



Into the Mess & Other Jesus Stories: Reflections on the Life of Christ

by Debi Thomas—

Week 7 Chapter 29 Bear Witness -- 34 The Extravagant Sower

Check in Question:

At the beginning of this section, the author quotes Richard Rohr in *The Universal Christ*: “Jesus came to show us how to be human much more than how to be spiritual, and the process still seems to be in its early stages.” How does this perspective challenge or affirm your understanding of Jesus and your own faith journey?

Opening Prayer

Loving God,
You call us to bear witness to your goodness
even when the way is unclear.
As we gather, quiet our hearts and open our minds.
Give us the courage to listen deeply,
to speak honestly,
and to recognize your presence
in challenge, blessing, and loss.
Be with us as we reflect together.
Amen.

Reflection questions:

Based on Chapter 29: Bear Witness

1. What does it mean for you personally to take responsibility for bearing witness to the believability of God?
2. How are you being called to care for those who are harassed, mistreated, oppressed, or exhausted?

Based on Chapter 30: The Blessing and the Bite

1. Thomas suggests that the Beatitudes are not qualities we strive to acquire but realities we must recognize—and that they challenge rather than comfort us. Which Beatitude do you find most challenging, and why?

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
Blessed are they who mourn, for they will be comforted.
Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the land.
Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be satisfied.
Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.
Blessed are the clean of heart, for they will see God.
Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.
Blessed are they who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
Blessed are you when they insult you and persecute you and utter every kind of evil against you falsely because of me.
Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven. Thus they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”
(Matthew 5:3-12)
2. In what ways do you experience the Beatitudes as blessings rather than rewards?

3. How do you live out—or demonstrate—your “blessedness” in daily life?
4. Our God makes reversals normative. Where have you witnessed such a reversal in your own life or in the world?
5. Thomas writes: “I think what Jesus is saying in the Beatitudes is that I have something to learn about discipleship that my privileged life circumstances will not teach me...”
How does this insight resonate with your own experience of discipleship?
6. Thomas says that “pain in and of itself is neither holy nor redemptive.” What is your response to this statement?

Based on Chapter 31: Go and Do Likewise

1. Amy-Jill Levine suggests that “religion is meant to comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable”. How does this idea resonate—or challenge—you?
2. Have you ever found Jesus’ parables to feel overly familiar or trite? What happens when you sit with them more deeply?
3. Who do you naturally consider your neighbor—and who do you struggle to see that way?
4. Thomas reminds us that being the Good Samaritan requires action, not just reflection. How are you living this call?
5. How do you describe your neighbor? Are they more than the sum of their political, racial, cultural, or economic identities?

Based on Chapter 32: On Lostness

1. When have you experienced being lost—spiritually, emotionally, or otherwise?
2. Did you encounter God in your lostness? If so, how?
3. Do you believe you are worth being sought after? Why or why not?
4. What did lostness teach you about vulnerability, empathy, humility, and who you truly are?

Based on Chapter 33: Letters to Prodigals

1. If you were to write a letter to either the prodigal son or the older brother, which would you choose—and why?
2. Would you allow the other brother to read the letter you wrote? What might that reveal?
3. If Thomas were to write a letter to you, what would you hope she would say?

Based on Chapter 34: The Extravagant Sower

1. If you consider your faith as one of the soils—hard, rocky, weed-infested, or fertile—how do you make sense of God continuing to scatter seed so generously?
2. How are you being invited to live with the same extravagance and trust as God?

Closing Prayer

For whom and what shall we pray...

Faithful God,

Thank you for meeting us in our questions and for sowing grace in every kind of soil.

Help us to carry what we have heard into our lives—

to see our neighbor more clearly, to trust your reversals,
and to live with compassion and courage.

Send us forth to bear witness to your love.

Amen.