

An abstract painting with warm, textured colors. The top half features a large, textured orange and yellow area with some darker, purplish-brown spots. The bottom half is a darker, more complex composition with deep reds, purples, and yellows, suggesting a landscape or a figure. The overall style is expressive and painterly.

MARK BARGER ELLIOTT

*Easter:
21 stations*

poems & photographs

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For Lynn,
Forever my Easter

PREFACE

Via Crucis means “way of the cross,” which describes the journey of seeking to follow Jesus Christ in our life.

A more familiar phrase might be the Via Dolorosa, which means the “way of sorrow.” For centuries, pilgrims have walked the Via Dolorosa, a street in Jerusalem, seeking to honor the path Jesus took to the cross on Golgotha.

When did this tradition begin?

The earliest example we have is a woman named Egeria who lived in the 4th century. She faithfully chronicled her pilgrimage to Jerusalem where she joined a crowd at daybreak, prayed, sang a hymn, read scripture, and processed to Gethsemane.

These types of pilgrimages and gatherings eventually led to the development of stations, where physically, or in one’s imagination, a pilgrim would stop and reflect on specific moments of Jesus’ life, death and resurrection.

How many stations are there?

Over the years the number has fluctuated and even increased to 37.

In 1732, Pope Clement XII declared there were 14 stations. To this day, these are observed by many Christians during the season of Lent.

Easter: 21 stations is my poetic and photographic meditation on the Via Crucis Jesus walks in the Gospel of Luke.

While Pope Clement XII designated 14, I offer readers 21; including additional moments when Jesus stayed at Mary and Martha's house, saw Zacchaeus up in a tree, healed ten lepers, and walked the road to Emmaus.

While this book can be read during Lent, many of us seek the presence of God and the promise of resurrection throughout the year. This book is for you and for all of us who seek to walk the Via Crucis.

Traveling Mercies,
Mark

INVITATION

If Easter was true – really true – would you
resurrect something in your life? Risk telling
the one you love the truth about their

drinking? Smell the shampoo in your hands
before you put it to use? Resist clicking “skip
ad” on YouTube understanding

time has no beginning or end? Would you
forgive someone who hurt you years ago?
Drive across the country chasing a dream? Or

trust everything is in God’s hands? Would you
view suffering and pain through a different
lens? Awaken every morning knowing this

was how Jesus felt when He took His first step
from the tomb? Would you believe there is more
to life than natural selection and the invisible

hand? Read the gospels, pray on your knees, or
believe in heaven? Would you order dessert for
a week... just because? Notice how your

chest expands with each breath? Consider the
lilies, as Jesus said? Never lie awake worrying
about your 401k at 3am?

If it were true – really true – would you?

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Once a year
 our planet appears
Split down the middle
 one half in darkness
The other half in light.

On that day we begin
 to spin
More to the sun
 than away.
So, our days
 lengthen in light.

The name "lent" draws
 from the word "lenten"
Meaning, "to become longer."

So, let us together then
 lenten in light
As the One scripture
 proclaims is "the light"
Beckons us to spin
 out of our shadows
Once again
 and towards Jerusalem...



I.

On Shrove Tuesday I knelt
In front of my fireplace
With a ziplock bag and spoon
Scooping ashes I had forgotten
To order from the Catholic
Store on Fulton.
But ashes I learned
Are not easily cajoled,
Every molecule of soot
Preferred my cuticles
And khaki pants to the spoon.
So, staring at the mess
I made, I thought,
Like a chimney sweep
At the end of the day,
What's the point of ashes anyway?

II.

God said to Adam
After he ate the fruit
Of the tree of
The knowledge
Of evil and good,

*By the sweat of your face
you shall eat bread,
till your return to the ground,
for out of it you were taken;
for you are dust
and to dust you shall return.*

Job said, after God had turned his
Blessings into a curse,

*God has cast me into the mud...
Therefore I despise myself
and repent in dust and ashes.*

The Bible reads
When Tamar
Was raped
by her half-brother,

*She sprinkled ashes on her head,
tore her robe, and with her face
buried in her hands
went away crying.*

III.

Aelfric of Eynsham in 1000 AD
Suggested ashes be
“Strewn” on our heads.
But tell me Aelfric,
Exactly why is that?
To remind us knowledge
Leads to death?
Sitting in ashes
Is how we beg forgiveness?
Or do ashes mark
When horror
Tears our world apart?
“Suffer us not to mock ourselves
with falsehood,” wrote T.S. Eliot
In *Ash Wednesday*.

But what falsehoods must
We, O Lord, set aside?
Or better phrased,
Where does truth reside?

IV.

Did you know
40,000 tons
Of cosmic dust falls on earth
Every year?
No wonder dust is found
On top of our refrigerator!

But scientists teach
Such dust has a purpose:
"Our bodies are made of
the burned-out embers of stars."

Without stardust there
Would be no new stars,
Or us, because molecules
In dust are building blocks
For cosmic recycling;
Or what people of faith call
Resurrection.

So, perhaps, the truth of ashes
Is to remind us of our denouement;
As T.S. Eliot observed,
"In my beginning is my end...
In my end is my beginning."

With that thought
I stood before the congregation
Fireplace ashes in hand

Index finger raised aloft
Tracing the cross.
Saying, "to dust
you shall return."

I wanted to add, but did not,
"So you will be raised again!"
But next year I think I will
Because it makes sense
As we begin the season of Lent
To offer a cosmic reminder
Of the reality of Easter.





Painter Mark Rothko after
Discerning the essence
Of a painting would layer
Color after color on the canvas
Until that essence glowed
From inside the canvas out.

I wonder
Did Jesus ask
Who do people say that I am?
Curious if others saw His essence
Beneath the colors
Layered
By others
On the canvas
Of His life?

One disciple said,
"Some say you are Elijah!"
Another, *"John the Baptist."*
I suspect for Jesus this
Was somewhat flattering
But also like being mistaken
For your older brother.

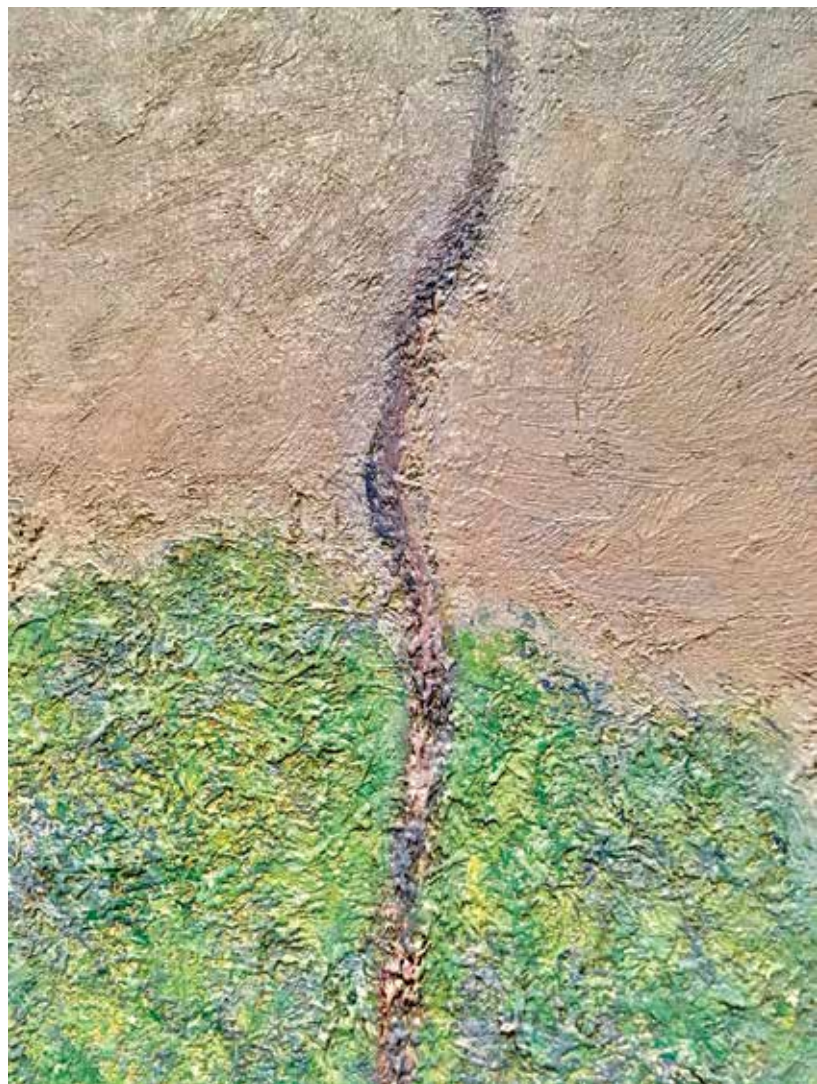
Then Jesus asked,
"Who do you say that I am?"
"You are the Messiah!"
Peter answered.
Jesus warned them
To tell no one.

Which makes me wonder
If before Peter spoke
Jesus knew the answer?

Or was he surprised
In hearing the truth.

Like when you sputter,
"I love you"
For the first time
And want to savor
The moment.
Keeping it private
As long as you can.
Knowing once
The essence
Has been seen
Life will never be
The same again.





Jesus sets out for Jerusalem
“*Resolutely*” records Luke.
The Greek word is *estērisen*
Which comes from *sterizo*
Which means “a support
that fixes, plants down.”

The Via Crucis
In other words
Is both vertical
And horizontal.

Jesus plants Himself
Downward
For support
As He moves forward.
Points and planes
Of His life
Intersecting
With the ground
Like a holy graph
Forming
With each step
A walking cross.



Imagine the kind of woman
During the time of Jesus
Who owns her own home.
Can you see her?
Chin forward
Eyes anticipating
Three steps ahead
Of the moment unfolding.

*Jesus and his disciples
came to a village where
a woman named Martha
opened her home to him.*

Martha hustles
To impress her guest
Stirring a stew of lamb,
Onion and garlic,
While Mary sits
At Jesus' feet
Like a cat.

Martha says, "Lord, don't you care that
My sister has left me to do the work
By myself? Tell her to help me!"

"Martha, Martha," Jesus answered,
"You are worried and upset
About many things, but few things
are needed – or indeed only one."

Kierkegaard wrote
"Purity of heart is
To will one thing."

Pleasure and riches
Power and honor
Will forever pull
Distracting the soul.
So, let us fix our gaze
Like Mary on the One
Who remains the same.
For the host of the feast
Has revealed He indeed
Is the one thing we need.





Writing a sermon
And needing a break
I walked around the block
And saw parked
On the street,
A dumpster.

Its surface was black,
Protruding and pocked.
I was curious how it would look
Through my phone camera.

As I peered through the lens
Sunlight reflected off the steel.
Swirls and colors suddenly
Appeared, as if Kandinsky
Had rendered the Milky Way.

It's fascinating how we cannot
Actually see light and yet,
We can only see *with it*.
Yes, there is light that
Flickers up from inside
And through our eyes
When we fall in love
For the first time.
But light also flies
670,616,629 miles per hour.
Light that creates wonder
On the surface of a dumpster.

Jesus said *"if your whole body
is full of light, and no part of it dark,
it will be just as full of light as when
a lamp shines its light on you."*

I suspect this is true:
Dumpster light dances
Over me and you.
Illuminating
What is pocked
And protruding
In us, if through
A divine lens
We could see
Our true selves.







She was selling a knife
 in the gift shop of the DIA.
"Hold it in your hand," she said.
 "The heat in your palm
Will warm the blade
 so it can slice through ice."
She pointed to a tray
 of ice on a table and
She was right, it did.

Jesus said, "*I am
The bread of life;
The light of the world;
The good shepherd.*"
He also said,
"*I have come to bring
Fire on the earth...
Father against son
Will be divided...
Mother against daughter.*"

When I read those words I thought
Of the DIA blade designed to radiate
Heat dividing what is whole in half.
But still, I wondered, is it appropriate
To equate Jesus with division?
Then I remembered it takes fire
To make bread and light.
Shepherds fight wolves in the night.
Maybe, sometimes, we do need to be
Cut in half to be made whole.
Just spare me of that truth, O Lord.



Jesus doesn't take
The most direct route
From Galilee to Jerusalem
Which runs north to south.

Where we find him instead
Is walking east to west
Between Galilee and Samaria.
Was He lost? On a walk about?
Not only that... He talks with lepers.
Not only that... He heals a Samaritan.

The Greek phrase "dia meson"
Is used to describe
Where we find Jesus in the text.
It means *through the midst*.

Could not this be Jesus' bio
On his insta or twitter?
Through the midst.

Between nations on the border –
through the midst.
Between us –
through the midst.
Within our diseases and loneliness –
through the midst.

If we follow Jesus to Jerusalem
Where he leads us is,
Through the midst.

Dia meson.



As Jesus walked through Jericho
On His way to Jerusalem
Zacchaeus, a wealthy tax collector,
Wanted to see Him.

Why? Well, Jesus had told another
Rich man to gain heaven
He needed to sell everything
And give it to the poor.

He told a parable about prayer
With a Pharisee and tax collector
Where unexpectedly the latter
Went home justified before God.

If word got around, as word did,
Something churned inside
Zacchaeus and he longed
To see Jesus for himself.

Dancer Martha Graham said we only get so
many “moments in movement. Don’t let them
slip away, unused and unnoticed.”

Zacchaeus climbs a tree to see Jesus walk by.
Jesus invites himself to his house
Where Zacchaeus declares he will give half
His possessions to the poor.
If he cheated anyone he will return it fourfold.
Jesus says, “*salvation*” has come to this home.
Luke writes: “*For the Son of Man came
to seek and to save the lost.*”

But how does that work?

What happened in that house?

Zacchaeus means “pure” or “innocent.”

In other words, he wasn’t born

A cheater. He became one.

There’s a difference.

So, Jesus saves him, yes,

But maybe not from himself.

Rather, Jesus helped Zacchaeus find

Himself, remembering the person

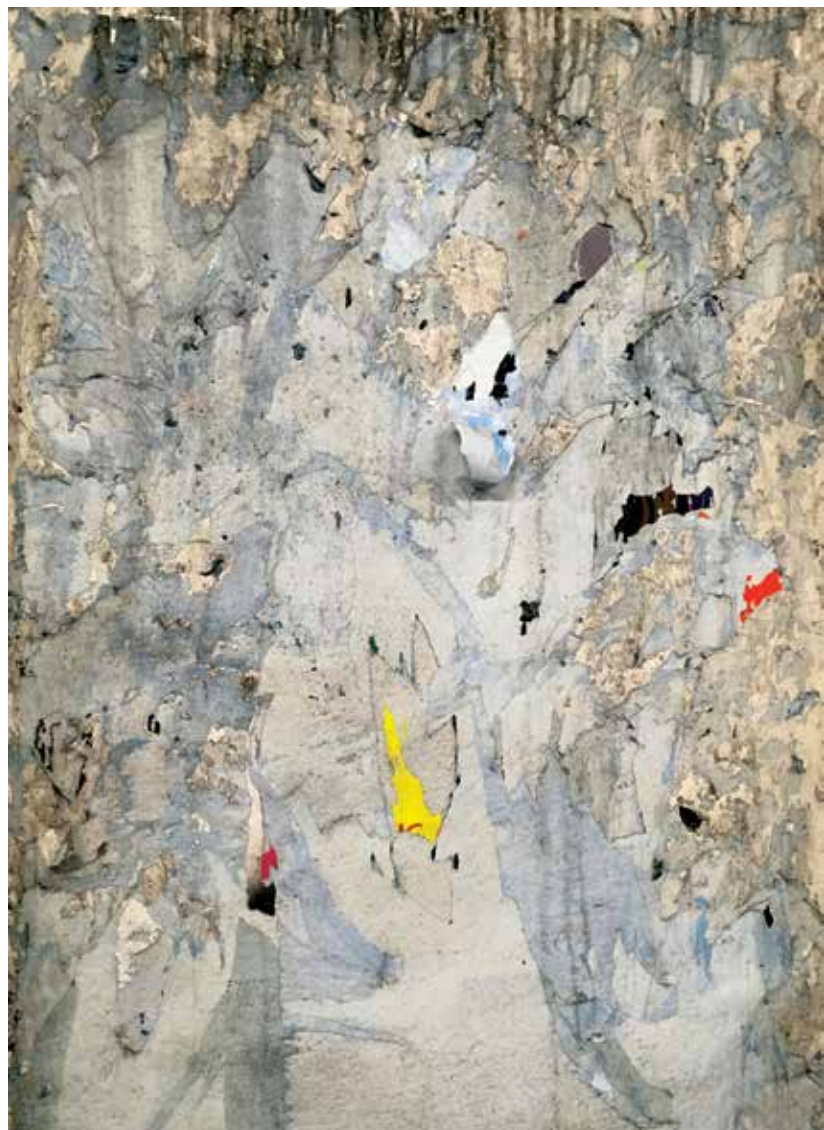
His parents longed he would become.

The seed of a parent’s prayer in a name

Planted long ago, requiring the presence

Of Jesus to be born in Zacchaeus anew.





I.

As Jesus approaches Jerusalem
 He instructs two disciples
 To find a colt
 In the village ahead,
 Untie it and bring it to Him.
 Jesus says,
 If anybody questions this
"tell them the Lord needs it."

So, the disciples
 Take an "owners"
 Colt on which Jesus
 Processes like a king
 Into Jerusalem
 Which makes me think
 Of the prophet Nathan
 Who told King David
 About a king who takes
 The only sheep of a poor man
 To give it to a guest.
 When he heard this story
 King David was furious
 At the injustice.

At this station
 We pause to reflect
 On the question
 Of whether or not
 Jesus has the right
 To take a colt.

One answer is no.
There is right and wrong.
It is never right to
Take what isn't yours
Even if you're God's Son.

Another answer is in His
Excitement of crossing
Into Jerusalem
Jesus overlooked the detail
Of paying the owners.

We all do that at times,
Focus on the big picture
And forget things,
Which makes him
As Hebrews puts it,
"in every way fully human."

The other answer is yes.
Jesus can do that.
"My ways are not your ways,"
As Job hears God instruct.

II.
This station invites us to ask
How we would feel if
The colt was taken from us?

Our answer is a glimpse
Into how we think about
The character of God.





When I was a young pastor
 An old man came to see me
 With W.H. Auden creases
 In his cheeks
 Shoulders slumped
 He rubbed his hands
 On his knees.
 He said he cheated on his wife
 Years ago and could never
 Forgive himself.
 He was like DeNiro
 In *The Mission*
 Seeking contrition;
 A bag of armor
 To carry up a hill
 In teeming rain
 To wash his sins away.

I said, *God forgives you.*
 But what does that really mean?
 Was it a truth I could proclaim?
 His eyes flashed and I could see
 He had heard those words before.
 But then I saw them die, my words,
 Between us on the floor.
 Because the only forgiveness
 He wanted was from the one
 He had betrayed years before.
 But she clearly had
 Closed that door.

Now he walked the earth as a ghost
Praying to return to a state of grace
He had to earn first.
I, the young pastor,
Had no further words
To explain this was not
How it worked.





It was the Festival
Of Unleavened Bread.
Everyone lifted their fingers,
After Jesus said,
*"One of you will betray me.
His hand is on the table."*
Someone asked,
"Who will betray you?"

Nobody noticed
Judas glance down
Shocked his plans
Were known.

According to Luke,
The disciples
Next thought
Was not,
How can we stop this?
Instead, they asked,
Who is the greatest?
(I kid you not, it's in the text.)

The word used to describe
The twelve is *philoneikia*,
Which means *to love strife*.

Meaning, right after Jesus
Had taught about sacrifice
Broke bread and lifted the cup
The disciples' response
Was to fight over
Who was number one.

Can you imagine
Jesus' face must
Have gone slack
Watching His words
Slide off their souls
Like rain on glass?

The old English name for
This night is Shere Thursday
Which means "guilt free."

In medieval times men apparently
Shaved their beards this day
As one might shear a lamb;
Letting go of the past and
Choosing to face the future, clean.
With that in mind
Perhaps it makes sense
On this night that
We see the disciples
At their worst
As we come to recognize
We too need to shear
From our lives
Hubris and pride.





In the September
Of my years
I count what has
Overtime
Slipped away
Like kites
Untethered
From my hand
Now floating
Aimlessly up
Nudged by
The whimsy
Of the wind
Never to
Return again.

"Send me out into another life lord,"
Wrote poet W.S. Merwin,
"because this one is growing faint
I do not think it goes all the way."

But in the calculus
Of the spirit the arc
Of our life intersects
With the ineffable.
We learned this
From Jesus
Who felt forsaken
In Gethsemane.

Yet the divine revelation
As events unfolded was
Nothing is lost
That feels lost and what
Has slipped through
Our hands is found
By the One beyond
The clouds where kites
We can no longer see
Are redeemed.





It doesn't say in the Bible
"God helps those
Who help themselves,"
Or, "this too shall pass."

No one named Veronica
Is mentioned either.
But nonetheless
She appears
In Pope Clement's stations
Wiping Jesus' brow
With her veil.

It was said the veil later
Displayed Christ's image
Like the Shroud of Turin
But this is only mentioned
400 years after
Christ's resurrection.

Veronica means "image of truth"
(Vera is truth; eikona is image.)
But how can this image be accurate
If Veronica did not exist?

Tradition maintains icons point
To truths beyond themselves.
So, could this be Veronica's truth?
On our way to the cross she reminds
Us to notice if someone is in distress
And to wipe the sweat off their brow;
Because Christ's face is what we will
Touch if we stop and take that risk.



I slipped on ice
 In my driveway
 Hidden beneath snow.
 For a moment I was falling
 Parallel to the ground
 Until my hip bounced
 Off asphalt and I lay flat
 Like a whale surprised
 To be washed up on the sand.
 But we are always falling aren't we?
 The earth pulling us down.

Newton was the first to figure this out
 Describing the invisible force drawing
 Objects to each other. Every atom, you see,
 Attracts another like the moon pulls on water;
 Or the Milky Way falls every day
 Farther into the Andromeda galaxy.

In the 18th century the church defined 14 stations.
 Three marked when Jesus fell down. But as with
 Veronica, this did not happen. Jesus does not fall
 On his way to the cross.

John Wheeler describes Einstein's revision of
 Newton's theory this way:
 "Space tells matter how to move and matter tells
 space how to curve."
 Space, in other words, is more like a mattress
 Sagging with the weight
 Of an object curving on the ocean's surface
 Like waves.

So, technically,
We are all falling
Sagging in space,
Cresting and dropping
In gravity waves.
So, it is true Jesus
Fell, just every day.
So too are we falling
In the same way.





We often think of
Loved ones as
Frozen in time.
Remaining
The same age
As when we met
In our mind.

I wonder, did Mary see
Jesus in swaddling
Clothes when He
Was healing
The blind?
When they shouted
“Hosanna?”
Or when He died?

During these times
Was the memory
Of Jesus
As a child
Inside her
All the while?



I.

It is unimaginable to
 Imagine the One who
 Created neutrinos
 Quarks, anti-matter,
 Matter, and the stars,
 Felt fire in his palms
 As a hammer struck
 A nail into a wood beam.

This is why the poet W.H. Auden said
 Christmas and Easter lend
 Themselves to poetry,
 But Good Friday does not.
 He said it was a “stumbling block”
 To those who wanted to believe in God.
 Bluntly, why would God allow God’s son
 To feel “forsaken?” That’s the question.
 Because God had called him “beloved”
 At the Jordan and during the Transfiguration
 Yet now in Jesus’ time of desperation
 God was silent. Why?

Yes, the “Word” (God) was made “flesh”
 But it appears there is no Word on the cross,
 Only flesh, Jesus’ neurons firing in pain
 His vocal cords with anguish resonating.

Jesus taught his disciples, *“everyone who asks
 receives, everyone who searches finds,”*
 But that did not prove to be the case this time.

II.

There is vocabulary that attempts to help us
Form an opinion about this. "Transcendence"
Means God is outside of the world. "Immanence"
Means God is in the world. So, if God is outside
Of the world, well, then nothing could be done.
Of course, Jesus felt forsaken.
God was removed from the equation.

Still three days later God did something:
Resurrection. For this reason transcendence
Is not a great explanation for God's absence
Because it appears to be intermittent.

But if God's relationship to the world is
"Immanence" – then God could have done
Something. Offered a word of comfort to the
Word. Sent an angel with a sword
Reminding everyone who was in charge.
But God took a pass on that chance.

This is what Auden was talking about:
How do you describe a God who deserts
A Son in need and ignores His suffering?

III.

The traditional way we make sense of this is
To say on the cross Jesus bore our sins.
He needed to die as a divine offering
For everything we have done wrong.
But that still raises the question, why
Would the One who can forgive everything
Choose this violent way to demonstrate grace?

As Barbara Brown Taylor put it, “there is no getting around the detail that God killed Jesus.”

The only insight I can offer
Is it's helpful to remember
God created a universe
Where galaxies are swallowed
Whole by black holes.
Stars burn out, die, and are reborn.

So, perhaps, that is one reason
God did not stop the hammer mid-arc
Or send an angel with the sword.
It's not how the Creator or creation works.

We might wish it were not so.
But on Good Friday our vigil
Is not one of wishful thinking
But a clear-eyed reckoning
That pain and suffering
Hang on a cross before us.
No one is spared, not even Jesus.



When Jesus died
What happened next?
Did His eyes remain closed?
Did He pace around the tomb?
Did His spirit ascend to heaven
During the intermission
Between Good Friday and Easter?

"We grow accustomed,"
Said Emily Dickinson,
"to the dark."

I wonder, did Jesus grow
Accustomed to the dark
During those three days
In a cave?

Or was there always
Inside Him a light
That never died
Like a pilot light
In the corner of our eye
We see when we walk by
A fireplace at midnight?



I.

I walked a labyrinth at a
Franciscan retreat center.
A labyrinth is not a maze.
A maze has dead ends.
But a labyrinth winds
You to a center where
In this labyrinth stood
A four-foot cross.

There pilgrims had spread
Stones with the names
Of loved ones, a guitar pick,
Two white hospital masks,
And an unsmoked cigarette.

I stood in the center studying
These offerings, wondering
What did they hope would
Happen next, after they left
These parts of themselves.

II.

On Good Friday we stand watch
As Jesus' arms are spread wide.
His body growing so tired
He can't take a breath.
His lungs slowly contract
Until there is no air left.
Three days later pastors point
To a seed that appears dead

But then it rises in the spring.
A metaphor we preach,
For how resurrection works.
But I wonder, isn't Easter
Bigger than that?

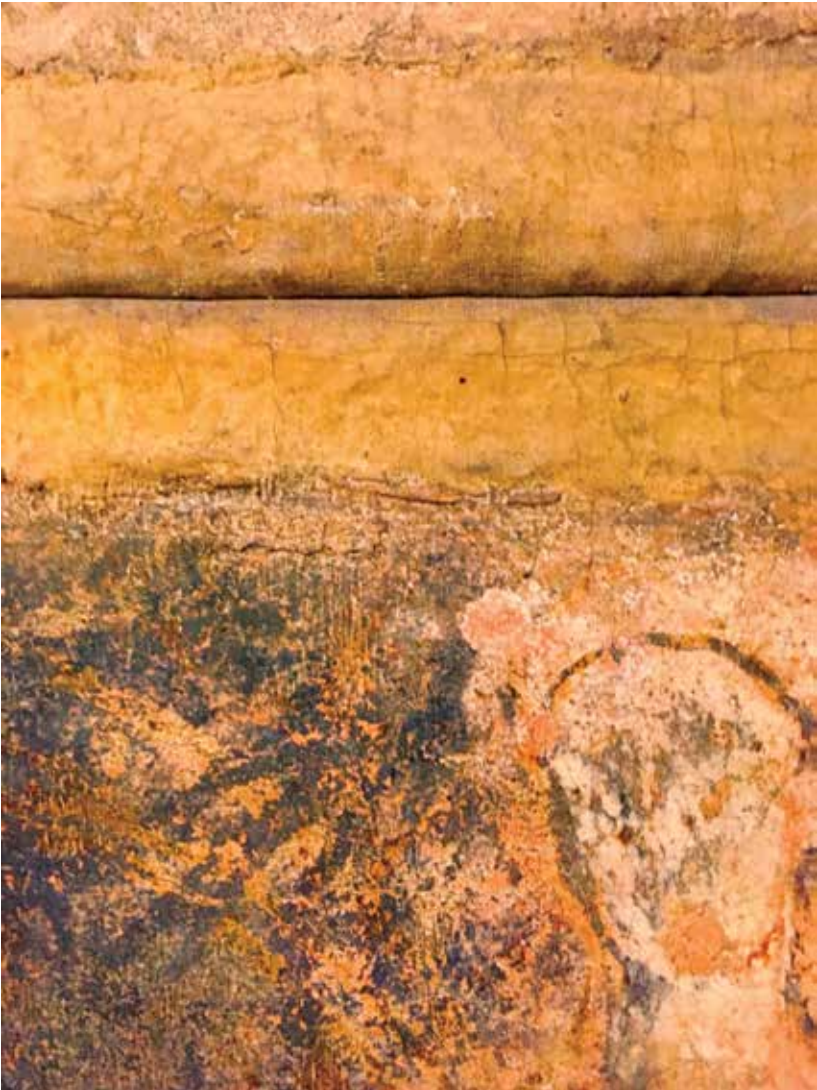
III.

Astronomers sometimes ask,
Was there something
Before the Big Bang?
That moment when
A singularity containing
All the matter that ever
Was burst into a universe.
They ask, was it dark
 before the Big Bang
They wonder, was there life
 before the Big Bang?
Was there anything
 before 13.8 billion years ago
A time Steven Hawking deemed
 "unmeasurable"?

Some say there was nothing.
Others believe there was
A universe before ours;
That a universe expands
Until it pops, like a balloon,
Then contracts, into a
Singularity, then begins
To expand again;
Thus, a "Big Bounce."

Perhaps, this is what
Those pilgrims prayed
For in the labyrinth
As they spread stones
With the names of loved ones,
Guitar picks, hospital masks,
And an unsmoked cigarette.

They hoped this burden
Might pop, contract, and
Bounce into a new universe,
A new life,
In which they could
Begin again.



The First Law of Thermodynamics
Describes how energy cannot be created
Or destroyed; all the energy
In the universe remains static
Nothing can be added or subtracted.

But the Second Law states as
Energy moves around the universe
It will always end up in entropy and
Disorder without a new energy source.
Coffee in a cup doesn't stay hot
Without sitting in a coffee pot.

When I read of the men
On the road to Emmaus
I think of the Second Law
Of Thermodynamics.
Luke reads how they
Were "downcast."
The world they thought
Was ordered now was
Disordered: all felt lost.

In John's Gospel, Jesus is called
"the light of the world."

Physicists teach how light
Is energy, which means
Whenever we meet Jesus
After disorder befalls
And entropy appears
On our road to Emmaus

We will experience Him
As energy creating
Order moving
Molecules
Of our lives
Around
As sunflowers
Turn to the sun.

Luke records that after
The disciples stop
For dinner, Jesus breaks
Bread and they recognize
Him, but then He disappears.

So they decide to run
To Jerusalem
To tell everyone
What happened
Laughing and defying
With each step
The Second Law
Of Thermodynamics.





After the crucifixion
the disciples locked
themselves in a room
terrified Jewish
leaders would come
for them
to extinguish the remnant
of a failed revolution.

Then Jesus appeared
"and stood among them"
and said,
"Peace be with you."

Today, we stand in church
reciting Jesus' words
shaking hands
and sharing God's peace
between partners,
strangers and friends.

But after re-reading
this pericope
I realized
not only are we
sharing a moment
of God's peace
but we are recreating
that anxious room
where we become
the resurrected One
to each other;

reminding ourselves
what binds us
together
is the belief
death
is not our end
but a beginning.
Easter doesn't occur
once a year
but every Sunday
in our midst
it appears.

Wendell Berry said,
"practice resurrection."

May that be our charge:
to become living metaphors
of this eternal truth.
The tomb is empty
and in that
once dark
and foreboding
place,
thanks be to God,
peace and joy
now reigns.





Benediction

As Jesus stepped out of the tomb
and into the light of a new
day, over the next 24 hours

He took about 20,000 breaths.
His body made about a million
red blood cells. His heart beat
about 10,000 times. His blood
circulated about 12,000 miles.

Have you ever really felt
air fill your lungs?

Imagined your bone
marrow making cells?

Noticed blood pulse
through your arms and legs?

The miracle of Easter is, yes,
Jesus' victory over death.

But it is also that life exists

At all. In our world only
0.00000001 percent of matter is alive.

In the universe it is "one-millionth
of one-billionth of 1 percent."

Resurrection, in some respects, is
God's second miracle.

Life, in all its complexity
and wonder, is the first.

So let us dance, sing,

and bring our praise

Into every day, wasting not
a moment of God's precious gift.

Let life, I pray, always Easter in us.

Photographs

Photographs were taken by Mark Barger Elliott of poster beds in the London Underground, tile work on subway walls in Paris, details of paintings at the Guggenheim, frescos in the Cloisters in New York City, a dumpster in Grand Rapids, Michigan, and the village of Duk Padiet in South Sudan.

Quotes

Station 2 “our bodies are made of the burned-out embers of stars” is found in *Living with the Stars* by Karel and Kirs Schrijver

Station 15 “space tells matter how to move and matter tells space how to curve” is found in the Wikiquote page for John Wheeler.

Benediction “one-millionth of one-billionth of 1 percent” is found in *The Accidental Universe* by Alan Lightman.

About the Author



Mark Barger Elliott is a pastor, award-winning filmmaker, and author. He has written *Middle of the Maze: 5 Secrets to Finding Your Way* and *Creative Styles of Preaching*. *THE LAST SONGWRITER*, premiered at the Nashville Film Festival where it won an Audience Award. *LOST BOY HOME*, narrated by Sam Waterston, premiered at the Palm Beach International Film Festival. It won a Best Shorts Award and was featured at the Africa World Documentary Film Festival. A lifelong learner, Mark is a graduate of Cornell University and Princeton Theological Seminary. He enjoys running and has finished seven marathons — just before the street sweepers closed the course.

*"In a world crowded with Lenten meditations, Mark Barger Elliott's **Easter: 21 stations** is bracingly fresh. It crosses boundaries with grace - poetry unpacks science, the venerable tradition of the Stations of the Cross meets superb modern photography, deep piety intersects with contemporary doubt – all conspiring to lead believer and skeptic alike on a journey into a deeper faith."*

Michael Lindvall, *A Geography of God*

"While appropriate for the penitential season of Lent, this collection by Mark Barger Elliott is a feast of words and images to nourish reflection throughout the year. Reminiscent of the work of Mary Oliver, Alan Lightman, and Wendell Berry, Elliott's poetry and photographs teach, surprise, delight, and turn the reader of this book into a pilgrim who is changed, challenged, and enriched by embarking on this sacred journey."

Amy Richter, *Antimony: a Novel*

"This devotional is really something different – fresh and provocative. These 21 stations and their stunning photography take us from the London Underground, to Paris subway walls, to paintings in the Guggenheim and frescos at the Cloisters, and even to a coffee shop and dumpster in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Mark joins these images with his evocative poetry, bringing us challenge, insight, and inspiration in our journey from Lent and Easter."

Greg Cootsona, *Negotiating Science and Religion in America*

