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Scarboro United Church
Calgary AB
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“The Door of Faith: Life and Death”

Jesus knows that, surrounded by crowds, he is facing the door of life and death – the gate into Jerusalem, the Temple entrance. He sets his face like flint.

It is a long week, a long week ahead. We move from one crowd to another and back again, swarming here, swarming there. We become a holy crowd hoarse with hosannas. Blessed is the one who comes in God’s name, on God’s behalf. Waving him in through the massive gates of the city, through the door of our elaborate, lifelong defences. We wave him in to the door of our hearts, the entrance to our souls. He must be the one, everybody says so. Let him in to the city! Let him in to the temple! Let him in! Let him in! Let him in! Hosanna! Hosanna! Hosanna in the highest!

He stands at the door to our hearts, the entrance to our soul. And he cannot find the way in. Too much merchandise, too many tawdry trinkets distract his attention. The way to our souls is hidden. His journey is stopped. You can feel his heat rising. You can hear his low growl as he leaps forward, tearing at all the stuff and junk that clutters our temple and hides the door, the entrance, the way in to where we truly live – behind our mask of death.

Baubles and beads blocking us from our soul work are ripped away and cast aside. Tables piled high with cash and investments, venture capital and bonuses, flung away as he presses on to the door, the way to our souls. Cars and fashion and travel and SUVs, ATVs, RVs, HDTVs, mansions, status, perks, pornography and payoffs – business, busy-ness – tossed aside, turned over, strewn about. He simply must be stopped. This is not decent, not in good order. Chaos threatens. We are being assaulted! He must be stopped. He must be . . .

Better for him to go away, gotten rid of. Some doors must remain closed. My door must remain closed. I’ll have to get some more stuff. Start over. A long road ahead. I don’t think I will ever be able to get all that I want again.

So we sit here at table with him and our friends, a small crowd of sojourners wanting to be close, knowing we are on dangerous ground, no longer playing it safe, no longer secure. He looks around this small crowd and offers us bread, speaking of brokenness, offering wine, hints of a bloody death to come. He thinks someone in this small crowd will betray him. Not !! Not !! You wanted close but suddenly this is claustrophobic, you must get out of here! You must find another crowd.

“Barabbas! Barabbas!” we scream together. What a large noisy crowd. And so decent of the powers that be to give us a choice! A choice of who will live and who will die. Barabbas will simply head for the hills and fight on our side. Jesus will stand before that troublesome door we have been ignoring for so long, hiding so carefully – knocking, knocking, knocking. Barabbas is the better choice. He will live to fight another day. If only Jesus would stay away and leave us alone, if only he would bother just people we

don't like. Crucify him!

And now we stand in the street watching a bloody and brutalized Jesus paraded with his cross on the agonizingly long yet oh so short road to his death. People press around us trying to get a glimpse they can talk about later. He falls. They look for someone to carry the cross! Not me! Not me! That black/native/Muslim/gay/punk teenager fellow there, get him to do it, he is not like us, not one of us! The last thing you want is to be anywhere near that old rugged instrument of tortuous death. Pick up his cross? Not on your life!

Wait a sec. Didn't he say something about that? I remember that. I remember him saying we had to pick up our cross and follow him. But I thought it would be a nice gold cross that would sit on the shelf, or hang on a chain around my neck as we went about doing good. It seemed so nice to think about at the time. Dying to live – aren't we all? Did he really mean dying?

Here in this crowd it suddenly seems so stark, such brutal clarity – Follow the crowd to the cross and watch him die or follow him to the cross and die with him, there on that hill. Right now I don't want to do either.

Maybe I'll just pop into this pub – looks like a friendly crowd. Noisy enough to drown out the pounding of the nails, the anguished screams.

Maybe I'll just head back to my love and in a night of passion try to forget what I have seen and heard and done.

Maybe I'll just go to the rink and hope for a good fight to break out! Love it when they drop their gloves!

Maybe, just maybe I'll go a few steps further with him. I'd like to see what this cross-shaped door is all about. Maybe it will open while they try so desperately to nail it shut. Maybe it won't be so hard to go through to the other side. Maybe it won't be so bad. Maybe there'll be a crowd there too.

A crowd like this one here, gathered to remember. Remembering that night with the bread and the wine and the talk of betrayal and death. Remembering the betrayal and the brutality of it all. Remembering the holy moment, this body broken, this blood spilled, this door to sacred life broken open, cross shaped door raised high and bringing us low to become friends, person to person, loving life, all life into fulfillment. Dying to trinkets and baubles – rising to life – right here – right now. *This* crowd remembers and gives thanks.

Where in the crowd are you?