

# **“Appreciating Jesus” by members of a recent SCL class**

**March 17, 2013**



## **The 5th Sunday in Lent**

*The Word was brought by some of the participants in our recent School of Christian Living class, Appreciating Jesus. The text of some contributions is not yet available.*

### **“Jesus is my Savior” by Pat Conover**

Jesus has taught me, inspired me, led me to live my life in response to the lures of God: hope, creativity, grief, faith, responsibility, caring, solidarity, stewardship, calling, and more. When I fall short I have learned that the lures do not go away and that my punishment comes when I turn away. Jesus calls me and calls me back.

Jesus is distinctive but not special in some metaphysical sense. Jesus reveals what God looks like in human form and calls us to notice, explore, engage, and embody the lures of God so that we also can be transparent to the Divine Presence that calls everyone, Christians and everyone else. We are not given a special status of God’s approval because we are Christians but we can become very important to each other within Seekers, within the wider world of progressive

Christians, the yet wider of world of Christians, can become good news for all people, good stewards of the Earth and all its creatures.

We do not need the special approval of God because Jesus leads us toward understanding and appreciating the first creation story in Genesis: God's gifts of life and world are good gifts. That doesn't mean that life is supposed to be easy and fun all the time. We are saved as the human beings we are, saved before everything has been made right, saved before we become saints. We are saved as imperfect companions, imperfect helpers, imperfect teachers, imperfect healers, imperfect leaders, imperfect followers.

Paul makes this point clear in the 8th Chapter of Romans.

I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Jesus matters but we would never have known about Jesus if his imperfect followers with their imperfect concepts and doctrines, with their sometime terrible behavior, had not also passed along what matters, perhaps sometimes despite themselves. It is in the hearing of the Word of salvation, not just the speaking, that salvation begins to matter to us, begins to shape our relationships with each other. I'm trying to make my mistakes in the right direction.

It matters to me that Jesus was a distinctive and specific human being and not some cosmic force for good that visited the Earth. The lures of God are everywhere and for everyone but we discover them, respond to them, fight against them, and sometimes can only hope there is more than the darkness that sometimes clouds our deepest caring. We have to start walking our paths along the Christian Way from within the particular

moments and situations we live within, with the companions we have been given.

Not everyone welcomes us when we bear and show the good gifts of responsibility, honesty, deep listening, healing, and hope. Such things upset us and upset other people who have turned away from the lures of God toward the idols of our day and time, good things like money, recognition, skills, connections, that we turn into advantages, privileges, possessions, and pride. It can be hard when we see things that our friends do not want to see, do now want to hear about, do not want to admit. It can be hard to hold our tongues and wait for the moments when a healing word or touch will be welcomed. It is harder yet when we are held accountable for our failings and imperfections, when we have to accept the anger that can show up when it is our turn to hold each other accountable.

Jesus walked a very hard path to the cross. Other Christians have followed Jesus into the deep dark valleys without fearing evil but nonetheless to untimely deaths, unfair punishment, and abandonment. Faith leads us to keep on following Jesus not because we are promised Hollywood endings but because grief, even agony, cannot separate us from the love of God.