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Bruce Beasley

FRAGMENTS FROM JUDAS'S GOSPEL

1. And Jesus instructed the twelve again, saying
 What you understand I will take
 from you now like a wound

2. Whoever believes in this
 will perish

3. From the figtree, learn its lesson:
 it shriveled, branches to root,
 a few hours after he touched it

4. Sell everything you own (he said)
 and give it to the poor.

She drew forth the precious alabaster
jar of nard, anointed him
with her hair. The poor (he laughed)
you have always with you.
His feet slathered with the priceless
ointment. All around us,
the fatted lamb, baskets of fish
(Lazarus, corpulent, sprawled at his side)

This is my body, he kept telling us

5. Because they alone understood him,
 he would not permit the demons to speak.

For the rest of us, garbled
parables
(The Kingdom of Heaven is like

the rendered
tallow, fat of the lamb;
like the bridegroom
who lies with his bride,

in joy, and then in bleeding)

Meaningless
speech, lest we turn and be saved

6. And he marveled
at our unbelief

7. Mary said to the angel,
Do with me as you must,
only spare my life,
for my sins are grave indeed

8. They sat mending their nets
when he called them,
arbitrary. The fishes
slapped at the flat stones, slashed
with their gills.

He who comes with me
will be like this, he said,
and held the stilled fish in his fist.

9. The healed lepers
sat by the roadside,
begging, still scraping at their scabs.
The healed blind man lay with the flies in his eyes

10. Barabbas, drunk in the brothel, shouted
Jesus has set me free

11. He said to Peter, the Kingdom built on your rock
is a desolate kingdom; I will give you its keys
12. Render unto Caesar
that which is Caesar's,
unto God, that which is God's:
for once, I could obey him, and with a kiss
13. O you of little faith,
Lazarus is laid again into the grave.
Take your comfort in his going down to Sheol
since your disbelief has made his raising
fail
14. And Jesus turned to me,
his weeping servant Judas, saying
See you
tell no one these things