all truth; for she will speak the words of God; and she will tell of the coming restoration. She will glorify me and I her. All that God is and will ever be

belongs to me. For this reason I can tell you that we are God and that we are declaring all things to you."

"I will be with you for a short time longer and then after a short time longer you will see me again." The disciples' heads were spinning in confusion, "What is the Queer talking about? How long is a little while? Where is the Queer going?" The Queer heard the murmurings and replied, "You could just ask me. You will weep for a short time and then experience ecstasy. The world is about is about to rejoice. Like a woman in full on labor, the pain lasts until the joy of the child's arrival. You have pain at this time, but joy is com ing quickly. No one will take the ecstasy away from you that is coming. Why haven't you asked anything in the name of the Queer? Ask and you will get it."

"I know that I have used a lot of figures of speech, but you will understand these things by and by. The hour is coming when you will see all things plainly. On that day you will ask anything in the name of the Queer and God will give it, because God is the Queer and the Queer is God. God loves you and that is why God sent me. I came from God and I am going to God."

The disciples rejoiced, "Finally! The Queer is speaking plainly. Now we don't have any further questions and we know for sure that the Queer has come from God." The Queer answered them, "You believe now? You are about to scatter and desert me. Yet, I am never alone, as God is always in me. These are words of peace. In this world you will deal with some real shit, but have strength and courage, I have conquered the world with love."

17

After the Queer spoke these words, the Queer looked up to heaven and said, "The hour for the murderous hate crime has come. Glorify the Queer that the Queer might glorify you. I know that you have given all authority to me to give eternal life to all people. These events are so that all people might know that you are the one true God and I am your one true Queer. I am finishing the work that you gave me to do, I love them in spite of the hate crime that is coming. So, now God glorify the Queer with the glory that I had before the cre ation of the universe."

“I have made your name known to all people. They are your people, you have granted them to me, and they have kept and are learning to keep your word. Now know that the Queer’s word is your word. They know the truth that flows from God. I asking for your justice and love on their behalf. I am asking for all of your children. All my children are your children and all your children are my children. I am glorified in them. Now, the Queer is no longer in the world, but the queer children remain in the world. I am coming straight to you. God make them one, so that they might love each other and create peace and love together. I have always tried to protect them. I made sure that not one would be lost. But now my work is done, I speak all of this so that the world may know what is happening and have joy. I, the Queer, have given them your word. The world hates them, because they are queer too and do not belong to the world, just as I am queer and do not belong to the world. I am not asking you to take them out of the world, just make them safe from hate, bigotry, and oppression within it. Protect them from evil. They are queer just like me, keep them safe God. Fill them with truth, fill them with your word of love. As you have sent the Queer into the world, so too have I sent all the queers out into the world. I

go through with this, so that they might know what love looks like. May this example of love sanctify them in truth."

"I ask for all people who are here and are to come, that they may all be one. I want them to be just like us, God is in the Queer and the Queer is in God. I want the world to know that I am the God sent to earth. The glory you grant me, I give to them so that they may be unified as one. I love them as you have loved me. God let all people be with the Queer constantly, let them know my presence through my love for them. These are my people and have been my people before the foundation of the world."

"Holy God, the world is often blinded to your presence, but I am not. I know queerness and my followers know the Queer. They know me. I made your name known to them, Queer. I will make it known unto the ends of the earth so that all might love the queerness within and the queerness without. The love that you have loved me with, I want that love to be in all of them. The Queer will exist in all of them, forever."

18

After the Queer spoke all of these words, the time of darkness was rapidly approaching, the Queer and the disciples cruised down to a solitary garden within Quakertown Park. Judas knew the place, as he and the Queer had been there before. Suddenly, without much warning, sirens and spotlights filled the place. Some of the police cars jumped curbs and almost rammed some of the disciples. The police jumped out of their cars with guns drawn, "Freeze you queers! If anyone makes a move you will die." The sergeant with the police offi cer remarked, "What in the hell are all of these different types of people doing together in Quakertown Park in the middle of the night? Straights, blacks, whites, Hispanics, Asians, Native Americans, gays, lesbians, bisexual, transgender, pansexual, intersexual, women, men, and all kinds of folks. I haven't seen this type of diversity since I worked for Fort Worth and participated in the raid on the Rainbow Lounge. Are ya'll planning the world's most diverse orgy imaginable? Who are we hear to get?" "The Queer," one of the rookie officers replied. "Judas, do your thing," whispered the sergeant. Before Judas could act, the Queer exclaimed,

"Who are you looking for?" They all answered, "The Queer from Ponder." The Queer replied, "That's me." Judas was standing right next to the Queer. When the Queer answered the question, every race, sexuality, class, and identity fell to the ground. Again the Queer asked, "Who are you looking for?" They again replied, "The Queer from Ponder." "I told you that is me! If you are looking for me, then let all of these other folks go," the Queer replied. The Queer did not lose a single one of the disciples. Then Peter pulled out a pistol and shot Malchus, the assistant to the pastor at the Church of the Bible. The blast missed everything vital, but blew Malchus' right ear clean off. The Queer promptly healed Malchus' ear and looked to Peter, "Don't ever use a gun again. My people have no use for guns. Those who carry guns will die by guns. Am I not supposed to do what I have been called to do? Are you not supposed to do what God has called you to do? How can you love anyone holding a gun? Take me away officers!"

So the police officers arrested the Queer and bound the Queer with plastic zip ties. First, they took the Queer to the pastor of the Church in the Village, a queerphobic underling of the pastor of the Church of the Bible. The pastor of the

Church of the Bible had told all who would listen that is was time to arrest and execute the Queer. It was better for one to die than queerness be rampant in Denton.

Peter and another disciple followed the squad cars carrying the Queer to the Church in the Village. Upon arrival, since people were familiar with the disciples, Peter and the other disciple kept their distance and looked in the windows of the Church in the Village to watch what was happening. Ultimately, they both decided to go to the outskirts of the sanctu ary. A woman who was at the Church in the Village all the time approached Peter and declared, "Are you not one of the disciples of the Queer? Are you queer yourself?" Peter lied and said, "I am not." Rather than following the Queer, the closet seemed a much safer space at the moment. Peter walked over to a television showing a basketball game, where the police officers and some staff of the church were gathered, and tried to breath for a moment.

The pastor of the Church in the Village questioned the Queer in the large sanctuary about the disciples and the teachings. The questioning was on large screens for the entire quickly gathered congregation to see. As the questioning com-

menced, dramatic guitar chords played over the loud speakers. It was a typical service at the Church in the Village, except that someone's life was at stake. The Queer responded to the questioning, "I have been honest, I have taught in all types of churches. I have never been closeted with any of my teachings. Why do you ask? You have ears. You have heard my teachings." One of the nearby police officers struck the Queer in the face and screamed, "Is this how you address the pastor of the Church in the Village?" The gathered congrega tion cheered and screamed for more blood. All the components of a hate crime were in place. The Queer spewed blood and managed, "I have not lied, so why do you strike me?" To the disappointment of the gathered, who wanted to see an execution right now, the pastor of the Church in the Village sent the Queer to the pastor of the Church of the Bible.

Peter was still watching the basketball game with the officers and church staff when one of the officers looked at him and said, "Weren't you with the Queer earlier?" Peter snapped back, "I am not queer and I don't know the Queer." One of the cousins of Malchus, whose ear Peter shot off, saw Peter and said, "I saw you in Quakertown Park!" Peter shuttered

and said, “It was not me!” At that instance, a dog outside of the church barked three times.

Once the pastor of the Church of the Bible got hold of the Queer, he took the Queer immediately to the residence of Pilate, the Mayor of Denton. The mob of religious folks had guns and banged on the door of the Mayor’s residence demanding she come out. “We values voters put you in office and we can take you out in a minute,” they screamed. So Pilate came out on the porch and inquired, “What accusations have you brought against this Queer?” The religious folk screamed in unison, “If this where not a criminal then why would we bring the Queer to you?” Pilate responded, “Take the Queer and judge the Queer based on your laws and your interpretations. That is what you usually do anyways.” The religious folk snapped back, “Unfortunately, our laws and interpretations do not allow us to put someone to death.”

Pilate entered her house with the Queer and asked the Queer, “Are you the Queer of God?” “Do you ask this because you believe or because others made you?” the Queer responded. “I am not religious and frankly I don’t give a shit, but those folks out there can run me out of office. Your own

religious folks turned you over to me. What exactly have you done?" replied Pilate. The Queer answered, "I am queer and in this world that is enough to get you killed. I am not from here. I am from God. No one is fighting my attackers, because they know that death cannot hold me. My queerness is not of this world. I am the Queer of God." Pilate responded, "So, you are a governor, bishop, or president of some other world?" The Queer replied, "I am the Queer and for this I have come from God. I came to earth to die for the queerness of all people. I came to earth because I love all people. I was born for this very moment to testify to the truth of love. Everyone who cares about love listens to my voice." Pilate responded fleetingly as she whipped around to go back out on the porch, "What the fuck is truth?" "The queerness of love and individuality," the Queer managed to whisper.

When Pilate arrived outside, she went to the pastor of the Church of the Bible and said, "I find no fault in this Queer… but I have a tradition that the religious folks in town pardon a criminal once a year. Do you want me to release the Queer of God?" The crowd shouted with blood curtailing shrieks, "Kill the Queer, release Barabbas." Now, Barabbas killed a

local family for sport earlier in the year. This shows the hatred the folks carried for queerness and the Queer.

19

Pilate had the Queer tortured in the city jail in hopes that torture might satisfy the blood lust of the religious mob and leadership. The police officers wove a crown of glow sticks and aluminum cans and shoved it down into the flesh of the Queer's head. They took a broomstick and shoved it up the Queer's anus. The officers mutilated the Queer's genitalia by stabbing it with paper clips. As if all of that was not enough, they placed the Queer in a burning barrel and lit the Queer on fire using lighter fluid. When they finished with the torture, the officers took a rainbow robe and put it on the Queer. The officers kept coming up to the Queer, saying, "All hail the Queer of God!" and each time they took turns peeing on the Queer. The officers also struck the Queer on the face as often as they could. Pilate went to the jail and asked for the torture to stop. She told the religious folk, "I am bringing the Queer out to you to see the punishment I ordered and that there is now no further fault in the Queer." So the Queer came out, wearing the crown of glow sticks and aluminum cans and the

rainbow robe, to face the crowd, which now had swelled to a couple thousand people. Pilate said, "Here is the Queer." When the pastor of the Church of the Bible saw the Queer, he led the chorus of voices, "Kill the Queer! Kill the Queer! Kill the Queer!" Pilate declared, "Take the Queer and do it yourselves, I find no fault in the Queer." The religious folk screamed, "Leviticus says that we should kill the Queer and that is what we intend to do."

When Pilate heard this, she was more afraid than ever. Pilate knew that if she didn't do what they say then she would lose her job and perhaps even be killed by the mob herself. In her house, she again asked the Queer, "Where are you from?" The Queer refused to answer any more questions. Pilate grew frustrated, "How can you refuse to answer my questions? Your life is on the line." The Queer responded, "You have no power over me. I am giving my life. The religious folks have the responsibility." From then on Pilate tried to let the Queer go, but the religious folk cried out, "If you release the Queer, you are no friend of the Governor of Texas. Everyone who claims to be from God is saying that they have

higher standing than our Governor. This is just not possible!"

When Pilate heard these words, she brought the Queer into a courtroom at the Denton County Courthouse. The time was about noon. Then Pilate began to administer the death penalty as it is usually administered in Texas, swiftly with lit tle regard for facts. Pilate asked the religious folk, who served as the jury, "What do you want to do?" They all shouted in unison, "Kill the Queer! Kill the Queer! Kill the Queer!" The courtroom erupted. Pilate screamed over the melee, "So, your verdict is death." They all screamed, "Yes." The religious folk seized the Queer with the pastor of the Church of the Bible leading the way. The state-approved hate crime continued.

They forced the Queer to walk the streets of the town as they shouted, "Kill the Queer! Kill the Queer! Kill the Queer!" The Queer carried a cross that was painted purple. Finally, after several beatings in alleys, public bathrooms, and small parks, they took the Queer to the Denton Square. There they nailed the Queer's hands and feet until blood dripped onto the stark green lawn. There were two other crucified next to

the Queer, they had committed religious crimes as well, one denied the inerrancy of scripture and the other declared all people bound for heaven. The Queer was right in the middle. Pilate had the inscription "The Queer" written in English and Spanish on a board and placed on the cross over the Queer's head. Many of the religious folk read the inscription and asked that it be changed, because they were afraid of federal hate crime statutes. Pilate answered, "What is written is written, just put your trust in your bigoted religion." When the police officers helped the religious folk crucify the Queer, they took the Queer's clothes and divided them amongst each other. There was a shiny purple silk shirt that a couple of officers wanted, so they rolled dice to see who got it. As one of the officers won, a sharp sound of agony came from the Queer.

Meanwhile, standing near the Queer's cross, was Mary, the Queer's Mother, her sister Mary, and Mary Magdalene. When the Queer saw the Queer's mother and John, the Queer declared, "I am your son." Then the Queer said to John, "She is your mother." John knew that this meant that

he was to take care of the Queer's mother, for the Queer adored the Queer's mother.

After this, the Queer knew that time was drawing to a close, the Queer said, "Can I at least have something to drink before I die?" The officers couldn't resist one last bout of torture. They filled a sponge on a stick with their urine and sent it up the Queer. When the Queer smelled the urine, the Queer refused it, and declared, "I am finished." The Queer bowed the Queer's head and died. The thousands of religious folk in attendance and the many religious folk watching live on local television cheered. The pastor of the Church of the Bible slapped hands with the pastor of the Church in the Village and said, "We have finally killed that inclusive queer shit!"

The other two victims on their crosses were still alive and asked for mercy. The officers shot them both in the head. "That will teach them to question the inerrancy of the Bible and the limited nature of heaven," declared the pastor of the Church in the Village. When the officers checked the Queer again, they realized the Queer was dead, one exceedingly queerphobic officer took a gun with a bayonet attached and

shoved it into the side of the Queer. Blood and water poured out the side of the Queer. The wound-fulfilled ancient prophesy of a last queerphobic wound and identified the Queer as the true Queer of God.

After all these events, a secret disciple of the Queer, Joseph of Krum, asked Pilate to be allowed to bury the Queer in a private cemetery in Fred Moore Park. Pilate agreed and the body was taken to the cemetery. Nicodemus, who first came to the Queer in secret, also came and financially made sure that the body of the Queer was properly embalmed. They took the body of the Queer and placed the Queer in an all white outfit. On top of the casket was a rainbow flag, representing the rainbow peoples of the world the Queer loved so much. In the private cemetery there was a garden, amidst the flowers they buried the Queer with just a few people present, as most lovers of the Queer were scared that they too were going to be the next buried.

20

Early on Sunday, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene set out for the grave of the Queer. She didn't live too far away

and thought the early morning walk would be good to calm her nerves. When Mary Magdalene arrived, she noticed that the ground was moved and the coffin was open. Completely unnerved, Mary Magdalene ran to the other side of town, were the disciples were hiding, to tell Peter and John. "They have taken my Queer, and I don't know where they have laid my Queer!" she managed to blurt out exasperated. Peter and John took off toward Fred Moore Park. John outran Peter and saw the open empty coffin. Looking in, John noticed the Queer's white clothes lying there folded. Peter ran up, diving into the coffin, Peter screamed, "Where is the Queer?" John got into the coffin as well and believed something supernatu ral was happening. The disciples returned to the hideout confused about what was actually going on.

Mary Magdalene stayed crying at the tomb, for she really loved the Queer. Feeling as if someone was watching her, she looked up and there were two angels standing at the coffin. They asked, "Why are you crying?" Mary Magdalene managed, "They have taken my Queer, and I don't know where they have laid my Queer." When she said this, she turned around and saw another familiar looking figure

standing there. The figure asked, "Why are you crying? Who are you looking for?" Unable to place exactly who it was and thinking it might be the gardener, Mary Magdalene answered, "Sir, if you know where the Queer is, just tell me." "Mary," replied the Queer affectionately. "Holy Shit!" replied Mary. "Don't grab at me. I have not yet ascended to God. Go to the disciples and tell them I am ascending to our God," remarked the Queer. Mary Magdalene ran to the disci ples and shouted, "I have seen the Queer!"

Later on in the evening, with the doors locked for fear of the religious folks, the Queer walked through the wall and said, "Peace!" After exchanging greetings, the Queer showed them the wounds. Then, and only after seeing the wounds, the disciples believed and rejoiced. The Queer declared, "I send you to share love and your wounds with others. After saying this, the Queer breathed the Holy Spirit onto them, "Receive the Spirit. Go and love. Forgive and speak of forgiveness. Bless the people and be a blessing."

Thomas was not present when the Queer showed up. So the other disciples told her what happened. "We have seen the Queer!" they declared. Thomas couldn't believe it and re-

marked, “Unless I put my finger where the nail pierced, see where the glow sticks and aluminum cans pierced the skull, smell the urine on the body, see the burns, and put my hand in the side, I cannot believe.”

A week later, as the disciples were sharing some drinks, the Queer came through the wall and stood amongst them. “Peace friends!” greeted the Queer. Then the Queer remarked to Thomas, “Sniff the urine, ok now put your fingers in these gashes on my head, touch my legs, feel the burns, now the hands, put your fingers in the holes, and now the side, put your fist in my side. Believe Thomas.” Thomas exclaimed, “You are my God!” The Queer replied, “You have believed because you have touched. Blessed are those who believe because they have learned to feel.”

The Queer did many signs and wonders in this place. Description of all the beauty that took place in Denton and else where during this time could not be contained in a million books. The present description is written so that you might know the depth and height of the love the Queer has for you, believe that the Queer is the child of God sent to save you and the rest of the world, and trust that, like the Queer, you can

use your wounds to find life in yourself and give life to others. Life flows from the Queer.

21

A short time after all of this magic, the Queer appeared again to the disciples at Lake Ray Roberts. The sighting happened in this way. Peter and six other disciples were all out on a camping trip and trying to get some rest away from the fears of Denton. Late one night, Peter declared, "I'm going fishing!" Everybody else declared, "We're going too!" They all loved going out fishing and spending the night on the boat. They had a few cans of beer and were having a pretty good time, but didn't catch anything.

Right after the sun came up, the disciples looked up and a fa miliar looking person was standing on the shore. They didn't know it was the Queer. "Friends, have you caught any fish?" remarked the Queer. They replied with a resounding, amused, and emphatic, "No!" The Queer said, "Well, put all the poles you have into the water right now." They did as they were told. Then fish started hitting the poles and jumping into the boat. There were fish going everywhere. The dis

ciples were worried the boat was going to sink and grew frightened. John then recognized the familiar figure and remarked to Peter, "It is the Queer." Peter couldn't contain himself and dove into the water as he was putting his bathing suit on. Swimming as fast as he possible could, Peter couldn't wait to reach the Queer. The other disciples were trying to get the boat and fish to shore.

Once they arrived, then went and sat down next to the Queer and a charcoal fire. The Queer was cooking some fish and bread. "Fresh fish is my favorite," remarked the Queer. Peter helped put everything together. The Queer asked, "Is everybody ready for breakfast?" No one spoke, they were all just in awe of the presence of the Queer. They all ate breakfast and felt completely whole in the presence of the Queer.

This was the third post-mortem appearance of the Queer.

After breakfast, the Queer said to Peter, "Do you love me?" Peter replied, "Yes, you know that I love you." The Queer replied, "Feed my people the bread of life." A second time the Queer asked Peter, "Do you love me?" Peter growing frustrated, "You know that I love you." The Queer replied,

"Take care of my people by sharing your wounds and healing the wounds of others." A third time the Queer asked Peter, "Do you love me?" Peter was hurt and replied, "You know ev erything and you know that I love you." The Queer replied, "Feed the people the sustenance of love. No matter your strength, ability, or level of belief, just follow me."

Peter turned and saw John had snuck up behind them to be close to the Queer and to eavesdrop. "What happens to that guy?" Peter jealously remarked. The Queer sharply responded, "What difference should that make to you? I will deal with him however I want. You, keep your eyes on me." The disciples learned much in this time about caring for themselves while not wasting time on negative thoughts about others.

We know that the words and testimony contained in this book are true, for the disciple who has written them has actu ally walked with the Queer. However, one must never forget that world cannot contain all the things that the Queer has done.

The Queer of Ponder is Jesus of Nazareth.

CONCLUSION

The Star Is Still Moving

The five books in this volume were published across six years in five forms: a nativity, a space fable, a campaign history, a field study, four gospels. They were never meant to share a spine.

Bound together, they show a habit. Hood cannot leave a doctrine in the air. Give him the incarnation, he will want the county. Give him the census in Luke, he will want to know which hotel turned the mother away. Give him a hospice with a mission statement, he will ask for the patient numbers by race.

The habit has a cost on the page. These books are uneven. Their author says so. One was written in a night with mistakes he says he could not prevent. One is a student project he would now write in stronger language. One prints a gover nor's slurs as the governor spoke them. Hood prints what he found.

The same years put Hood beside people the state was prepar ing to kill. That work is told in other books. Here it surfaces in a few lines: a Lord's Prayer for the incarcerated, a walk from Dallas to Fort Worth against the death penalty. The condemned stand in this volume where they stand in the Gospels, at the edge of the frame until the end, then at the center.

A reader who has come this far has met a God who is queer, a Christ who is ooze, a daughter of God born behind a dump- ster in Lubbock. Some will have put the book down. The nar rator of Drugged is locked in a ship for saying what he saw, then recants within a day.

Each of the five stops without settling. A Queer Christmas ends with a star still moving. Drugged ends on a fragment: And just like that. The history ends with two death dates. The study ends with a hope that its recommendations will be taken up. The gospels end by naming the Queer of Ponder as Jesus of Nazareth.

The star is still moving.

— The Editors