Spirituality
Pencil Preaching



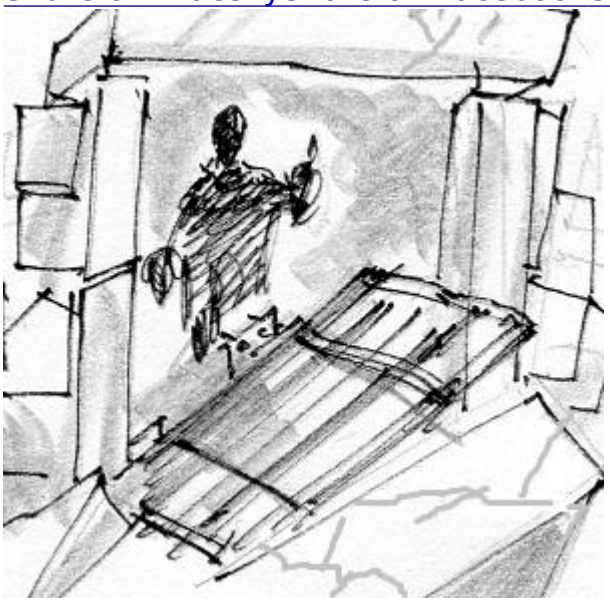
by Pat Marrin

View Author Profile
patrickjmarrin@gmail.com.

Join the Conversation

Send your thoughts to *Letters to the Editor*. Learn more

May 15, 2023
Share on BlueskyShare on FacebookShare on TwitterEmail to a friendPrint



“It is better for you that I go…” (John 16:7).

Acts 16:22-34; Jn 16:5-11

An earthquake at midnight frees prisoners and provides a metaphor for the ongoing power of the Resurrection. Luke is intent on retelling the Gospel story of Jesus in the life of the early church. What Jesus did – preach, heal and raise from the dead – the

disciples also do.

When Paul and Silas are beaten and jailed for preaching about Jesus in Philippi, they rise up and go free. The foundation of an old reality shifts and breaks open to release new life and freedom. (Acts 16:22ff). The world does a somersault. The Gospel cannot be chained, and the new Creation revealed in the death and resurrection of Jesus cannot be turned back.

Jesus prepares his Apostles for his departure: “It is better for you that I go, because when I go I will send the Advocate to you.” Jesus must go because the risen Christ is of a transcendent order of being that no single historical life can hold. His death and resurrection expand reality beyond caution and fear. Something utterly new is happening, and Jesus’ disciples will be its evangelists. They want to cling to him, but this would postpone the Age of the Spirit.

Jesus’ departure is what clears the space within them to receive the Holy Spirit. As music needs silence, so love needs longing. In ordinary human terms we say that “absence makes the heart grow fonder.” In fact, couples often do not know they are in love until separation occurs. It is the ache of absence that reveals just how important another person has become to us. We cannot live without them. Loneliness carves out the space within our hearts that can hold the mutual love that unites us.

So, the process of expanding love must begin. It gave birth to the church then; it calls the church now to new life. Grief, loss and introspection, the deepest unfinished prayer the disciples endured after Jesus dies, become the foundation of the Church at Pentecost. He returns to them with wind, fire and earthquake.

If we believe in Jesus, we must make his life, death and resurrection the foundation of our existence. Liturgically, we are entering the dark interval between the Ascension and Pentecost. Jesus must go away in order to return to us in the Holy Spirit. It is a sacred time of waiting and longing for the birth of something new and wonderful.

Only lovers understand that the next step they take will change everything. Only if they let go of their old lives will they be opened to enter a new future they could not have imagined. Only immigrants and refugees really understand the risks they are taking to find new life. Only the eager beginners and the dying pioneers know that their dreams are ahead, beyond the limits of ordinary reality.

Only the Holy Spirit knows the future and is offering us the gracious audacity we need to leap forward to claim it. What is the next step for you, and are you ready to take it?