

## group Bible Study – March 5, 2008

### Read Hosea Chapter 14

**Reflection:** Bob Zurinsky, Center for Worship, [bob@spu.edu](mailto:bob@spu.edu)



The image on the front of this sheet is “Christ of St. John of the Cross,” one of the best-known paintings by 20th century artist Salvador Dalí. For many years I had a large print of this hanging on the wall above my desk at home. I think I was obsessed with it, actually.

It is haunting. Especially when it hangs above your head for days and years. When I look at this painting I actually have the feeling that the dead body of Jesus is hanging over the earth, hanging over me. And this has become a source of great comfort for me. It’s comforting, but it’s also shocking and scary. And I pray that I never forget just how scary it is.

We’ve come to the last week of ‘group’ for winter quarter—which also means the last week of dwelling in the season of Lent together. The next time we gather, Easter will have come. We’re coming to the end of a very important season that is, in the end, nothing more than an extended reflection on the cross of Christ.

For me, Lent is something much more profound than just ‘giving something up’—for me this is a journey toward Good Friday. A 40-day journey to the death of Jesus. A journey that has served to prepare me for this one final task: looking directly at the dead body of God, without turning away. And allowing this sight to shape my life.

As I turn my eyes to the dead body of God hanging on a cross, I know deep down, at a gut level, exactly what this whole thing means.

I have a friend who is dying of an incurable disease. He is a teenager, and it won’t be long. I have a friend who has no confidence in herself. Every interaction with another person is slow torture. I have a friend who is coming to understand himself as homosexual, and his insides are being torn apart day by day. I have a friend who is so lonely and desperate for affection that she would do literally anything to not be alone with herself. I have a friend who just realized that he’s really a lot uglier inside than he ever admitted before. And what’s worse, he doesn’t know what to do about it.

And as the dead body of God hangs over my head, I see how this whole thing works. This is the human body of God. This is God become us. This is all of humanity wrapped up in one bloody package. This is God become sin. This is God become death. This is God become me, and God become my friends. And he goes down into the earth. With us. (And in faith I will say: *for us.*)

I wonder if the prophet Hosea had anything so horrible in mind when he penned God’s promise in chapter 14:

**“I will be like the dew to Israel; he will blossom like a lily...  
I am like a flourishing juniper; your fruitfulness comes from me.”**