

# THE HOPE JOURNAL

LEARNING TO LOVE, TOGETHER

October 26, 2025



## MERCIFUL

*remembering God is the hero in our story*

by Drew Downs

*What am I supposed to do?* The eternal question. Asked of monks and yogis and gurus throughout human history by people looking for a right answer. Certainty. Conviction. Righteousness. We expect the answer is simple and that we're somehow unable to find it or name it or settle down upon it.

We center the story upon ourselves as the protagonist, of course. Life is always told in

the first person. But that doesn't mean we're the hero. That the world is dependent on us to get this one thing right or otherwise fall victim to the machinations of the antagonist.

God is the hero. We're here to tell the story, to participate in the living into it, the living embodiment of God's grace and love in the here and now as a threaded narrative of millions of protagonists, an ensemble cast, praying for grace and mercy.

# ORDINARY TIME

2025

## WHAT'S GOING ON

*"You know we've got to find a way  
To bring some loving here today".*

-Marvin Gaye

Disciples, Apostles, and Saints!

### Time with Jesus

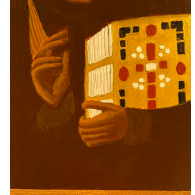
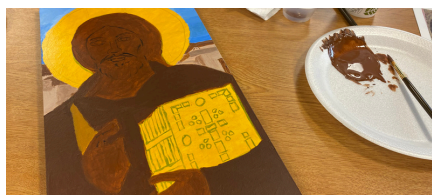
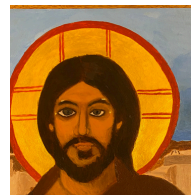
Last week I was fortunate to spend several days with clergy in our neighboring diocese of Northern Indiana at their fall clergy retreat where we prayed, wrote icons, and gathered in fellowship. It was faithful and holy time and a true delight. For many of us, it was our first experience writing an icon, which was an exquisite experience of faith and devotion unlike anything I've ever experienced.

To write an icon is to pray as much as paint, to trust as much as do, offering layers upon layers of brush strokes to a wooden board as servant-creative. And the result is a unique reflection for prayer and to assist in devotion.

This icon we wrote was based on Jesus the Pantocrator, an ancient Orthodox icon. And one of the comments that a colleague offered in reflection after spending 12+ hours of painting rung true: "I have not spent this much time looking at Jesus as I did the last three days."

What's stopping us from spending that time now? Nothing.

With love,  
Drew+



# ORDINARY TIME

2025

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## FOR SUNDAY

*Proper 25C*

October 26, 2025

### **Collect**

Almighty and everlasting God, increase in us the gifts of faith, hope, and charity; and, that we may obtain what you promise, make us love what you command; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

**Amen.**

### **Reading**

Luke 18:9-14

Jesus told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and regarded others with contempt: "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee, standing by himself, was praying thus, God, I thank you that I am not like other people: thieves, rogues, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give a tenth of all my income.' But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even look up to heaven, but was beating his breast and saying, God, be merciful to me, a sinner!' I tell you, this man went down to his home justified rather than the other; for all who exalt themselves will be humbled, but all who humble themselves will be exalted."

# ORDINARY TIME

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## Reflection

The evangelist gives us another clue with that opening editorial description, saying that Jesus was directing this parable, not at the disciples as he did the previous one, but “to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and regarded others with contempt”. This parable isn’t a math equation of two decent choices, but a comparison of a posture of grace and one of cruelty.

One of the easiest postures we could have is one of generic neutrality — to suggest we be indifferent to the actions of others and yet also self-righteous in that posture, elevating ourselves, rendering our own decency greater than others. A close second to that easy posture is the one where we focus, not on our own greatness, but on the weakness of others, thanking God we aren’t like them.

These postures are really easy to slip into and extraordinarily tempting. They seem harmless, fleeting, maybe even automatic and natural. Almost as if it were an actual form of gratitude. Like we are truly thankful for not being ugly or stupid or deluded or pathetic, etc. As if this were an expression of gratitude and not what Jesus seems to be describing it as: contempt.

The lesson for us in reading this isn’t to compare — to place ourselves in the place of contempt — but to seek freedom from comparison. That we are in a relationship with God in which we seek to be worthy. Not to assume we’re worthy or to judge the worthiness of ourselves (or others). But to put ourselves in a posture of seeking and hoping.

It is an American obsession to want security in definitions and certainty. But the certainty isn’t in our own righteousness. It’s in the certainty of Jesus’s righteousness. And we hope that we may be worthy of God’s generous grace.

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