

One night after meditating on the account of the death and resurrection of Jesus in John's gospel, I asked Jesus to forgive my sins, to set me free from the bondage of karma, and to become the Lord of my life. I had come to believe that he was the only one who could do that. In the puja room I recited the Gayatri mantra to Jesus, but that night I confessed my sins, surrendered my life to him, and worshiped him as Savior and Lord. I knew that something eventful, something life changing, had happened.

When I awoke the next morning, I walked towards the puja room. As I looked at the images on the altar, I knew there and then that I could never return to them. They instantly lost all attractiveness for me. I closed the door of the room with the deep conviction that I belonged to Christ and that from then on my devotion and affections were to be set upon him. It was not to religion but to Christ I was drawn.

—Krister Sairsingh in *Finding God at Harvard* (1996).

Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

—John 14:6

What Wondrous Love Is This

American Folk Hymn

The Southern Harmony (1835)

①

What wondrous love is this, O my soul, O my soul,
What wondrous love is this, O my soul!
What wondrous love is this that caused the Lord of bliss
To bear the dreadful curse for my soul, for my soul,
To bear the dreadful curse for my soul!

②

To God and to the Lamb, I will sing, I will sing
To God and to the Lamb, I will sing;
To God and to the Lamb, Who is the Great I Am,
While millions join the theme, I will sing, I will sing,
While millions join the theme, I will sing!

③

And when from death I'm free, I'll sing on, I'll sing on,
And when from death I'm free, I'll sing on;
And when from death I'm free, I'll sing and joyful be,
And through eternity I'll sing on, I'll sing on,
And through eternity I'll sing on!

Fourth Sunday in Lent
March 18, 2012 – 10:15 to 11:50 a.m.
Old Orchard Church

Descent to the Cross:

I Am the Way, the Truth, the Life

Come, my Way, my Truth, my Life;
Such a Way as gives us breath:
Such a Truth, as ends all strife:
And such a Life, as killeth death.

—George Herbert (1593-1633)

Scripture Readings

Old Testament Lesson: Psalm 16:8-11 and 36:7-9

Gospel Reading: John 14:1-7

Sermon Series

The Joyful Seriousness of a Kingdom-Focused Life (Part IV)

“The Strange Paradox of Kingdom Giving”

Acts 20:28-38

We celebrate the Lord's Supper weekly—and in a circle, at the end of worship. A word of direction is given, and with this everyone stands and moves to the walls. The cup is passed in two forms: in a chalice and then in small individual cups. You are free to choose.

And as this is the Supper of the Lord Christ, please listen to the instructions we give as to what qualifies a visitor to participate. **But whether you intend to take communion or not, please join us in the circle.**

Special Thanks to **Ryan Glasgow** for the cover art this morning, drawn in 1998.

The Only Way to Peace With God

Did Jesus really have more power than Shiva or Krishna? I wanted to know.

What astonished me most was Jesus' claim to have power to forgive sins. I understood the fundamental principles of my religion well enough to know that within the Hindu scheme of things, there is no such thing as forgiveness for one's wrong actions. The law of karma – that whatever wrong we do we will have to pay for in some other life – rules out the very idea of forgiveness. According to the law of karma, reincarnation is therefore necessary in order to pay for the sins of a previous life. One's present life is determined by one's previous existence, while one's future existence is shaped by one's present life. Each soul is held to be responsible for its own destiny.... The law of karma offered a simple and attractive explanation of the mystery of suffering in the world. People suffer because of their own evil action. But reincarnation as a necessary working out of the law of karma was never good news to me – even though I knew it undergirded the whole fabric of my religious and moral world.

Who was this Jesus who could break the bondage of karma, who said he had the power to forgive sins? I had to know. I delved deeper into the Gospels. Over the next six weeks, I went into the sugarcane fields to pray, hoping that something of God's truth would be revealed to me. More than anything else, I wanted the truth

As the weeks went by the person of Jesus began to exercise a powerful hold upon my imagination. I could not easily evade his call to follow him. It became clear to me that he was no mere seeker after God; he bore witness to God. In him the truth of God's reality could not be denied. As I read his words in the Gospels, I thought that he was speaking directly to me. It was as if he were telling me that he could actually come to me and forgive my sins, undo the past, loosen me from the terrors of death, break the bondage of karma, and make me truly free.

For a while I tried to incorporate Jesus into the pantheon of deities arrayed on the altar of the puja room. Each morning, after I offered incense and chanted mantras before the altar, I would then turn to recite the mantras to the picture of Jesus beside that of Gandhi and other gurus whose pictures lined the wall of the puja room. I had begun to include Jesus in my prayers. But I had the uneasy feeling that Jesus did not belong to their company, that he was without equal, and that he would not wish to be honored in a way that made him one among many, just another avatar among others. It soon dawned on me that he did not belong to the company of the gurus or even the deities on the altar. He was unique, utterly different. I did not know how to worship and honor him. And yet in the depths of my heart, I desired to adore him. (over)