

PASTOR'S PAGE – JULY/AUGUST 2008

Musings

I was at McDonalds getting lunch one day – a personal hazard, compounded by the firm belief that if I don't eat for longer than a week in any particular fast food restaurant the calories don't count. I had already ordered and was standing and waiting ... and people watching.

As I watched, a rough looking, "biker type" grandma comes in. She is way over weight, is covered with tattoos, has no bra on and wears a dress that is way too short and that doesn't support anything. With her is a small, very cute, girl of about 4.

The grandma stands in line. The little girl goes to look at a display of toys in the children's happy meal. The grandma says: "Come over here." The little girl pays no mind. The grandma repeats herself and there is the same response.

The grandma then grumbles about misbehaved grandkids, and her lot in life, and having to take care of the kid while her daughter works. Then she leaves the line and goes to stand by the little girl. "What are you looking at?" she asks. "Those," says the little girl as she points at the display. "Those are stupid!" says the grandma. The little girl does not respond and continues to stare at the toys. "Do you like those?" inquires the grandma.

The little girl glances at her and then looks wistfully back at the toys. "Oh, yes," the little girl says softly. "Then you're stupid, too," says the grandmother -- and she turns her back on the child and gets back into line.

Noticing me watching the grandmother says, "What are we supposed to do?"

"She's your granddaughter," I respond. "You're supposed to lavish her with love and buy her a toy – even when you think it's stupid."

As I ate, I watched them. The grandma scowled, and the little girl wolfed down her happy meal ... and then she began to play with her new toy. As I left she had escaped from the booth and was wedged happily between the trash container and the window. As I walked by the grandma continued to scowl. The little girl looked at me and said softly, "Thank you!"

I smiled and said: "You're welcome." It made my day.

Meditation

[I wandered off of Rumi for a time in order to read "Threatened with Resurrection" (Prayers and Poems from an Exiled Guatemalan) by Julia Esquivel. I thought this one to be particularly interesting.]

Those Who Saw the Star

The Word, for our sake, became poverty clothed as the poor who live off the refuse heap.

The Word, for our sake, became agony in the shrunken breast of the woman grown old by the absence of her murdered husband

The Word, for our sake, became a sob a thousand times stifled in the immovable mouth of the child who died from hunger.

The Word, for our sake, became rebellion before the lifeless body of Gaspar Sanchez Toma,(1) “scientifically” murdered.

The Word, for our sake, became danger in the anguish of the mother who worries about her son growing into manhood.

The Word became an ever-present absence among the 70,000 families torn apart by death.

The Word, for our sake, became an inexorable accusation arising from the blazing craters which swallowed up their tortured bodies.

The *word-knife* cut us deeply in that place of shame:
the painful reality of the poor.

The Word blew its spirit over the dried bones of the Mummified-Churches, guardians of silence.

The Word, that *early-morning-bugle*, awoke us from the lethargy which had robbed us of our Hope.

The Word became a path in the jungle, a decision on the farm,
love in women, unity among workers,
and a Star for those few who can inspire dreams.

The Word became Light,
The Word became History.
The Word became Conflict,
The Word became Indomitable Spirit,
and sowed its seeds
upon the mountain,
near the river,
and in the valley,

and *those-of-good-will*, heard the angels sing.

Tired knees were strengthened,
trembling hands were stilled,
and the people who wandered in darkness

saw the *light!*

Then,

The Word became flesh in a *nation-pregnant-with-freedom*,
The Spirit strengthened the arms which forged Hope,
The Verb became flesh in the people who perceived a new day,
and for our sake became life in Mary and Joseph who embrace
Righteousness and bury the people's ignominy.

The Word became the *seed-of-justice*
and we conceived *peace*.

The Word cried out to the world the truth about the struggle
against the anti-man.

The Word made *justice* to rain
And *peace* came forth from the furrows in the land.

And we saw *its glory* in the eyes of the poor converted into true
men and women.

Grace and Truth celebrated together
in the laughter of the children rescued by *life*.

And *those-who-saw-the-star*,
opened up for us,
The *path we now follow*.

Meanwhile,
Herod, slowly dying,
is eaten by worms.

The Word became judgment
and the anti-men ground their teeth.

The Word became forgiveness
and human hearts
learned to beat with love.

And the Word shall continue sowing futures
in the furrows of Hope.

And on the *horizon*
the Word made *light*
invited us to relive a thousand dawns

toward the Kingdom that comes.

The Word will gather us round her table.
And they will come from the East and the West,
from the North and the South,
and dressed in incorruption
we-will-finally-be-happy.

(1) Gaspar Sanchez Toma: syndicate member who was assassinated

Recommended Radio:

KUSF 90.3FM -- alternative music

KQKE 960AM (Air America) – Talk Radio from the Left

Recommended Movie:

Up The Yangtze

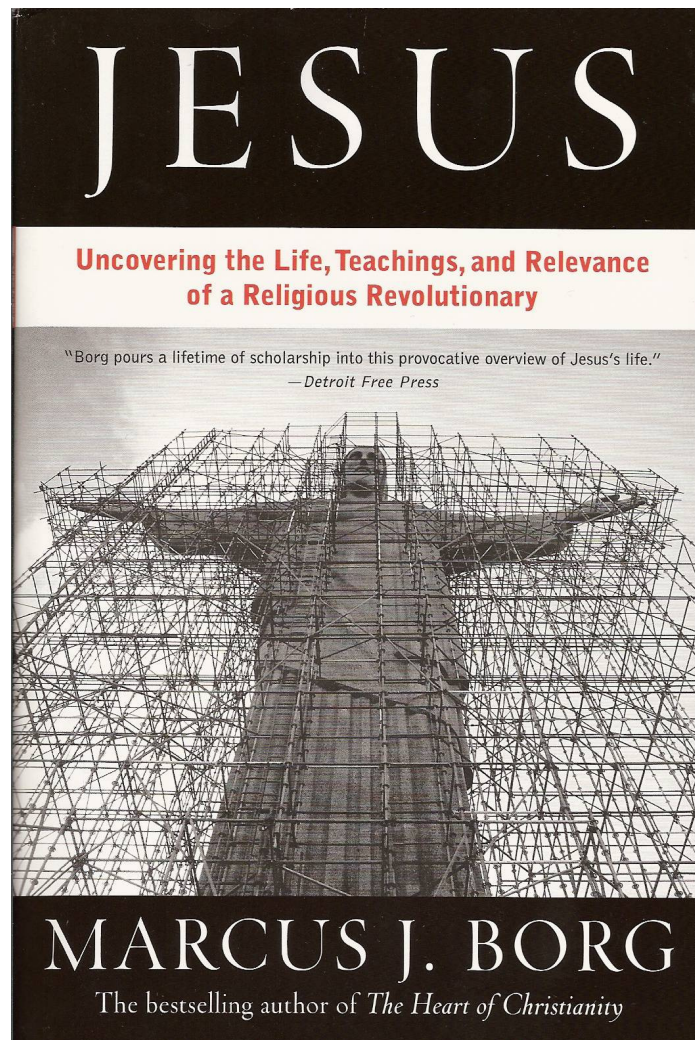


Director [Yung Chang](#) uses the construction of China's massive Three Gorges Dam as a springboard to better understanding the social hierarchies and changing times in his homeland in this documentary focusing on the luxury cruise ship that carries predominately Western tourists down the Yangtze River. Constructed as a symbol of modern progress in China, the Three Gorges Dam has forced millions of common people out of their ancestral homes, and will soon swallow up numerous nearby towns and villages. Despite the fact that the government has funded alternative housing for the dislocated families, however, many citizens make their way to higher ground feeling as if they have been duped by the powers that be. In order to truly understand how this affects the people, Chang focuses on telling the stories of middle-class scion [Chen Bo Yu](#) (renamed "Jerry" by the cruise line) and [Yu Shui](#) (who answers to the call of "Cindy")

while on duty). As the ship sets sail, this hard-working pair do their best to familiarize themselves with Western social cues, striving to perform to the best of their abilities, and ponder the prospects of a brighter future.

Winner of the World Cinema Documentary Competition at the 2008 Sundance Film Festival, voted Best Canadian Documentary, finalist for the Joris Ivens Award, and one of Canada's Top 10 in 2007.

Recommended Book:



"In every generation there are a handful of writers of whom it can be said, 'Read everything they write.' Marcus Borg is one of these today."

Walter Wink, *author of The Human Being*

"Marcus Borg is a key force in the emerging 'new paradigm' of Christian faith."
Walter Brueggemann, professor of Old Testament, Columbia Theological Seminary

In what may be his last comprehensive book about Jesus, Marcus Borg presents a book written within two contexts, the first century and the twenty-first century. Within it, he suggests a way in which to see Jesus shaped by history even as it is also addressed to Christians (and inquirers) within the modern cultural context. Thus we move back and forth between the first century and our own time, asking “what can we discern about Jesus then that matters for now?”

What began as a modest rewrite of an earlier book (*Jesus: A New Vision*) has itself become a major work helping readers to examine their relationship to the Jesus of then and now and enabling them to break out of conventional ways of seeing our Lord’s life and activity.

[Marcus J. Borg, author of *The Heart of Christianity*, is Hundere Distinguished Professor of Religion and Culture at Oregon State University and author of the bestselling *Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time*, *Reading the Bible Again for the First Time*, and *The God We Never Knew*. He also coauthored (with John Dominic Crossan) *The Last Week* and *The First Christmas*. He was an active member of the Jesus Seminar when it focused on the historical Jesus, and has been chair of the Historical Jesus section of the Society of Biblical Literature,

Quote of the Month:

“Time is sacred. Time is holy. Time is the raw material of the sacramental. Somehow or other we have to understand that this life is our life and the way we spend it is the kind of person we will, in the end, come to be.”

Joan Chittister