

**A Testimony from Paradise
(DisMuch BarIvan)**

Pastor Peter Hiett

March 27, 2005

[Peter walks into the Banquet Hall wearing dreadlocks, sunglasses, island attire, and singing as Bob Marley's One Love is playing in the background.]

*One love, one heart
Let's get together and feel all right
Hear the children cryin' (One love)
Hear the children cryin' (One heart)
Sayin,' "Give thanks and praise to the Lord
and I will feel all right."
Sayin,' "Let's get together and feel all right."
.."*

*Let them all pass all their dirty remarks
(One love)
There is one question I'd really love to ask
(One heart)
Is there a place for the hopeless sinner
Who has hurt all mankind just to save his
own?
Believe me*

It's dark in here. I can't hardly see anything. Where I come from it's super bright. [Peter takes off the sunglasses.] Now I can kind of see you. Hey, you all look really nice.

You'll have to pardon my attire, but where I come from there is a strict dress code... ultra casual.

You see, I come from paradise. Technically, I was the first to enter paradise. I got dibs on first Easter. I'm what you call the thief on the cross. That's right, thief, murderer... not much of a Sunday School flannel graph kind of guy. That really bugs the religious types. I didn't do one religious, good deed to get in.

I got saved naked, nailed to a cross.

I wasn't baptized.

I never went to a new member class.

I never gave to the building program.

I didn't own one stitch of double knit polyester.

And I ain't never been to a potluck.

(At least your kind of potluck.)

I was totally last, and I got there first. That bugs people, so they made up stories about me. One story was that I was like Robin Hood—stealing from the rich to give to the poor (sadly, I kind of believed that one myself).

One story was that I saved baby Jesus from the captain of our robber band because baby Jesus was so precious, compared to the other ugly babies. So Jesus saved me because I saved Him. So I earned it.

See, they all try to make me good,
which is evil.

According to some of your ancient manuscripts, my name was Dysmas. Actually, it was "DisMuch," that's what the guys called me because I disrespected everybody. DisMuch BarIvan (Bar means "son of" and Ivan was my dad).

DisMuch BarIvan from Galilee, born along about 0. I had one brother and, like all good Jewish boys, I loved my mama and feared my papa.

As kids we spent all our time playin' games in the fields around our house. I especially loved to play hide-n-seek. My favorite hiding place was in a culvert under the Roman road that bordered our farm. It was dark and spooky, and my brother was afraid to look. So sometimes he'd just give up, and I'd come home crying sayin', "No one looks for me." My mama said, "Sweetheart, that's how God feels. He hides and no one seeks Him."

Every night, Mama would tell us stories, mostly from the Tanakh (your Old Testament). My favorites were about the God-man. He met Joshua when the Israelites entered the promised land. Joshua said, "Are you on our side or their side?" The God-man said, "No. As commander of God's army, I have come.

It was the God-man that wrestled with Jacob, the liar, all night long at the edge of the promised land and gave him the name, Israel.

The prophet said one day Israel would have a new name. My mama said she thought the God-man would give it to us. I wondered how he could wrestle a whole nation.

We were all waiting for the Messiah. We figured he'd at least wrestle the Romans and give us back our land.

Well, every night, she'd tell me stories, kiss me goodnight, and help me pray, "Lord, Elohim, into your hands I commit my spirit." Every night. Even the last night. I was 10.

My parents had given some food and shelter to Judas, the Galilean, and some of his Zealots. I think that's why it happened.

I woke to screaming. It was the sound of my mama being raped and murdered by a Roman Centurion. They'd already slit my papa's throat and were doing the same to my brother. They burned our village to the ground. I escaped and hid in my culvert.

For a week I didn't come out.

I drank from the ditch. I wept and gnashed my teeth. I would fall to sleep every night crying, "My God, why have forsaken me?"

I hid and none found me.

None looked for me.

No one knew, I thought.

A day came when I stopped weeping, and I didn't weep again for thirty years.

I'd come out of the culvert at night to scavenge food and sometimes steal, but my home became the darkness under the highway. I loved it, and I hated it.

I loved it because I was in control.

I was king, and no one could find me.

I hated it because no one could find me.

I was king, but king of darkness and mud.

After two winters and three summers in the culvert, I left the darkness, but the darkness didn't leave me. I fell in with a group led by a fellow named Jesus... Barabbas.

Jesus was a common name back then. Basically it means, "savior." Some of your best old manuscripts record that Barabbas' first name was Jesus. Jesus BarAbbas—Jesus "son of the father" or "son of the rabbi."

Jesus Barabbas was very religious, violently religious.

Your Bible calls us “lēstēs” from the Greek root word for “take.” We believed in taking the kingdom from the Romans. Your Bible translates “lēstēs” as “thief.” We preferred “revolutionary” or “patriot.” The Romans would use the word “terrorist” or worse.

Now I had also heard of Jesus barJoseph, the Nazarene. He talked about the kingdom too. His name meant “savior,” too. But when people started whispering Jesus was Messiah, we’d just laugh out loud because He said stuff like, “Blessed are you persecuted for the kingdom belongs to you. Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth.”

We’d say, “They better inherit it because that’s the only way they’re gonna get it.”

People said Jesus the Nazarene worked miracles.

I, of all people, knew miracles could be faked.

People said He fulfilled prophecy.

I only knew but one prophecy.

People said He was good.

The Pharisees said they was good.

What was good?

Our rabbis said, “One road leads to paradise, but a thousand lead to hell.”

I’m thinking, “What are the odds of an illiterate, orphan, thief, like me, finding that one path to paradise? I better just make the best of hell.”

So I believed that if there was a savior, his name was Jesus Barabbas.

And we believed the kingdom must be taken, not
inherited.

And we believed a soldier deserved his wages.

So we'd take our wages: from Romans, Samaritans, and
bourgeoisie Jews.

And we'd take our wages from women...

Rape and murder were not out of the question.

Sometimes the screaming...

The screaming would remind me of my mother
and the Roman Centurion long ago.

Fighting the dragon, had I become the dragon?

Was I always the dragon?

I'd hide that thought deep in the dark place...

that culvert in my soul.

I was too terrified to see it—see myself in the light.

"I'm a victim," I'd say.

Victims can justify anything.

To stay a victim,
you must never forgive
or believe you're forgiven.

Just take and take.
Hiding the darkness with more darkness.

I was king
of the kingdom of my own darkness,
surrounded by kings
of the kingdoms of their own darkness.

A thief among thieves,
with a thief's heart.

We all have a thief's heart, a taker's heart...
Barabbas and me used swords to take.
The Romans used armies to take.
Herod used politics to take.
The Pharisees used religion to take
God and His kingdom.

But we all have a taker's heart.
We inherited it from the paradise garden long ago when we
took the fruit to be in control, then we hid.

We all have thieves hearts,
even if we hide them.

I don't mean to dis-much or disrespect you fine folks, but I saw your parking lot on the way in. Do you realize that with just one of those cars out there, you could feed a family for a lifetime that might otherwise starve to death living in a culvert somewhere on the other side of the world? But that's "the other side of the world." You must prefer a fine car in your world, your kingdom.

And now you say, "Dismuch, I earned that car. I didn't steal it like you and your thief buddies. I earned it!"

Oh, yeah? You earned it with what?

"I earned it with my sweat and my blood," you say.

Well, did you earn your sweat and your blood? Did you make your sweat and your blood? Did you make you?

No, God made you,
 and your sweat,
 and your blood,
 and your next breath.

The truth is
 you stole your car,
 you stole your house,
 your sweat,
 your blood.

You stole you. And lied to yourself that you earned you and all those things you call yours, including your husband, your wife, your kids, your friends.

You think you earned them and so they belong to you and you're in control so you can try to cram them into your kingdom, your heart, which is really rape and murder in your heart...

 turning them into things for you to consume in
 your kingdom of darkness and mud under the road.

 That kingdom you love, but you hate.
 Like you love and hate yourself.
 Because you're addicted to yourself.

And now, if you feel all bad, you might get religious on me...

 maybe give 10%, but only so you can take 90%,
 maybe give to the poor, but only to make
 yourself feel good, look good in God's image...
 take God and capture His paradise.

That's what most religion is.
That's what sin is.
That's what they tried in the paradise garden long ago...
 take God with stolen goods, stolen fruit.

What are we trying to do? Kill God and stuff Him
into our dark little kingdom under the road? Conquer God?
Who could conquer God?

Now please listen, I don't mean to dis you, to
disrespect you, I just want to point out the heart of a thief.
You got one. Your pastor's got one. I had one... even
before my family got murdered, I had a thief's heart. It was
just hidden in civility, religiosity, family values.

I loved my family—but not really. I liked 'em, but I
couldn't really know them and receive them... only what
they meant to me, how they tasted to me. I liked 'em like I
liked figs and raisins, bread and wine—to take, to eat, to
consume. But that's not love. Love is giving. And the
giving is the greatest receiving.

Later on, I called myself a religious patriot.
 But I didn't love Israel; I used Israel.
 I didn't love God; I used God.
 (In fact, I secretly wished Him to hell,
 my hell, under the road.)

I didn't love anyone; I used everyone.
I didn't even love me. I so loved myself, I hated myself...
the king of all I could see, but all I could see was darkness
and mud, fear and loathing.

Of course, I couldn't see all of this then. I hid the
darkness in more darkness anger, vengeance, religion,
patriotism, my cause, my wounded me.

I hid the darkness until that day the light shone in my darkness. I hated the light, but that day, I couldn't run, and I couldn't hide. I was nailed to a cross, naked, next to the light.

I woke that morning to the sound of a mob screaming. It was Passover week. Hundreds of thousands had come to Jerusalem. At the start of the week, Jesus the Nazarene had entered the city. The crowd went wild. He could have taken the city by force, but He didn't.

So a few days later, me and Barabbas and Gestus organized an insurrection. Some people died, and now we were imprisoned in Pilate's Praetorium.

Well, I put my ear to a crack in the wall of the prison. I heard Pilate scream, "Who do you want? Jesus Barabbas or Jesus Christ? Do you want Savior BarAbbas or Savior Messiah?"

Good question: What do you want?

Flesh or Spirit?

Taking or giving?

Darkness or light?

This world or the next world?

Conquest or love?

Jesus Barabbas or Jesus Messiah?

They chose Barabbas.

Now, could I be honest with you fine folks for a minute? Your pastor is kind of a weenie. He really is. Raise your hands if you know that. (Go ahead. Larry, take a picture. We'll tell 'im it's an evangelism photo, and it's a "My pastor's a weenie photo.")

But seriously, he really is. I mean, he's scared to say this stuff. Insecure. First of all, because he's guilty himself of this stuff. Second of all, he gets ripped on for speakin' this stuff.

But your pastor ain't here, and I ain't scared no more, so I'm gonna say it. Exceptin' the miraculous grace of God, you would've picked Jesus Barabbas, too, and maybe you still are.

You know, if our insurrection would've been a success, and we liberated Israel, we'd be famous revolutionaries, kosher George Washington's and Paul Revere's.

"The British are comin'. The British are comin'." Big deal. Try the Romans. They won't just shoot ya; they'll crucify ya.

So we chose Jesus Barabbas over Jesus Messiah. I bet you would've, too. The high priest even yelled, "We have no king but Caesar."

We chose Barabbas and Caesar...
terrorists and politicians.

No matter which side you was on, either side was ultimately about taking,
but Jesus Messiah wouldn't stop giving.
(It's like the whole world wouldn't stop taking, and so Jesus Messiah said, "Take me, consume me, eat me.")

They flogged him to within an inch of His life. Then they came and got us, slapped crosses on our backs and told us to march. That's when I first saw Him. He was

so disfigured, I barely recognized Him. Jesus was covered in spit, blood, and dirt.

I was shocked at how they hated Him.

I hated Him, too.

I couldn't wait to hear Him whimper.

(I knew from experience that affliction exposed men's dark hearts, either in "weeping" or "gnashing of teeth.")

I figured Him to be a groveling weeper.

And then, all at once, I heard Him speak.

"Women don't weep for me.

Weep for yourselves and your children."

That rattled me,

and I hated Him more

'cause I think I loved Him a little.

At the hill, they pinned me down. A Roman Centurion drove a nail through my wrist and deep into the wood. Fire shot up my arm and exploded in my brain.

When I came to, I was gasping for air, hanging by my wrists, pushing up on a piece of fire pounded through my feet. On a cross, that's the only way you can breathe.

The crowd was there, mocking. Gestus was on the other side of Jesus, and Jesus was speaking to a woman and to a young man.

"John, your mother, and Mother, your son."

And He prayed,

"Father forgive them."

Words are few when spoken from a cross, and these
were the words Jesus chose.

Gestus chose insults, and so did I.
It was all I had left to hide in.

I pushed up on the fire in my feet and yelled, “Hey,
king, where’s your kingdom?”

He turned and looked at me.
And the look undid me.

One look from a cross is worth a million
words, and He was The Word.

He knew me...
past the anger and into the darkness
in the culvert
and now on the cross.

He knew me...
and He would not retaliate against me.
He would not take from me, like I tried to
take from Him.

He was the deepest ocean, undiminished by me.

He gazed at me...
I wanted to run, but I was pinned down.
I wanted to hide, but I was utterly naked.

His gaze hurt more than my cross.
My cross wasn’t my judgment.
It just pinned me down,
so I couldn’t run from my judgment.

His gaze was my judgment.
 It was killing me.
 It was destroying me.
 Like light destroys darkness, and
 the darkness was me.

It was the light of the knowledge of the glory of God,
 shining in the face of Christ.

God is love, and
 Jesus crucified is love revealed.

So, more than a miracle,
 more than a prophecy,
 more than a good deed,

I had come face to face with Love Himself.

Just then, Gestus screamed with the mob, “Prove Yourself, Messiah!”

And I thought, “He just did!”

Then Gestus screamed, “Messiah, get down. Save Yourself and save us.”

I thought, “No!” If He saved us like Barabbas saved us, like Gestus wanted Him to save us, the Light would be gone, and we’d still be trapped in hell.

I gasped, “No!” And then I said, “Gestus, don’t you fear God, even when you’re dying? We deserve this, but He does not.”

Now, at this point, I had nothing to give Jesus but my kingdom of darkness and mud. I didn’t know if Jesus had anything left to give me but His self.

But I knew He was good,
 and He was Light and Life,
 and I loved Him.

And I wanted to be with Him in His kingdom,
 even if it was a kingdom of crosses,
 even if it was a culvert under a road,
 for wherever He was, it would no longer be dark.

I muttered, "Jesus, remember me when You come
 into Your kingdom." "Your kingdom," I said...

At that His head snapped around like a hound dog
 to a scent. His eyes locked on me, like I was a treasure He
 just found buried in a field or stashed in a culvert.

He pushed up, gasped for air, and said, "Truly,
 today, you will be with Me in paradise."

And I wept.

Thirty years worth of tears, I wept.

A river of life on a cross, I wept.

Then, get this, in the worst way, I wanted off that cross,
 so I could pick one up *for Him*,
 die *for Him*,
 be baptized *for Him*,
 feed poor people *for Him*,
 buy polyester, go to church potlucks *for Him*.

Well, He saw my new heart; He'd given it to me.
 But what of the old one?

By now, the sky had grown dark. The air was dark.
 It was the outer darkness and the presence of the prince of
 darkness.

I never spoke with Jesus again in this world, but I
 watched Him. For three hours, I watched Him. It was like

every murder, every rape, every fear, every shame was on Him, and He was wrestling.

All the old stories flooded my mind and heart. I remembered the God-man. I thought, It's Him. He's not on Israel's side or Rome's side, but as the commander of God's army, He has come. He's wrestling the darkness and the lies out of His people at the edge of the promised land, the edge of paradise.

But why now? Why here? Next to me?

Just then, the earth began to shake. Jesus eyes' opened in terror, He screamed as if from the very pit of hell, "My God, my God, why have You forsaken Me?!"

And then I knew. That was my cry from the culvert under the road.

I remembered the one prophecy, and I was in it. Isaiah 53:12, "He was numbered with the transgressors, and He bore the sin of many."

I was the transgressor.

God knew about the culvert all along.

He had descended into the culvert *for me*.

He had come to the cross *for me*.

He let Himself be conquered *by me, for me*.

He had been damned to hell *for the love of me*.

(I was hiding in hell, Sheol, and He'd come seeking me. I did not seek Him, but He sought me!)

He would not stop loving me.

I screamed, "Jesus!"

And He cried, "It is finished."

Head dropped, body ripped, and with His dying breath, He said, “Father, into Your hands I commit my Spirit.”

A Roman Centurion fell to his knees and said, “Surely, this was the son of God.” And for the first time, I loved a Roman, like “one love, one heart, let’s get together.”

I vaguely remember these words in Latin, “This one’s still alive,” then a crushing blow to my shins. I could no longer inhale. I could no longer take air, only give. With my dying breath, I exhaled, “Jesus, into Your hands I commit my spirit.”

Now, it’s almost impossible to tell you what happened next... but I inhaled Easter. I was forever found. Remember the thrill of being found? But it was better than just that, better than “Hide-n-Seek.”

Remember “Sardines,” the game “Sardines?” In Sardines, the person who is it, goes and hides, and everybody goes looking for them and then hides, too. Sometimes we played Sardines. When my mama was it, she’d always hide in my culvert, then my papa, then me with them... all of us together crammed in the back of that dark, muddy space under the road, gigglin’ and pokin’.

My little brother was scared to even look inside, until one of us would laugh out loud. Then he’d look into the dark culvert and find that everything he loved was hiding in that place of fear...

like a party in a tomb,

like the inside was bigger than the whole outside.

It was the closest thing to paradise I ever experienced on earth.

One of the rabbi's used to say, "I think old God is a sardine player and will be found the same way everybody gets found in Sardines, by the sound of laughter of those heaped together in the end."

Well, I couldn't hear the laughter. That was the problem. So Jesus, my big brother, came to me. I saw the laughter in His eyes as He hung next to me in darkness.

Faith, hope, love, truth...
in the darkness.
"The Light shines in the darkness."

He found me and gave me courage to look into my darkness and surrender my dark kingdom that I might receive His kingdom. And this is wild, but it's like that kingdom was there all along... at hand, Mama, Papa, faith, hope, love, truth.

I just couldn't take it,
 'cause you can only receive it as a gift.
I wouldn't receive it,
 'cause I couldn't take it, control it.
 I couldn't fit it into my dark little heart.
And so, I wouldn't and couldn't find the path,
 but the path found me.

He descended into my hell.

And He made Himself the door to paradise:
All things made new, Mama, Papa, brothers, sisters, Israel,
 creation, and me...
 Easter forever!

Well, the door to paradise is with us right now.

On the night He was betrayed, He took bread and broke it saying, “This is my body, broken for you. Take and eat.” And in the same manner after supper, He took the cup and said, “This is the new covenant in my blood, shed for the forgiveness of sins. Drink of it, all of you, in remembrance of me.”

Come to the table. Surrender your kingdom of darkness and mud. Say, “Jesus, remember me when you come into Your kingdom.”

Tear off a piece of the bread and dip it in the cup, and receive the Light, the Gate, the Way into your darkness.

I know this door looks terrifying, a cross—body broken, blood shed—and some of you are afraid to look, but there’s an entire new creation hidden on the other side.

[Peter singing...]

One love, one heart

Let’s get together and feel alright

Have pity on those whose chances grow thinner,

There ain’t no hiding place

from the Father of creation...

no hiding place

from the Father of creation

[The worship band plays, In Christ Alone.]

In Christ Alone by Keith Getty / Stuart
Townsend

In Christ alone my hope is found
He is my Light my strength my song
This Cornerstone this solid ground
Firm through the fiercest drought and storm

What heights of love what depths of peace
When fears are stilled when strivings cease
My Comforter my all in all
Here in the love of Christ I stand
In Christ alone who took on flesh
Fullness of God in helpless Babe
This gift of love and righteousness
Scorned by the ones He came to save
'Til on that cross as Jesus died
The wrath of God was satisfied
For ev'ry sin on Him was laid
Here in the death of Christ I live

There in the ground His body lay
Light of the world by darkness slain
Then bursting forth in glorious day
Up from the grave He rose again
And as He stands in victory
Sin's curse has lost its grip on me
For I am His and He is mine
Bought with the precious blood of Christ

No guilt in life no fear in death
This is the pow'r of Christ in me

From life's first cry to final breath
 Jesus commands my destiny
 No pow'r of hell no scheme of man
 Can ever pluck me from His hand
 'Til He returns or calls me home
 Here in the pow'r of Christ I'll stand

No pow'r of hell no scheme of man
 Can ever pluck me from His hand
 'Til He returns or calls me home
 Here in the pow'r of Christ I'll stand

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Worship leader: "He is risen!"
 Congregation: "He is risen indeed!"

But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they went to the tomb, taking the spices that they had prepared, and they found the stone rolled away from the tomb. But when they went in, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. While they were perplexed about this, behold, two men stood by them in dazzling apparel, and as they were frightened and bowed their faces to the ground, the men said to them, "Why do you seek the living among the dead? He's not here. He's risen." Amen.

Easter is a gift. And all that God asks of you is that you would receive it, that you would receive Him. Yet in order to receive Him, you must surrender your darkness because He is the light.

And if you came forward this morning and had communion, whether it's your first time or you've had it a million times, and you took that piece of bread and juice with just a little bit of faith, just a mustard seed of faith, the Light descended into the darkness, and the darkness cannot overcome it. Believe the Gospel, in Jesus' name. Amen.

If you'd like prayer, we have a prayer ministry team, and they would love to pray with you. They'll be in the back. In Jesus' name, believe the Gospel, and have a great Easter. Amen.

Our Guest Speaker:

We really don't know his name. The apocryphal gospel, The Acts of Pilate, from the middle of the 4th century A.D., records that his name was Dysmas and that his companion's name was Gestas. Our gospels simply refer to him as a "criminal" and a "thief" or "robber." The word translated thief or robber is the Greek word, *Lēstēs*, from the root word for "take." A *lēstēs* robbed in the open as opposed to a *klēptēs* that robbed in secret. *Lēstēs* is also translated "brigand," "rebel," or "revolutionary."

In John 18:40, Barabbas is called a *lēstēs*. In Matthew 27:16, he is referred to as a "notorious prisoner," which can also be translated "famous captive." Mark records in 15:7 that Barabbas committed "murder in the insurrection." It's probable that Barabbas was a Zealot, one of the political revolutionaries who wanted to liberate Israel from Rome. The Zealots were established by Judas the Galilean (Acts 5:37) in A.D. 6 when Judea was incorporated as a province of Rome.

Some of our best ancient manuscripts of Matthew 27 record that Barabbas' first name was "Jesus." Jesus was a common name. Jesus is the Greek form of Joshua, meaning God saves. So when Pilate asked the crowd to pick Jesus or Barabbas, he most likely asked, "Do you want Jesus Barabbas or Jesus called Messiah?" That is, "What Jesus, what savior do you want? A political revolutionary or the one they call Messiah?"

We don't know if the thief on the cross was directly associated with Barabbas or not, but they both are called *lēstēs*, and both were condemned to die at the same time.

Relevant Texts:

Therefore I will divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he poured out his soul to death, and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

Isaiah 53:12 (RSV)

Now at the festival the governor was accustomed to release a prisoner for the crowd, anyone whom they wanted. At that time they had a notorious prisoner, called Jesus Barabbas. So after they had gathered, Pilate said to them, "Whom do you want me to release for you, Jesus Barabbas or Jesus who is called the Messiah?" For he realized that it was out of jealousy that they had handed him over.

Matthew 27:15-18 (NRSV)

So Pilate gave sentence that their demand should be granted. He released the man who had been thrown into prison for insurrection and murder, whom they asked for; but Jesus he delivered up to their will. And as they led him away, they seized one Simon of Cyrene, who was coming in from the country, and laid on him the cross, to carry it behind Jesus. And there followed him a great multitude of the people, and of women who bewailed and lamented him. But Jesus turning to them said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For behold, the days are coming when they will say, 'Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bore, and the breasts that never gave suck!' Then they will begin to say to the mountains, 'Fall on us'; and to the hills, 'Cover us.' For if they do this

when the wood is green, what will happen when it is dry?" Two others also, who were criminals, were led away to be put to death with him. And when they came to the place which is called The Skull, there they crucified him, and the criminals, one on the right and one on the left. And Jesus said, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." And they cast lots to divide his garments. And the people stood by, watching; but the rulers scoffed at him, saying, "He saved others; let him save himself, if he is the Christ of God, his Chosen One!" The soldiers also mocked him, coming up and offering him vinegar, and saying, "If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!" There was also an inscription over him, "This is the King of the Jews." One of the criminals who were hanged railed at him, saying, "Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us!" But the other rebuked him, saying, "Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we are receiving the due reward of our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong." And he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." And he said to him, "Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise."

Luke 23:24-43 (RSV)

Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour. And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, "Eli, Eli, lama sabach-thani?" that is, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

Matthew 27:45-46 (RSV)

It was now about the sixth hour, and there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour, while the sun's light failed; and the curtain of the temple was torn in two. Then Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said, "Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit!" And having said this he breathed his last. Now when the centurion saw what had taken place, he praised God, and said, "Certainly this man was innocent!" And all the multitudes who assembled to see the sight, when they saw what had taken place, returned home beating their breasts. And all his acquaintances and the women who had followed him from Galilee stood at a distance and saw these things. . . . But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they went to the tomb, taking the spices which they had prepared. And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they went in they did not find the body. While they

were perplexed about this, behold, two men stood by them in dazzling apparel; and as they were frightened and bowed their faces to the ground, the men said to them, "Why do you seek the living among the dead?"

Luke 23:44-49, 24:1-5 (RSV)

In the Garden of Paradise, man hid from God in the garden; now man hides within himself.

Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen

There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all, who is above all and through all and in all. But grace was given to each of us according to the measure of Christ's gift. Therefore it is said, "When he ascended on high he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men." (In saying, "He ascended," what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is he who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things.)

Ephesians 4:4-10 (RSV)

Let them all pass all their dirty remarks (One love)
 There is one question I'd really love to ask (One heart)
 Is there a place for the hopeless sinner
 Who has hurt all mankind just to save his own?
 Believe me

One love, one heart
 Let's get together and feel all right
 As it was in the beginning (One love)
 So shall it be in the end (One heart)
 Alright, "Give thanks and praise to the Lord and I will feel all right."
 "Let's get together and feel all right. . ."

Have pity on those whose chances grow thinner
 There ain't no hiding place from the Father of Creation

Bob Marley

"The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, and for those who sat in the region and shadow of death light has dawned." From that

time Jesus began to preach, saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

Matthew 4:16-17 (RSV)

For it is the God who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

2 Corinthians 4:6 (RSV)

May you be strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy, giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. He has delivered us from the dominion of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation; for in him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

Colossians 1:11-17 (RSV)

The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

John 1:5 (RSV)

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