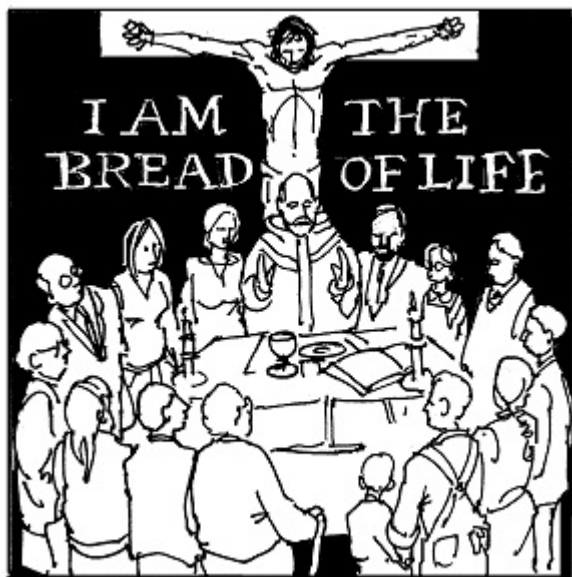


[Spirituality](#)

[Pencil Preaching](#)



by Pat Marrin

[View Author Profile](#)

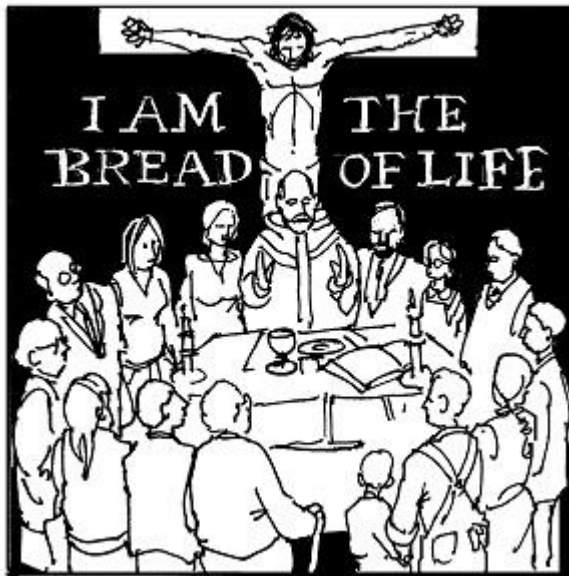
[patrickjmarrin@gmail.com](mailto:patrickjmarrin@gmail.com).

## [\*\*Join the Conversation\*\*](#)

Send your thoughts to *Letters to the Editor*. [Learn more](#)

October 14, 2020

[Share on Facebook](#)[Share on Twitter](#)[Email to a friend](#)[Print](#)



“Woe to you who build monuments to the prophets your fathers killed” (Luke 11:47).

*Eph 1:1-10; Luke 11:47-54*

In today’s Gospel, Jesus continues his denunciation of leaders who have betrayed the trust of those they were supposed to serve. He points to monuments to prophets who were murdered by one generation and memorialized by the next. These tributes stood as an admission of past sins the present institutions were built on. He attacks the scholars who hold the key to knowledge but do not practice it or share it with others. The scribes and Pharisees are furious and withdraw to plot his downfall for calling them out publicly.

Jesus’ searing critique echoes down to us. The current debate over monuments in the United States exposes the unfinished work of acknowledging and addressing the economic and social effects of slavery. Statues of slaveholders and confederate generals share space with the memorial to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr, gazing silently out over a nation still lagging in the struggle for equal rights. History judges the present generation for its failure to honor its own principles.

Major universities become bastions of privilege churning out graduates and papers on social problems that persist at their doorsteps, located, as many are, surrounded by poor neighborhoods that do not benefit from their academic excellence or huge endowments from wealthy beneficiaries of higher education. Prophets are marginalized as radicals, misguided activists who have no voice, go untenured, unheard, unpublished and dishonored until after they die and are rediscovered and

memorialized in chic documentaries about ideas whose time had come and whose causes were right but society was not ready for.

We understand why Jesus wept over Jerusalem before entering its gates riding on an ass, leading what looked like a children's crusade. He knew the hopelessness of changing the system before he went to overturn the money tables in the Temple, sealing his own fate. He celebrated Passover, shouldering its symbolism and accepting the role of Suffering Servant and sacrificial Lamb of God, then went to his death on a Roman cross, excommunicated by his religion and executed by the state. Failing in every way humanly possible, he went to the grave placing his hopes in the hands of his *Abba*, the God of justice and mercy, who reigns over history and would not let him disappear.

Jesus' mysterious resurrection, attested to by women, entered history as the timeless victory of love and justice over hate and oppression. It is the dangerous memory that will not go away, remembered at every Mass said and lived by any group that welcomes the outcast and serves the poor. Jesus is the murdered prophet we memorialized with the church and by every crucifix worn or mounted on spires or behind altars. The risen Christ is among us, inviting us to honor him by imitating him with our lives.

Advertisement