

# “Everyone Who Thirsts” by Kevin Barwick

March 24, 2013



## Palm/Passion Sunday

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We are still in the Lenten Season. As some of you might recall, a few weeks ago I opened my mouth and asked for some teaching around Lent, since I didn't grow up observing Lent. And Glen said that I could preach about it. So, I took him up on it, and here I am. I'm not up here only as an answer to Glen's call, but really from the place of wanting to embody my understanding of Christ's message to me, to us, i.e. to take up my cross and follow him.

Yes, Lent is a reminder, of sorts, of our deeper commitments to God. It's not meant to be how I was religiously shaped, i.e. don't dance, don't smoke, don't sex, don't burp, don't, don't, don't. It was never in the context of intentionally rearranging my life in order to focus on who I am in relation to who God is.

So, today, it bids us to ask questions like, Do we give up something or give in to something? Do we try harder or try less? Do we fight longer or surrender more? Do we do all these

things or none of these things? Lent suggests practices that deepen our experiences, and calls us to new realities of Christian faith, or what our beloved Gordon Cosby called it, *New realms of Being*. By the way, Debbie's and my introduction to the Church of the Saviour was through a class Gordon gave in 1981 on, I believe, *Work as Call*. That class was pivotal, in many ways, to how I began to view Lenten practices.

Today is the beginning of Passion Week, as some call it, and today being Palm Sunday. It's marked with what many call Jesus' Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem. It was, however, anything but "triumphal." We'll get to that in a minute.

But first let's look at the Scriptures...

It's interesting to me that Jesus sent his scouts out ahead of him. It plays with my imagination that they were on some rookie covert mission. "*Go into the city... you'll find an ass.*" Around DC, that wouldn't be too hard to find! "You'll find an ass tied up there. Your mission, if you choose to accept it, is to untie it and bring the ass to me. The rookies say, *Isn't that stealing?! If anyone asks you why you are doing this, tell them 'the Lord has need of it.'* The rookies say, *Got it.*

They went out and found the ass tied up by a doorway, just as they were told. I imagine they were trying to be the Pink Panther ("Stand in front of me.") They began untying it. Then suddenly, the owners of the ass (or what I would call, the ass-masters) said, "What are you doing untying the ass? The two disciples in code said, "Because-the-Lord-has-need-of-it." I can imagine the owners innocently looking at them. And then suddenly as if they remembered the secret code words, and let them have the animal. Amazing! Whoa!

It's similar to when Jesus was preparing for the Passover meal in Luke 22, "*As you enter the city... a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. The mission, if you choose to accept it, is when you see the man, follow him to his house. Then knock*

on his door and tell him, The-Teacher-asks:-Where-is-the-guest-room-where-I-may-eat-the-Passover-with-my-disciples? He will then show you a large room, fully furnished. The rookie scouts said, *Got it*. When it happened they were amazed! Whoa!

I have to admit that I am often amazed or surprised when things seem to happen as “planned or grace-filled.” Perhaps my rookie-like belief prevents me from walking in confidence. I would think by now, after being a Christian for four decades, I would know a thing or two about God’s provision and grace. Or maybe Spirit wants me to keep a child-like amazement of Her newness and beauty and surprises. WHOA! (Turn to your neighbor and say WHOA!.)

But back to the meaning of this week...I could talk about the historical events leading up to the death of Jesus. I could speak of the many interpretations of why Jesus offered himself as a sacrifice. We could sing hymns until our throats were sore. Those might be fun or necessary at times.

But, the reality is, at least 2000 years ago, that there were periods of time in Roman history when it was not uncommon for thousands of people to be rounded up and crucified, all around the city perimeter. I read that this public display of humiliation and torture sometimes had the Roman soldiers, in order to fit them on the crosses, had to crucify men and women in several different positions. Attempts of insurrection and political humiliation were quickly dealt with, alleviating Roman fear. The three main ways of instilling State terrorism was crucifixion, burning and left to be consumed by wild beasts. Kind of gross... It was not a place that you or I, who had a message, was safe to enter. Although, we tend to play it safe. This is precisely, however, where we are told to go, i.e. “Go into the city, take up your cross and follow him.”

As many of you know, I’m a big fan of Richard Rohr, a Franciscan priest, founder of the Center for Action and Contemplation. He reminds me a lot of our beloved Gordon.

Richard is often found reminding us to “die before you die,” while allowing ourselves to find tremendous joy in the journey. This tension, I believe is close to the heart of this Passion week.

In a minute, I’m going to invite you to make a public declaration of some aspect of what you want to die to. Perhaps, like me, you want to further die to the illusion of control (I want predictability, stemming back to a wound of not being able to trust). Or maybe you need to die to some form of denial. Or maybe you want to take on some new aspect of conscious living. Whatever it is, as a part of your Lenten practice, your dying before you die, I will invite you to come forward to the table, and find a stone. On one side you will find the word “Whoa” (newness, joy, surprises) while on the other side you will write a word capturing the essence of your Lenten practice. After sounding out your word for all to hear, the rest of us will join you with a resounding YES!, implying that you are beloved and we support you. You’ll then take it with you and return to your seat. Two or more can come up at the same time.

So, as we continue our Lenten practices, I invite you to “Enter into your city of death, *and* find your “Whoa.” Take up your cross and follow Christ” into those scary uncomfortable shadowy places, while knowing that you are truly loved by God and others. I encourage you to dig deep into your heart for your word or phrase, and let us join you in support of your journey. May it be so.

In light of this year’s Lenten theme, *Everyone Who Thirsts*, the Offertory is “The Deer’s Cry.” May it speak to you.

In closing, I’ll read my favorite poem from Hafiz, [“Into a Tree House”](#).