



seeking:
honest questions
for deeper faith

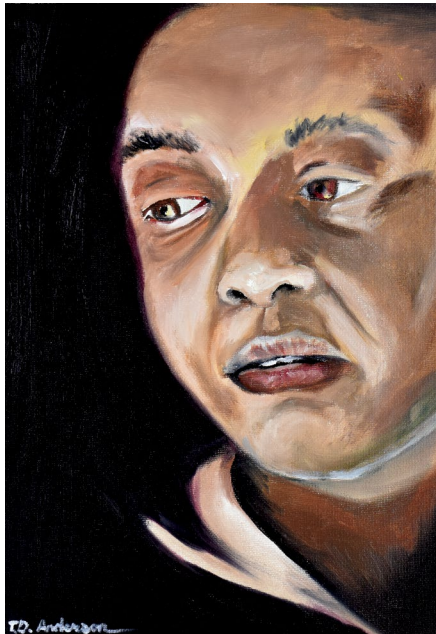
artist statements

FOR LENT-EASTER: YEAR A

While we hope viewers develop their own interpretations of the art we create, we offer these artist statements as theological reflections on our process creating these works. You are welcome to share these artist statements in worship bulletins, church newsletters, or online, and you may also incorporate them into sermons or worship liturgy (with credit).

ASH WEDNESDAY

seeking: *Is this the fast that I choose?*



DON'T LOOK UP

by T. Denise Anderson

Inspired by Isaiah 58:1-12

Oil on canvas

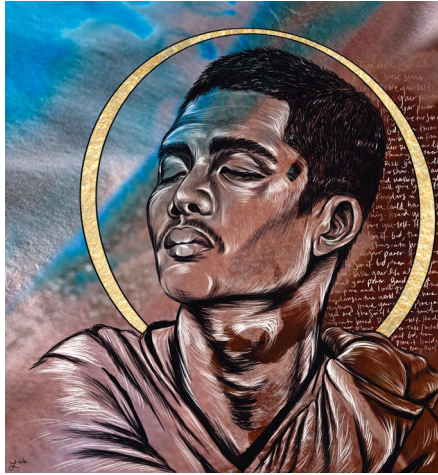
I love portraiture because I believe there is something deeply profound about our faces and what they can communicate. Few things are more beautiful to me than the shapes and shadows created in our faces by directional light. The pieces I have offered for this Lenten series attempt to show the drama that light and darkness create together on the human visage. Because I'm a person of color, I am careful to acknowledge how scripture's preference for light over darkness has historically been used against darker-skinned peoples. Therefore, I do not subscribe to a light/dark dichotomy that suggests one is preferable to the other. I believe light and dark work together to frame a specific part of the picture that needs our attention the most. In each of my pieces, light is coming from a specific direction and cooperates (not competes) with darkness to spotlight something.

The Isaiah text prophesies to a community preoccupied with religious observance that draws the gaze "upward" to God, but neglects the people and matters that are most important to God. God is not calling for fasts and religious rituals that only focus heavenward. As the community has focused on things above, they persist in injustice below. The people have exalted themselves above their kindred and wondered why God has not responded to them. Meanwhile, God is shining light on what they've neglected below—that is to say, their own community.

The person depicted here is fixing their gaze upon a light source that is just below and to the side of them. This is an invitation to stop elevating one's worship and oneself above one's siblings and peers, for it is there that God may be found. —Rev. Denise Anderson

THE FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT

seeking: *Who will you listen to?*



TUNE IN

by Lisle Gwynn Garrity

Inspired by Matthew 4:1-11

Silk painting with digital drawing and collage

In this image, the words of the Tempter hover in the background. The Tempter's voice lingers like a ringing in Jesus' ears, saying: "Take charge. Hoard your power. Dominate. Control."

Somehow, Jesus has deciphered that these words are simply background noise. He closes his eyes and goes inward, wrapping himself in a posture of self-embrace. From this introspective perspective, Jesus essentially says, "Get behind me, Satan."

The backdrop of this piece resembles the dust of the desert. Like sand washing along a beach, the sediment shifts into water in the top left, hinting at what bolsters Jesus in his ministry: his belonging to God. His belovedness washes over him, giving him the courage to defy the deception of the Tempter and tune into his inner wisdom. In this way, he is given a new song to carry with him, a lullaby from God that goes, "You, my child, in you, I am well-pleased." This is a melody for singing, a song for dancing.

What are the voices that linger with you like a ringing in your ears? What are the messages that try to deceive or devour you? Let those voices buzz and fade into the background. Close your eyes, tune in, and embrace yourself. From your belovedness, what song will you sing?

—Rev. Lisle Gwynn Garrity

seeking: *Who will you listen to?*



WHO WILL YOU LISTEN TO?

by Lauren Wright Pittman

Inspired by Genesis 2:15-17, 3:1-7

Digital painting

To give insight into my world when creating this piece, I was recovering from an unexpected postpartum surgery. I read the text, and then weeks of internal wrestling ensued. I felt angry, defiant, and it was all personal. Like a rebellious teenager, I poked holes in the text with hopes it would crumble; but why?

When we found out we'd be collaborating with Danielle Shroyer, one of my colleagues suggested her book, *Original Blessing*,¹ as a resource for my text study. I'm grateful for her work, because it helped me see why

this text felt so burdensome. In my early faith formation, this narrative was taught as the origin story explaining human nature, sin, suffering, and death. It was the text I thought of when I had menstrual cramps. I would mutter, "Thanks, Eve," under my breath, blaming her; but I realize I was also blaming myself for my own pain. It was the text that justified distrust in myself.

It turns out, I am not alone. Shroyer writes, "We make demands upon the text that it simply isn't willing to meet. And in terms of sheer volume, on a scale of pure expectation, there is perhaps no more loaded passage of scripture than Genesis 3."² So much of my faith was built on this text as though it was foundational in the first place, and consequently, much of my understanding of my faith, myself, and even the gospel itself was colored by this narrative.

While engaging with this text, the pain I was feeling in my body from childbirth complications felt like punishment. I raged against this text because I felt it raging against me.

Beware of the ways deeply-rooted, harmful theology bubbles up in your life. In this case, for me it surfaced as thoughts of shame, self-blame, self-distrust, self-deprecation, and self-hatred. Ask yourself, "Who will I listen to?" I was giving power to a hermeneutic that wasn't even in line with who God has revealed God's self to be, and the image of God that I bear.

I decided to create this piece in monochromatic cool tones, contrasting with the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil (in orange) and God's wisdom (in gold) surrounding them. In hindsight, I realize I was visualizing my emotional journey with the text. The cool tones represent the heaviness and confusion I felt with this familiar story, and the high contrast mimics the way this text has made me feel separate and isolated from God. The woman's expression holds the weight and the pain caused by the ways this text has been used to subjugate women and to prop up destructive doctrines and a distorted gospel.

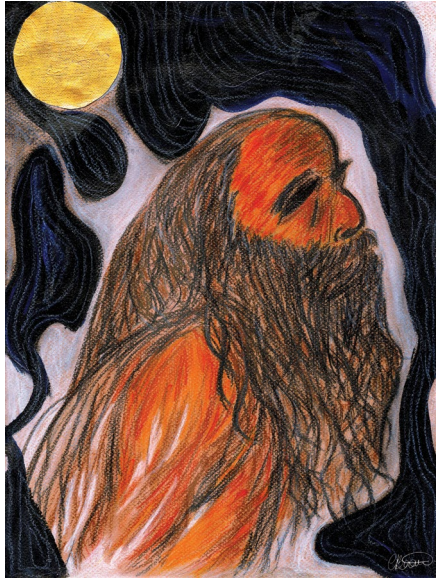
—Rev. Lauren Wright Pittman

¹ Shroyer, Danielle. *Original Blessing: Putting Sin in Its Rightful Place*. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2016).

² *Ibid.* 60.

THE SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT

seeking: How do we begin again?



RENACIMIENTO

by Carmelle Beaugelin

Inspired by John 3:1-17

Conté crayon, charcoal, acrylic, gold gild on paper

I was raised in a Spanish-speaking Pentecostal church in Miami called "Renacimiento." A simple translation of *renacimiento* to English means "rebirth" or "renaissance." For my small Pentecostal church, *renacimiento* meant far more than the symbolism of being "born-again" Christians. It was a perpetual reminder that each time the saints gather to encounter Jesus, the Spirit calls us to continuous transformation, calling dead things into new life and Holy Spirit-filled revival.

It is no wonder that Nicodemus seeks Jesus in the cover and darkness of night. It is in the quiet of night that our deepest fears startle us awake, that our anxieties of the day keep us from sound rest, and that the fear of the death of our dreams and bodies looms. As rapper Nas

wrote in his debut album, *Illmatic*, "sleep is the cousin of death."³

Yet Jesus challenges Nicodemus' seeking in the night with a call to be born again, to *renacimiento*. Not just improvement, but transformation. Not simply resuscitation of what is and was, but a complete resurrection of what could and will be.

In this image, a metaphorically disrobed, aging, and vulnerable Nicodemus, surrounded by the milky gray swirls of water and spirit, wonders: *How can this be? Haven't I reached past my benchmarks? How is it that you are calling me to begin again?*

We may see ourselves in Nicodemus today, holding the same questions in the sleeplessness of our darkest nights. Yet, what if we chose to hold fast to the faith that responds to our seeking? Jesus promises us that the winds and waters of the Spirit will lead us toward our own new beginning. Each of us will experience *renacimiento* if we dare to seek it.

—Carmelle Beaugelin

³ Nas. "N.Y. State of Mind." Track 2 on *Illmatic*. Columbia Records, 1994.

THE SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT

seeking: How do we begin again?



TO BE A BLESSING

by Hannah Garrity

Inspired by Genesis 12:1-4a

Paper lace and pencil over oil paint on paper

"I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing." —Genesis 12:2 (NRSV)

As I began to study this text, the motion we are in as a human species came to mind. God calls Abram. She tasks him with relocating; she's not really explicit as to why. Contemporary theologian Norman Wirzba speaks of our current ability to rely on global positioning systems, or GPS, to travel without needing to know where we are.⁴ What do people carry when they are forced to begin again? Medicine and technology, that's what people are carrying across borders right now as they sustain and navigate life through the journey ahead.

How did Abram begin again? He was wealthy. He was called, not forced. He traveled with his entourage. In this image, the globe subtly depicts the route that Abram and his wives, his children, his servants,

and his animals took. The lines of countries are suggested as they ripple outward. Tools for navigation used to read the stars and the shadows are echoed below the globe. Stars in the corners represent the twelve tribes of Israel.

How do we begin again? Through the paper lace, the book of Genesis overlays a canvas. The text is hard to read, clouded by oil paint. How do we begin again? Listen through the haze, through the clouded reality, for God's call. God is calling as we begin again.

"In you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." —Genesis 12:3 (NRSV)

Dear God, it doesn't feel like much of a blessing these days. We carry on in this journey, beginning yet again. We are called, like Abram—to navigate, to persevere, to be a blessing.

—Hannah Garrity

⁴ Wirzba, Norman. *This Sacred Life: Humanity's Place in a Wounded World*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021). 50.

THE THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT

seeking: *Will you give me a drink?*



LIVING WATER

by Lauren Wright Pittman

Inspired by John 4:5-42

Digital painting

In a quick Google image search of this story, I noticed that, in most of the art, Jesus and the Samaritan woman are almost never on the same level. In my piece, the positioning of Jesus and the Samaritan woman is inspired by the work of Karoline M. Lewis in her commentary on John. She introduces a fresh way of looking at this text, with a focus on their “mutuality of need.”⁵ Jesus needs water to drink, and the woman needs living water. She writes: “Jesus needs her to be a witness, and she needs Jesus to invite her into this new identity.”⁶

In this image, their body positioning is mirrored, with their eyes on the same plane. Where their arms overlap becomes a vibrant blue, creating a water drop with a dove in it, representing the living water that springs forth from their mutual need and relationship. Each of their clothing is patterned with the other’s need. In Jesus’ clothing are simplified “springs of water gushing up to eternal life” (John 4:14). In the Samaritan woman’s clothes, her water jar is positioned upright and poured out, representing her wrestling with whether she will interact with this man—and further, whether he is the awaited Messiah.

The image is subtly divided in half by slight shifts in color value. There is a chasm between them socially, culturally, religiously, etc. Referencing a primary dispute between the Jews and the Samaritans, their places of worship are in the background: on the left is the temple in Jerusalem, and on the right is Mount Gerizim.

In the center is the Samaritan woman’s vessel. We are not told whether she fills the jar or gives Jesus water, however, we are told that she leaves the jar behind. Her need is not the water in the well; her need is for grounding in a new identity,⁷ and to be seen for who she really is. She needs to not be defined by the worst parts of her life, the number of her husbands, or others’ assumptions, but to be seen through the lens of mutual need—to be seen as one of the first witnesses of the Messiah,⁸ and now a vessel of living water herself.

—Rev. Lauren Wright Pittman

⁵ Lewis, Karoline M. *John: Fortress Biblical Preaching Commentaries*. (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Publishers, 2014). 55.

⁶ *Ibid.* 56.

⁷ *Ibid.* 56.

⁸ *Ibid.* 60.

THE THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT

seeking: *Will you give me a drink?*



WET STONES

by Carmelle Beaugelin

Inspired by Exodus 17:1-7

Conté crayon, charcoal, acrylic, gold gild on paper

On a recent search to remedy dull kitchen knives, I found myself learning about wet stones. Sharpening a knife used to be called “whetting,” so to sharpen a blade was to “whet” it. Stones used for sharpening were called “whetstones,” or a “wet rock.” Natural whetstones are typically formed of quartz, but today can be formed into pumice stones from all kinds of materials. This interesting play on the words “wet” and “stone” led me to ask of this Exodus narrative, “In focusing on their perceived lack, how had the Hebrews’ trust in God begun to dull?”

In Exodus 17 we find the first encounter involving the Hebrews where a perceived lack of water, a necessary resource for survival, is in question. When collective despair and the threat of abandoning the journey to God’s promised land is aroused, God aids Moses in providing water

from rocks along the way. This fear of scarcity dulled the once sharpened faith of the community to the extent that they longed for their former life in Egypt where water was abundant but sipped under the oppression of slavery. How is it that seeking freedom could cost so much?

Like the Hebrews in the wilderness, our fear of scarcity may cause us to struggle in our confidence in God’s provision as we seek our own promises along our life’s journey. In seeking to quench our thirst, like the figures in this image, perhaps we may find the provision of God in the grace of relief and from unexpected places that sharpen our faith.

—Carmelle Beaugelin

THE FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT

seeking: *Who sinned?*



SON, RISE

by T. Denise Anderson

Inspired by John 9: 1-7

Oil on canvas

Jesus' community saw this man's blindness as a curse or a punishment for sin (either his parents' sin or his own). While it is true that blindness comes with challenges in a world made for sightedness, it is important that we do not problematize blindness in preaching and teaching this story the way they did. What happened here was an apocalypse—a revelation of the nature of Jesus and the heart and mind of God. That revelation challenged the epistemologies of the community, and it is the ones in the story who'd been sighted all along who were ironically unable to perceive what God was doing.

Jesus said that he "must work the works of him who sent me while it is day" (John 9:4). Daybreak is also an apocalypse of sorts; it reveals what we couldn't readily see at night and allows us to perceive the work in front of us. In my portrait, I've lit this man's face as if the earth and the sun's light are moving slowly across the surface, signaling the

dawn of a new day. His eyes remain closed in my portrait because, for me, his newfound sightedness is not the miracle or the most important part of this story. What's most important is the revelation of who Jesus is. Jesus has been revealed to this man in a way that even the witnesses around him could not comprehend. His encounter with Jesus raises him to a new life and offers the whole community a new understanding of God's works. It's a new day for everyone, though that proves to be a difficult gift to receive.

—Rev. Denise Anderson

THE FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT

seeking: *Who sinned?*



INSIGHT

by Lisle Gwynn Garrity

Inspired by John 9: 8-41

Silk painting with digital drawing and collage

In seven verses, the gospel writer tells us that a man born blind is given sight. But after that, the narrator devotes thirty-three verses to the details of disagreement that swell after the healing takes place. I used to find this second part of the story tedious and exhausting. In a world with constant conflict, I'm tired of listening to endless bickering.

However, this second half of the story makes me realize that this encounter is hardly about physical healing or literal blindness. It's about how harmful theology can prevent us from seeing people—truly seeing them. It's about how our narrow imagination can harden into

accusation and blame. It's about how we can be threatened by new ideas or shifts in someone's identity. It's about how our doctrine can lead to exile. Ultimately, it's a story about our resistance to change. Can this be a cautionary tale for us?

In this image, hands expressing denial and exclusion press in on the man. In the background, I wrote a barrage of questions I imagine emerging from the crowd: *Why did God heal you? What did you do to cause this? Who sinned?* Alongside those questions, I wove in contemporary statements I've heard spoken in situations when we think a tidy rationale will comfort us: *Everything happens for a reason. God only gives you as much as you can handle. Pray harder.*

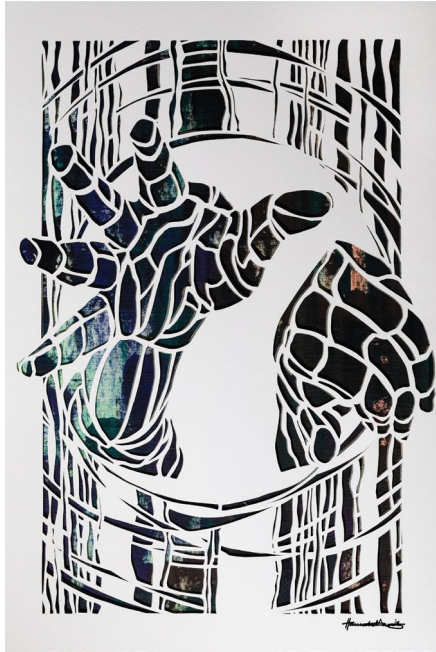
I wonder what this story would look like had better questions been asked. What if his neighbors had instead asked the blind man, "How do you feel?" What if the man had asked the crowd, "What are you afraid of?" What if the Pharisees had asked one another, "What if it's time to change?"

Surrounded by remnants of narrow vision, the man has new insight. He looks beyond the words, beyond the crowd, beyond the accusations driving him out of town. Can we seek understanding without denigrating or objectifying humans in the process?

—Rev. Lisle Gwynn Garrity

THE FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT

seeking: *Can these bones live?*



UNBIND HIM

by Hannah Garrity

Inspired by John 11:1-45

Paper lace over oil paint on linen

As I met with this text, I was drawn to Jesus' call for Lazarus to be unbound. To represent the fabrics used in preparation for burial, I wrapped a canvas in linen. You're not really supposed to do that. The canvas was already stretched and gessoed. It was ready to resist the oil paint medium I was applying. However, the texture of the binding cloth matters for this tactile text. I began to scrape the paint onto the woven strands. The linen fabric absorbed the paint as I scraped it on with a palette knife. In the final image, the linen shows through the paint and the paper lace design, representing the bindings.

Jesus' call for unbinding also includes the community. The foreshortened hands of the community, tasked with unbinding his body, reach in toward Lazarus. They reach through the concentric binding lines so that he can go free. Can these bones live?

In the strength of community, they can. The community made up of Jews, Gentiles, Samaritans, and others all joined one another at the tomb to grieve for Lazarus that day. They came to support Mary and Martha. Jesus arrives as the community mourns together. Jesus cries in his grief. Their collective tears create the backdrop for this paper lace design. This diverse and neighborly community is who Jesus calls on to do the unbinding. Jesus makes sure that the community knows about this miracle so that they can share the news. Can these bones live? Lazarus lives, and Jesus' miracle lives on in the telling.

—Hannah Garrity

THE FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT

seeking: *Can these bones live?*



RUBBLE

by Carmelle Beaugelin

Inspired by Ezekiel 37:1-14

Conté crayon, charcoal, acrylic, paprika paste, cinnamon

It has been over a decade since my family in Haiti experienced the most traumatic earthquake in the nation's history. If you were to Google, "Haiti" and "earthquake," images of collapsed concrete and rubble would emerge. The most disturbing images are those of survivors, covered in white and gray ash and rubble, reaching out for rescuers to salvage them from collapsed buildings. Endless images are found on the internet of arms stretched out, identity-less faces of horror covered in soot, and faces frozen into expressions of despair by the spectating photographer's lens.

When I think of Ezekiel and the story of the dry bones, I think of those images. I've often heard sermons where pastors position God's people as the prophet to call the world into life, but what about God's people

who are, as the bones, facing the despair of death? Their suffering is theologized away by those who consider themselves the righteous "Ezekiels" of the world, whose privilege weighs heavy on the bones of the suffering, like the concrete rubble in Haiti.

Rubble speaks to the realities of being made alive and yet not being allowed to live—a nameless multitude of God's people resurrected yet still bearing the scent of burial spices on their bodies.

Who are we in this story? Are we the bones seeking life? Do we perceive ourselves as spectators of suffering? Or will we choose to be participants in healing as active agents of God's resurrecting power out of the rubble?

—Carmelle Beaugelin

seeking: *Where are you headed?*



POWER PLAY

by Lisle Gwynn Garrity

Inspired by Matthew 21:1-11

Silk painting with digital drawing and collage

In their book, *The Last Week*, theologians Marcus Borg and John Crossman assert that there were actually two parades occurring simultaneously in Jerusalem on this day. From the east, Jesus entered on a donkey. From the west, the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate, entered with an imperial guard. They write: "Jesus' procession proclaimed the kingdom of God; Pilate's proclaimed the power of empire. The two processions embody the central conflict of the week that led to Jesus' crucifixion."⁹

This image is a meditation on these opposing processions and the embodiment of power. Pilate processes with a pompous display of armor, accompanied by soldiers. For him, power is displayed by superiority, elitism, and weaponry. Later in the week, he will use his power to satisfy the crowds willing Jesus to be crucified, despite not finding any offense to justify it (read John 18 & 19). He uses his power for violence, to appease the status quo.

Jesus enters the city on a donkey with her young colt in tow. He wears no armor, only soft linens. In this image, I imagine if the composition were expanded, Jesus would be kneeling, humbling himself before his disciples as he washes their feet. In Jesus' processional, members of the crowd lay down their coats as a display of humility and honor. This foreshadows the way Jesus will take off his outer robe and tie a towel around his waist to wash his friends' feet. Jesus embodies power through a posture of vulnerability, through caring for those who desperately need love.

Which parade you would join in Jerusalem has a lot to say about your definition of power. If you are quick to place yourself in Jesus' parade, I encourage you to pause and consider these questions honestly: When have you aligned yourself with systems or people who have used their power for violence or to uphold the status quo? When have you embodied power through vulnerability and love for your neighbor?

—Rev. Lisle Gwynn Garrity

⁹ Borg, Marcus J. and John Dominic Crossman. *The Last Week: What the Gospels Really Teach About Jesus' Final Days in Jerusalem*. (New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 2006). 2.

MAUNDY THURSDAY

seeking: *Will you wash my feet?*



BY OUR LOVE

by Hannah Garrity

Inspired by John 13:1-17, 31b-35

Paper lace over oil paint on gold leaf

"Yes, they'll know we are Christians by our love, by our love. Yes, they'll know we are Christians by our love."¹⁰

We know that the disciples and Jesus were constantly on the move, walking from one town to the next. The dust on their feet was surely ever-present. What is the meaning of the foot washing ritual? I find that it is a show of sacrificial love, a show of intimate care. In the art for this week, I visually explore the contrast between the structures of human power and the soft, sacrificial love of God.

Vertical, diagonal, and horizontal lines are found in architecture, in power grids, in city planning. Cold, glossy marble, gold leaf, cavernous ceilings with great height: these are the materials, the lines, of human power. In this image, vertical and diagonal lines place Jesus in a grand throne room. Yet the power he offers on this Maundy Thursday is not

a power understood by the cold, sharp, human power exhibited in the architecture.

By leaning down and washing the feet of his disciples, Jesus introduces a curve in the layout. Jesus' figure kneels over a bowl of water at the top of the stairs. This act of sacrificial love ripples like water through the lives of Jesus' disciples, from that year to this one. It is organic; it is mysterious. Ripples and edges intersect, expanding outward from the figure. The collision of human and heavenly power exhibits a daily phenomenon. Which power will you choose? Whose feet will you wash?

—Hannah Garrity

¹⁰ Scholtes, Peter. "They'll Know We Are Christians." © 1966 F.E.L. Publications, assigned to the Lorenz Publishing Company, 1991.

GOOD FRIDAY

seeking: *Why have you forsaken me?*



WHY HAVE YOU FORSAKEN ME?

by Lauren Wright Pittman

Inspired by Matthew 27:27-50

Digital painting

My research for this piece began with imagery of Christ's mockery. Image after image had contorted, almost inhuman, figures torturing Christ and reveling in brutality, while Jesus was at peace. It seems the artists depicted Jesus leaning hard into his divinity, almost transcending the embarrassment, abandonment, and pain, but all I could think of when I read the text was how devastating and lonely it is to be misunderstood and made to be a joke. I felt that, in the last moments of Jesus' life, he'd be thrust into his humanity.

An art piece that was particularly intriguing to me was *Christ of Saint John of the Cross* by Salvador Dalí. It has such a harsh downward angle on the cross; it visually connected me to Christ's mockery in a new way. It pushed me to consider different perspectives from which artists and people of faith have been engaging with this horrifying event, both physically and theologically.

One visual perspective I couldn't find was one looking directly down on Jesus's face. At first I thought of this as the ultimate position of mockery—looking down Jesus' nose during the most excruciating moments of his thirty-three years. Everyone mocked him. It must've felt like this mockery was closing in on him. I wonder what his internal world was like... Were there parts of him echoing the mockery of the soldiers, chief priests, scribes, elders, and bystanders?

As I began to sketch Christ from this perspective, my thoughts and feelings about the piece took a hard turn. I was thinking about the text as I was holding my five-month-old little boy. He had a fever and was inconsolable. I felt desperate to offer him comfort and solace; it felt like my heart was breaking open. And then it occurred to me: this perspective I was drawing was not a position of mockery, it was metaphorically the perspective of God the Creator looking at her son who was screaming out in agony. In order to find the expression on Christ's face, I referenced images of children crying; their expressions were raw, real, and unencumbered. This perspective shift reveals something profound to me about the heart of God, and I connect with it in a new way after becoming a mother.

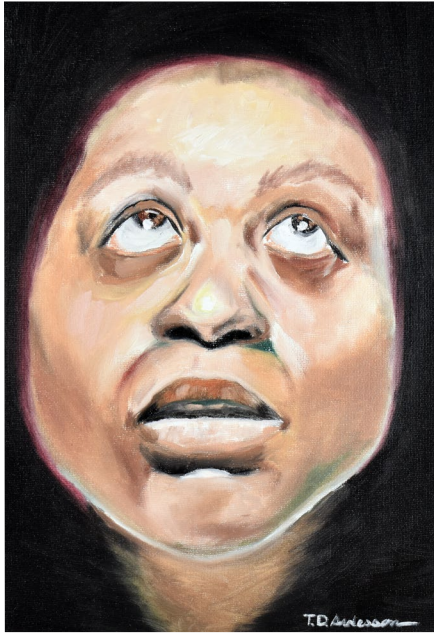
This image represents the deep lament of God. It holds the desperation of a parent and the betrayal of a loved one. These acts of abuse, cruelty, and indignity were fired at the Creator of the Universe by the very beings into whom God breathed life. Perhaps God is crying out to us, "Why have you forsaken me?"

One of my colleagues, Denise Anderson, reminded me that in Jesus' crying out, "*Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani,*" he is quoting scripture. So I read Psalm 22, and found lament woven with praise, and humanity dancing with divinity. Instead of creating a mandala with mockery closing in on Jesus, I imaged the verses of Psalm 22. These images of grief and gratitude ripple out from Jesus' mouth and become a foundation, a grounding in his faith in this moment. In the visual, the moments of lament are faded while the images of adoration and praise shimmer a bit more brightly. The psalm gives him the fortitude to rest, and to offer up his last breath.

—Rev. Lauren Wright Pittman

EASTER SUNDAY

seeking: *Who are you looking for?*



RABBOUNI!

by T. Denise Anderson

Inspired by John 20:1-18

Oil on canvas

In the days immediately after a loved one's passing, we often muddle through life until the closure of the funeral, when it will all—or mostly—be over. What happens when it doesn't appear you'll have that closure anytime soon, or ever? Some of us have experienced delayed burials due to difficult circumstances. The closure the funeral provides helps us begin piecing life together in our loved one's absence. Without that ritual, it's incredibly difficult to move on.

This is the space in which Mary Magdalene finds herself. She arrives at the tomb to provide burial services for her dear teacher, only to find his body is gone. What grief that must have thrown her into, having her last act of love for him arrested like that! There is no reason to expect that the stranger speaking to her is her beloved teacher, and maybe that's why she doesn't recognize him immediately. It's in the intimacy of him calling her name that she realizes what's happening.

Here, I attempt to convey the grief, befuddlement, and ultimate realization that I imagine Mary experienced in this encounter. The light source is above her, as Jesus' simple address—"Mary"—invites her to shift from any potential navel-gazing and to pay attention to the heaven-crafted phenomenon before her. Moreover, Jesus' address to her comes from a deeply intimate place and is the only thing powerful enough to pierce through her grief. She is profoundly seen and known by her teacher. I want us to behold her the way that Jesus might have in that moment.

—Rev. Denise Anderson

about the artists



Rev. T. Denise Anderson

Denise (*she/her*) is a minister in the Presbyterian Church (USA) and the Director for Compassion, Peace and Justice Ministries at the Presbyterian Mission Agency. A graduate of Howard University School of Divinity, she is the former Co-Moderator of the 222nd General Assembly (2016) of the Presbyterian Church (USA). tdandersonart.com



Carmelle Beaugelin

Carmelle (*she/her*) is a Haitian-American visual artist, Human-Centered Design Consultant, and "holy cheerleader" based in Princeton, NJ. Her creative focus includes abstract impressionism/expressionism painting inspired by Afro-Latin Caribbean art styles and Christian spirituality. She is the Founder and Lead Curating Artist at BeauFolio Studio, an emerging arthouse at the intersection of sacred art, human-centered design, and restorative equity. carmellebeaugelin.com



Rev. Lisle Gwynn Garrity

Lisle Gwynn Garrity (*she/her*) is a Pastorist (pastor + artist), retreat leader, and creative entrepreneur seeking to fill the church with more color, paint, mystery, and creativity. She founded A Sanctified Art with the conviction that, in order to thrive, the church needs more creative expression and art-filled freedom.



Rev. Lauren Wright Pittman

Lauren (*she/her*) is an artist, graphic designer, and theologian. She uses paint, metallic inks, and Apple pencil to image the layered complexity she experiences in scripture texts. She also helps faith communities share their vibrant stories through branding & design services.



Hannah Garrity

Hannah (*she/her*) is an artist and an athlete, a daughter and a mother, a facilitator and a producer, a leader and a teammate. She is a Sunday school visual choir facilitator at Second Presbyterian Church in Richmond, VA, an art in worship workshop leader wherever she is called, and a liturgical installation artist at the Montreat Conference Center, Montreat, NC.