

setting the passion in motion.

It is ironic. Mary's over the top love preparing Jesus for death, it drove Judas to have Jesus killed.

Love broke Judas. The devil had twisted him. It was too much. Too much love.

So what's in a name?

Names and stories. Love. Love that carries across centuries, across millennia, across death, and carries us into an intimacy with God and one another in which we are born again.

Jesus.

The name that carries us.

The name that anoints us with the Love that breaks us and makes us whole all at once.

The fragrance fills the house.

Our names.

Our stories.

The personal encounter with the God whose holiness caresses our world, whose love is stronger than death.

Choose Love.

That is the story of their names. The names of Mary, Martha, Lazarus, Judas and Jesus.

Choose Love.



*Frances Hardaway 2020*

**40 DAYS**

**A ROAD TRIP WITH THE DEVIL**

**Jack Hardaway Lent 2025**

**Grace Episcopal Church Anderson SC**

## WHOSE WORLD IS IT ANYWAY?

A hot dry road runs through the desert.

An old car comes along, windows down, no air conditioning, held together with primer and bondo.

The devil is driving the car.

Jesus sits there next to him in the passenger seat.

They've been driving like this for days and days, not saying much. Seeing the land. Seeing the world.

With a loud clank the engine quits, steam and smoke erupt from under the hood and they slowly coast to a stop, pulling over.

They sit there for a few minutes listening to the engine click and creak as it cools down.

Then Jesus says, "I told you, you should have let me drive."

He opens the creaking car door, slams it hard, and starts walking.

The devil leans out the window and says, "It is my world you know."

Jesus shades his eyes as he looks to the far off horizon, and he whispers, "We'll see about that."

Whose world is it anyway?

We get these conflicting statements from the witness of scripture and from our own experience.

Who is driving the car?

The tempting of Jesus didn't end with the forty days.

It didn't end until he was on the cross and he quoted a different scripture than the devil, rather than seizing or demanding or controlling he surrenders his life, "Father into your hands I commend my spirit."

The devil's world is full of power and wealth and glory and those who are twisted by it.

events foreshadowing Jesus' death while he is with Phillip, or Mary, and Martha, and Lazarus. Today is always a Sunday of adoration and ominous portent. 10

John's gospel is many things, mystical poetry, long teachings about the intimacy of Jesus with the Father and the Holy Spirit, who is also called the Companion, the Comforter and the Advocate.

But it is mostly about names and stories.

Personal encounter after personal encounter with Jesus. That turn of phrase, "A personal relationship with Jesus Christ." That idea and experience comes from the personal encounters in John's gospel.

Names and stories touching one another, and the love and the tragedy carry across time, inviting us to that same personal encounter with Jesus, intimacy, love, and adoration.

Mary and Judas are paired off against each other today, two opposites, two different encounters with the holiness of God caressing the world in Jesus.

Mary's adoration and love is over the top.

Earlier in John's Gospel her sister Martha tells her to stop, and Jesus tells Martha to stop.

And now Judas does the same thing, and again Jesus shields Mary's love and grief, telling Judas to leave her alone.

Mary is the example for us.

Mary knew the time was short, she was preparing Jesus for a nightmare that could not be stopped, she anointed him for death, and washed his feet with her hair.

An extravagant all-consuming love. Heart breaking, beautiful, too intimate and embarrassing to witness, a love that puts the rest of us to shame for loving so poorly. She is the example, the exemplar, the revealer of what it is like to follow Jesus.

It broke Judas. And when Jesus did the same thing, washing the disciples' feet, showing Judas that Jesus sided with Mary, about loving with undignified reckless abandonment, Judas left for good,

pages over, on the deceased page her name again, Mary Martha, 9  
February 9 1925. 100 years ago. We had a baptism here at  
Grace on the anniversary, reclaiming that day for me as a day of  
new birth.

Mary Martha was six years old. The family memory has grown  
vague about the details of her death, probably scarlet fever.

We have another little book of random quotes from the childhood  
of Mary Martha, and her two brothers, written by my great grand-  
mother, Kathreen Morris Hardaway.

Mary Martha has only one quote in the book, she had hurt her lips  
and said, "Oh mother my lips are leaking."

A name, bits of a story, the love for her still carries across now just  
over a century.

Mary Martha. That name always comes back to my mind when we  
hear the gospel stories about Jesus' close friends: Mary, Martha  
and Lazarus. The two sisters whose names my great aunt carried.  
All those names have stories.

Mary who sat at Jesus feet and listened.

Martha who served and was upset Mary didn't help.

Lazarus, whom, Jesus raised from the dead.

And today we hear about them again.

Martha is still serving.

Lazarus is still raised from the dead.

And this time Mary does something.

Rather than sitting at his feet, Mary anoints Jesus' feet with a wild-  
ly extravagant amount of extremely costly perfume, pure nard, the  
fragrance is overwhelming, and she wipes his feet with her hair.

A name, a bit of a story, the love still carries across the millennia.

And Judas, who didn't approve, wanting the money for the poor  
but really for himself. His name carries across time as well.

We are in John's Gospel today, Luke is set aside for a week, the  
fifth Sunday of Lent we always go back to John, and hear about

God's world is the world of the suffering messiah, who claims 2  
the world for God with love rather than abuse, with grace rather  
than bullying, with hope rather than scorn, with hospitality rather  
than disrespect.

The thing about the wilderness road is that it really isn't a journey  
that we choose.

It is forced upon us.

Most of us really aren't on a journey for Lent, we simply are get-  
ting by, choosing to survive. Wondering how to just keep the car  
going.

The wilderness question does press upon us more acutely though.  
Perhaps even more so this year.

Whose world will I live in?

Who is driving?

That is the acute question, in the wilderness that is forced upon us.

Whose world will I live in?

Who is driving?

We answer it not with words or thoughts, but by how we live.

The choice.

Forty days and forty nights.

Whose world?

Who drives?

An old car comes down the hot dessert highway.

What happens next?

Lent 2c 2025; 16 March

Gen. 15:1-12, 17-18; Luke 13:31-35

Jack Hardaway

## FOX AND HEN

A hot desert highway.

An old car broken down on the side of the road.

The devil climbs out of the car, pops the hood and takes a look. 3  
He bangs and cusses and spits until he kicks the bumper and the car starts.  
A headlight pops out and breaks on the asphalt.

The devil laughs in triumph, slams the hood shut, climbs in the car and starts driving.

After a while he catches up to someone walking on the side of the road, its Jesus.

The devil stops the car next to him and waits, not saying anything, not even looking.

Jesus shakes his head and climbs in without saying a word.

They start driving, all day and into the night, nothing to say, with only one head light.

The stars are so bright in the dessert.

The wild night air blows through the windows as they go down the road, Jesus watching the stars populate across the sky.

Jesus points to the stars and breaks the silence, "Count them. You can't own the sky. You thought you could. I saw your star fall."

The devil slams the gas pedal down and they accelerate, faster and faster.

In the sky they can see the Spirit moving like the wind, brooding over creation, like on that first day, at the beginning, her wings gathering all things.

The devil then turns off the one head light and he starts to scream, louder and louder. They fly into the darkness the engine roaring like a ravenous beast...

Conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit.

That is what we profess about Jesus, conceived by the Holy Spirit, the brooding wind that gathers her young, that gathers creation under her wings.

The Spirit born walks into the ravenous wasteland.

The wild life kept following them, critters, rodents, cattle, coyotes, birds, even a few angels. 8

The devil kept shewing them away.

Through the heat they made their way to the hills just up ahead.

Then they heard the trickle of water and they followed a small creek to a spring in shaded valley, lush with green things.

Jesus drank deeply of the water, and then slowly waded in and cooled off, floating on his back.

The devil stood off to the side and said, "This is where I leave you. My associates will meet you there."

Jesus sat up in the water, looked at him quietly for a really, really long time, the sun moved across the sky, the shadows grew long, and then he said, "Have you ever loved someone?"

The devil said, "Really? Is that all you have after all this? "

Jesus still sat there in the water, soaking and dripping.

Eventually the devil said, "I may have, once."

Jesus asked, "What happened?"

The devil responded, "It didn't fit into my plans."

Jesus stood up and walked across to the other side of the spring.

He turned and stood there looking across the water at the tempter.

Jesus then said, "That is the difference between us. You have associates. I have friends."

And like that their journey together ended

Names and stories. They carry each other along.

We have this old family Bible that is full of names, from the 1830s to the 1940's, births, deaths, children, random family tree branches wandering off the edge of the brittle pages.

Died in barn fire, died in Panama working on the canal, died in Korea.

Names and stories.

Mary Martha Hardaway. Born on October 18 1918, daughter of J.B. Hardaway.

My great aunt.

Her birth scribbled into the margins of the page, and then a few

we say, “love the sinner and hate the sin” we become the worst 7  
sinners of all.

We are warned to give up pointing out the sins of others. To do so  
is to fall away from the grace that pursues us. God is much more  
interesting than our preoccupation with the short fallings of others.

We are the followers and proclaimers of a Prodigal Gospel.

God’s love is extravagant and over the top, reckless and lavish.

God is Prodigal, and Jesus is the prodigal love of God celebrating  
God’s children. Jesus is God’s lavish party, the reckless celebra-  
tion of God’s children. Jesus is the fatted calf, the ring on the fin-  
ger, the sandals on the feet, the best robe draped upon us.

Jesus is the strange and foreign country where we are set upon, and  
smothered with love and affection. Jesus is the ludicrous extreme,  
kissing, hugging and embracing of God.

God’s love is ravishing. It is too much. Off putting.

The prodigal Gospel is that God is simply crazy about us, God is  
about to pop. God doesn’t care a lick about dignity and poise; he  
is running out to get us.

Is that how we experience God?

It is tempting to resent that affection upon others.

It is tempting to be the resentful child.

What if the point of all of this is simply to say, “Thank-you?”

How many ways can I say thank-you?

A life of prodigal thanksgiving.

That is the parable that we write with our lives.

Lent 5c 2025; April 6

John 12:1-8; Jack Hardaway

### **NAMES AND STORIES**

Jesus and the devil were walking across a dessert wilderness full of  
rocks and tangled twisted brush.

They had been on the road, with a car, driving for weeks and  
weeks.

The car eventually gave out.

Now they had left the road and were walking across the open coun-  
try.

The devil is still in the story.

4

Today his name is Herod, that fox.

And Jesus is slowly walking toward him, toward Jerusalem, to-  
ward the confrontation, toward the passion.

Until then Herod and Jesus play the game of fox and hen, chase  
and tag.

The work continues, until then, of healing, and bringing liberation  
from the demonic.

Freedom and vitality are invading the dying landscape. The wil-  
derness is blooming.

Herod simply devours, that is what people like him do, people who  
are enslaved like he is, possessed.

What happens when the fox catches the hen, and tries to devour  
him?

Can he own the sky?

He’ll try.

What do we do with that insatiable hunger?

Abram welcomed the stranger, who were angels unawares.

All the stars in the sky, the fullness of the heavens, are for the chil-  
dren of Abraham.

Those same strangers were attacked later on in another town,  
Abraham’s nephew, Lot, rescued them. The devouring hunger  
possessed them. There were no stars in the sky for them, only fire  
and brim stone raining from the sky.

Two ways of being in the world.

The road trip continues, the story goes on, it lives on in each us.

We write the next chapter.

Lent 4c 2025; 30 March

Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32; Jack Hardaway

### **PRODIGAL**

A dry dessert highway, empty, no traffic.

A cloud of dust is rising off to the side in the prickly thickets, where a car rests, upside down, one tire slowly spinning. 5

Jesus and the Devil sit inside the car, suspended upside down by their seatbelts.

The devil is snoring.

Jesus looks out the window and sees a not too distant hillside, upside down, much closer than it was.

Then a mother possum slowly waddles across the upside down world, with three baby possums following, or clinging to her back, or falling off and trying to climb back on the mama in motion.

Jesus smiles marveling at the holy mystery of life.

Jesus then pokes at the devil who wakes up with a snort, and says, "What?"

Jesus points to the mama possum and her entourage.

They watch them slowly disappear into the brush.

Jesus then says, "Have you ever wondered that maybe the whole point of all of this is to simply say thank-you?"

The devil's ears start to smoke and sizzle. He answers back, in a silent whisper, "I thought I was supposed to be tempting you."

Jesus then smiles and says, "Thanks for the ride. We're almost there." Jesus then unclicks his seat belt, tumbles to the ceiling, crawls out, and starts walking.

The devil watches him go, and then yells out, "You know, you don't have to do this."

Jesus just keeps on walking.

The road trip continues toward the inevitable destination.

Two sons, brothers, and their father.

We hear their story today.

It is often called the parable of the prodigal son.

One of the most powerful stories in human history.

The word prodigal comes from the Latin word used to describe the excessive living of the younger son in the parable. It was used in the vulgate and has stuck with it ever since.

Prodigal: meaning excessive, profuse, extravagant, lavish, reckless. "Dissolute" is the word used in the translation we hear today, which has an immoral connotation which misses the point. The

younger brother lived with reckless abandon, with extravagant expense. 6

This parable of the prodigal son is full of prodigality.

Every character is prodigious in some way.

We all know about the younger son who squandered his inheritance by living large. He gets all the attention.

But the neglected older brother is extreme as well. He is resentful, prodigal in his resentment, prodigious in his jealousy, lavish in his anger. He is even more lost and wasteful than his extravagant younger brother. Half of the parable is about the resentful older brother. In some ways he is the point of the whole parable.

You know how we are when resentment blinds us. We see and say things that are false. He accuses his brother of horrible things, when all he did was live way beyond his means.

He is the prodigal warning to all us religious types and how we are tempted to sap all joy and thankfulness from the miracle of existence. To encounter God is not to be full of poison and gall over others, but to rather celebrate the gift that they are.

Then there is the father. He is prodigal in his love. His love for both of his children is extravagant and lavish. He goes out to invite his children in. He is over the top both in his joy at his lost son coming home, and in his pleading with the resentful older child.

There are other titles for this parable; such as, the Parable of the Resentful Brother, or the Parable of the Generous Father.

I wonder sometimes if it should be called the Parable of the Great Dad and his Two Idiot Sons.

But really, prodigal is the best title. Not the Prodigal Son but simply The Prodigal, because everyone in it is prodigal in some way.

The parable leaves us wondering just who is the sinner and if the older brother will join in the celebration.

Will he let his resentment and suspicion blind him to what life is really about? Will he squander his inheritance on dissolute resentment? It leaves us hanging. And we have to answer it ourselves with our own lives.

The gospel changes how we understand sin. It turns out that when