

The Faces of the Beatitudes: Skits from the Time of Jesus

By Gusti Linnea Newquist

Suggestions for Use

These imaginary skits are designed to be read aloud or performed with a group. If you have time and energy, feel free to add simple costumes or props as suggested in the introductions to each skit. These extras are not essential in achieving the effect of the skits but they can enhance the interpretation. The most important thing is to catch the spirit of the narrative for yourself and for the group.

These skits may serve as a way to preview lessons or review lessons from *Confessing the Beatitudes*. For example, you might begin by inviting people from your group to perform the skit accompanying Lesson One. This will serve as a fun and educational way to get your group excited about the study. (You could even ask to perform the skit in your church service as a way to invite more people into this great study!) You could also begin Lesson Two by reading aloud the skit that accompanies Lesson One. Using the skits in this manner will allow you to review the material covered in Lesson One before you move on to Lesson Two. As you will discover, these skits are closely connected. Events that occur in one directly affect the events that occur in the next.

An introductory word about the content of these skits is also important. When the Bible Study Committee selected the topic of the Beatitudes in *Matthew* and *Luke* for the 2011–2012 study, they specifically requested that the study provide the historical context of these scriptures (see the inside front cover of the *Confessing the Beatitudes* study). They wanted readers to learn more about what the Beatitudes might have meant to the original audience who would have heard Jesus speak them. The goal of these skits is similar. These skits will give you a glimpse of

what it might have been like to hear the grace and good news of Jesus' teachings. As you participate in these fun, challenging skits, may you also feel a deeper connection to those who would have heard these words. May that connection bring you one step closer to honoring those whom God honors through the Beatitudes.

Cast (in order of appearance):

Makaria—a young Jewish woman from Galilee who is destitute

Jesus—an itinerant Jewish preacher

Prisca—a Jewish woman; the wife of Aquila, she later cofounds, with her husband, a house church (based on Prisca/Priscilla of *Acts 18* and *Romans 16:3–5*)

Aquila—a Jewish man; the husband of Prisca, he later cofounds, with his wife, a house church a (based on Aquila of *Acts 18* and *Romans 16:3–5*)

Cornelia—a young Gentile woman; she is the daughter of Cornelius, a Roman centurion (based on the Cornelius of *Acts 10*)

Cornelia's slave—an older Gentile woman whose name is not revealed until the final skit

Peteria—a Jewish woman and disciple of Jesus (based on Simon Peter of the New Testament)

Andrea—a Jewish woman and disciple of Jesus (based on Andrew of the New Testament)

Greatly Honored Are the Poor!

A Skit to Accompany Lesson One of *Confessing the Beatitudes*

Scene: A valley in Galilee, around noon

Jesus is sitting at the foot of a mountain, eyes closed, deep in prayer.

Makaria enters slowly. She is dressed very simply, and her basket of food contains a mere crust of bread. She looks around shyly, sees Jesus, then sits down at a distance facing him. She looks at the ground. Her bread remains in her basket, untouched.

Makaria (praying *Psalm 34:8*): “O taste and see that the LORD is good; happy are those who take refuge in him.”

A few moments pass. Prisca enters with her husband, Aquila. They are well-dressed in sturdy traveling clothes. Their food basket contains sufficient food for the day. She is excited, but he is hesitant. She is almost dragging him forward. He keeps trying to turn around, even while she is talking to him.

Prisca: “I know, honey, I know. We’ve heard so many of these traveling preachers before. But this one is different! Just give him a chance. Fifteen minutes. If you don’t like what you hear after fifteen minutes, we’ll go back to Jerusalem and that will be that.”

Aquila (stops physically trying to get away and sighs gruffly): “Fine. Just . . . fine. But don’t expect me to do this again, if this guy’s a nut like the last one. We’ve got a family to feed;

money is tight and we can't keep hopping around the Holy Land looking for a miracle. Herod's taxes are doing us in. No more travel after this."

Prisca: "I know, honey, I know. Just give it one more chance. There he is! Just look at him! He is *so* spiritual!"

Prisca sighs deeply in delight. Aquila rolls his eyes and throws up his hands in despair.

Prisca: "Here's a good spot. We can see him perfectly, without disturbing him."

Aquila stands frowning with his arms crossed, refusing to look at Jesus. Prisca places their blanket carefully on the ground in front of Makaria, not noticing her. Prisca sits down, facing Jesus, and takes out a loaf of bread. She turns to look up at Aquila.

Prisca: "Well, come on, aren't you at least going to eat?"

Aquila: "Oh, all right. Fine."

Aquila sighs gruffly again and sits down, still refusing to look at Jesus and not noticing Makaria.

Prisca (praying): "Open our hearts, minds and spirits, O Lord, to your word for us today. Amen."

A few moments pass. Cornelia enters. She is dressed lavishly as if she were going to a party. Cornelia's slave is dressed simply but decently and carries a basket overflowing with sweets, breads and fish. She is hobbling.

Cornelia (speaking loudly in a girly voice to her slave): "I don't know where I'm supposed to sit. You'd think there would be better crowd control."

Cornelia looks around with her hand shading her eyes but doesn't seem to notice Makaria, Prisca, or Aquila.

Cornelia: "Hard to believe all these people want to hear some Jewish guy named Jesus. Oh! There he is!"

Cornelia's slave arranges a blanket for Cornelia to sit on, beside Prisca and Aquila. Aquila glances at Cornelia and rolls his eyes. Prisca just shrugs. They keep eating. Cornelia's slave helps Cornelia to her seat, then offers her several sweets from the basket. Her hands are terribly arthritic, shaking and stiff as she tries to get Cornelia settled. Cornelia looks at the sweets for a moment, then chooses two.

Cornelia: "Well, I mean, I really *did* have to come, didn't I? Everyone is talking about him. No, I shouldn't miss it, even if it has nothing to do with me. And it's not as if we have anything better to do, living out here in the sticks of Galilee." (Cornelia visibly and audibly sighs.) "I can't wait until Dad gets transferred to Caesarea. He'll be a real Roman centurion! What an honor! It

will happen soon, he says! We're going to be something special, he says! Once Rome notices, we've got nothing to worry about. Ever. And the sea! What a wonderful place to live! Along the sea!"

The slave nods, then sits on the ground behind Makaria, without eating. Cornelia chomps loudly, Prisca and Aquila eat softly. Makaria and Cornelia's slave simply stare at the ground.

Jesus (standing): "Greatly honored are the poor!"

Cornelia (sputters, spitting out her sweets): "Did he just use the word *ptōchoi*, referring to the poor?!"

Jesus: ". . . the dominion of God is yours."

Cornelia: "Ha! This guy is nuts! Is he really saying that the destitute, the *ptōchoi*, are the citizens of heaven?! Are you kidding?! Since when are the poor and destitute considered so honorable?! That's not any kind of heaven *I* want to be part of. *My* father is a citizen of Rome. Now *that's* something to get excited about."

Aquila (laughing to Prisca): "You know, that girl is pretty smart, for a Gentile! What is this Jesus guy thinking? You and I both know that the only 'honor' to be found these days is with Rome. They have all the money, they have all the land. I don't know what kind of 'dominion' God has, but it sure can't compete with Rome!"

Prisca: “You *said* you’d give him a chance!”

Aquila (raising his voice): “I *am* giving him a chance!”

They stare at each other, then both sigh gruffly and cross their arms. Prisca looks at Jesus and Aquila stares into the distance, rolling his eyes again.

Cornelia’s slave (to Makaria): “Did he really just say that *we* are greatly honored? You? Me? *We* are the destitute, after all. We are the *ptōchoi*. But I’ve got to tell you, I don’t *feel* greatly honored. I have to follow this snarky kid around all day and do whatever she tells me to do. I have to leave my family and my home in Galilee and go to Caesarea just because her father got a promotion. Seems to me that *they* are the ones who have the dominion.”

Makaria shrugs and says nothing.

Jesus: “Shame on you who are affluent, for you are receiving your comfort.”

Prisca (to Aquila, uncrossing her arms): “See! I told you! He knows what he’s talking about. That’s exactly what you have been saying for years. You know our whole system of family-inherited land is falling apart. You know what it takes to get rich these days. You know how high the prices of food are. You know how it hurts the rest of us. That’s what Jesus says, too!”

Aquila (uncrossing his arms, but raising his voice even more): “Okay, fine, but what are we supposed to do about it? Just ‘be blessed’? Nothing has changed, as far as I can tell.”

Prisca (sighing and speaking softly after a moment): “Maybe he’s just saying that the first step in changing it is to confess that this unjust way of life is wrong and that we *all* have to change our hearts and minds in order to live in *God’s* dominion.”

Aquila sighs deeply, too. After a moment, he puts his arms around Prisca in silence. She relaxes.

Aquila: “I’m sorry, Prisca. You’re right. And so is he.”

Prisca: “You’re right, too, Aquila. It *is* hard. I know. Most of the time, it doesn’t feel as if very much has changed.”

Cornelia’s slave (to Makaria): “Do you hear those guys? They aren’t listening very well. Jesus said we *already are* living in your God’s dominion . . . whatever that means. You and me, at least. But maybe they aren’t, because they aren’t destitute like us. They aren’t *ptōchoi*.”

Makaria (whispers): “Are they not *ptōchoi* in spirit? I think being poor in spirit must count, too.”

Cornelia: “I don’t need to hear any more of this mumbo jumbo. I’m just going to lie down and take a nap.”

Cornelia lies down. Her slave places a blanket over her. Prisca and Aquila return to their loaf of bread.

Makaria (praying): “Living God, you came to us as an impoverished child, and taught us to honor those who are destitute. Loosen our grip on the things we crave, and teach us to share your good creation with all of your children. In the name of the one born in a manger, we pray. Amen.”

Greatly Honored Are the Mourners!

A Skit to Accompany Lesson Two of *Confessing the Beatitudes*

Scene: The same valley in Galilee shortly after noon the same day as mentioned in the skit for Lesson One.

Jesus is sitting quietly at the foot of the mountain, deep in prayer. Cornelia is snoring. Prisca and Aquila are sharing a loaf of bread. Cornelia's slave notices tears streaming down Makaria's cheeks.

Cornelia's slave: "Woman, why are you weeping?"

Makaria shakes her head in shame, trying to hide her tears.

Cornelia's slave: "No, really, what's going on?"

Cornelia's slave reaches over to Makaria, but Makaria shakes her off. Just then Jesus stands up and begins to speak.

Jesus: "Greatly honored are you weepers."

Cornelia's slave: "See! He says so, too! It's okay to let me help you. Tell me why you weep. There is nothing to be ashamed of."

Makaria: “It’s just . . . well . . . my husband was working on one of the Roman roads through our village. One of Herod’s cronies put the project together. We didn’t want him to do it—he hated the Romans—but what choice did he have? So he was gone every day from early morning to late at night. And one day he just didn’t come back. I don’t know why.”

Cornelia’s slave: “I know the road you’re talking about! Cornelia’s father was one of the guards there.” (whispering) “He said they had a lot of trouble with that crew. Too much grumbling, too much talk against Rome. They were worried about a riot. Cornelia’s mother got really scared and made Cornelia stay inside all week.”

Jesus: “God’s divine reign will bring consolation and laughter to those who mourn.”

Makaria weeps more loudly, uncontrollably. Prisca and Aquila turn around.

Prisca: “Who is this? I didn’t see her before. Dear girl, what is your trouble?”

Makaria just keeps crying.

Cornelia’s slave (whispering): “Her husband was one of the men taken by the Roman guards last week. You know, the ones working on the road nearby? She doesn’t know where he is. Or if he’s ever coming back.”

Prisca (praying): “Holy God, we pray for your comforting Spirit, always available to your children in their time of need. Amen.”

Cornelia rubs her eyes, waking up to the sound of Makaria’s cries.

Cornelia: “What is all that noise?! I was trying to get some sleep.”

Cornelia’s slave: “Oh, nothing. Not to worry.”

Makaria cries even louder.

Prisca: “It’s not nothing! It’s Rome! They take everything from us! Our land, our food, our husbands! They take everything!”

Cornelia recoils in fear and disgust.

Cornelia: “Excuse me, but you wouldn’t have anything if it weren’t for Rome! No roads, no peace, nothing. My dad is the one who has to keep everything safe for you. You have too many rebels, too many angry people. Last week he arrested an entire work crew because they were about to revolt!”

Makaria cries even louder.

Aquila: “How dare you!”

Prisca holds him back from advancing on Cornelia.

Jesus: “Shame on you who laugh and enjoy a good life in ignorance of the suffering your affluence causes.”

Prisca: “My dear girl, the husband of this young woman here is one of the men your father arrested. She doesn’t know where he is or when he’ll come home. That is why she weeps.”

Cornelia: “That means she’s one of *them!*” (to her slave) “Come! It’s time for us to go. These are not *our* people.”

Cornelia turns and walks away. Her slave does not move. A few moments later Cornelia realizes she is alone. She turns around and sees her slave, Prisca, and Aquila quietly comforting Makaria.

Cornelia (shouting): “Are you coming!?”

Silence.

Cornelia: “Why aren’t you coming!?”

Cornelia's slave (whispering to Makaria): "I need to leave you for a moment, but I will return."

Cornelia's slave walks slowly toward Cornelia.

Cornelia's slave: "I'm sorry, miss. But I can't leave her. "

Cornelia: "Why not!? I said it's time to go home! These are not *our* people!"

Cornelia's slave (quietly): "Miss, I'm afraid they *are my* people."

Cornelia (aghast): "What?!"

Cornelia's slave: "That man is right. That Jesus. Makaria is a mourner. The word for mourner that Jesus used was *klaiontes*. I also am *klaiontes*. I weep as well, and so she *is my* people."

Prisca comes up behind Cornelia's slave and puts her arm around her.

Prisca: "Come, dear. You may join us."

Cornelia: "She may *not* join you! She's *my* slave!"

Prisca: "No, my dear. She belongs to God. She is nobody's slave."

Cornelia stares dumbfounded at Prisca and her slave as they walk slowly back to Makaria.

Prisca, Makaria, Aquila, and Cornelia's slave stand in a circle together, Makaria still crying softly.

Aquila: "Open our eyes, oh God, to those who mourn in loss and in protest. Strengthen us to stand with them in love and justice, even as you stand with us. Amen."

Makaria, Cornelia's slave, Prisca: "Amen!"

Cornelia stares at them, then stares at the ground. She doesn't move.

Greatly Honored Are the Humbled!

A Skit to Accompany Lesson Three of *Confessing the Beatitudes*

Scene: The same day as mentioned in the skits for Lessons One and Two. Jesus, Peteria, and Andrea walk up the mountain in Galilee, finding a resting point halfway up. Jesus sits down and closes his eyes, as if in prayer. Peteria and Andrea survey the crowd down in the valley. Andrea stands still, reflective. Peteria is angry and pacing. She has boxing gloves hanging around her neck. It is nearly 1:00 PM.

Andrea (speaking softly): “That was really hard to watch.”

Peteria: “Tell me about it! Makaria, losing her husband so young. Cornelia clueless and stomping off! At least Aquila knew what he was talking about. And that Prisca woman seemed really nice.”

Andrea: “I wonder what Cornelia will do.”

Peteria: “Well, one thing is for sure. If Cornelia’s father had been there, I don’t think I could have controlled myself. It makes me so mad!”

Peteria lifts up the boxing gloves and starts punching into the air. She quotes from *Psalms 37*, each quote getting its own special punch.¹

“I would have hit him with the words of the Lord: ‘The wicked are violent against the poor and needy.’” (Punch.) “That’s all there is to say. They ‘borrow, but do not pay back.’” (Punch.)

“They ‘plot against’ those who are just.” (Punch.)

Andrea: (laughing) “Oh come on, Peteria, don’t start with the Rocky routine again!”²

Peteria: “I’m just so mad, I can hardly control myself! I feel like I could physically hurt them!”

Peteria just keeps punching, as if she were in a boxing match.

Andrea: “Okay, enough already. You know what would happen if you did anything with those gloves. You’d just be one more rebellious upriser they got rid of to keep the peace. This isn’t a Greek comedy, Peteria!”

Peteria throws down the gloves.

Peteria, quoting from *Psalm 37* again: “Ugh! It just makes me so mad! It’s just like God’s Word says: ‘The wicked draw the sword and bend their bows to bring down the poor and needy.’ That’s just the way things are. They ‘kill those who walk uprightly.’ They ‘borrow and do not pay back.’”

Jesus, opening his eyes and looking up to heaven: “Greatly honored are the humbled.” (Jesus closes his eyes and returns to prayer.)

Peteria: “Are you *kidding*?! Did you see that woman! How is *she* honored? Lost her husband, nowhere to turn, shamed into weeping uncontrollably by that . . . that no-good daughter of a Roman army officer!”

Andrea: “Now that’s not fair, Peteria. You saw what happened just as well as I did. Makaria really was comforted. And not just that. Cornelia’s slave stood up to her! Cornelia’s slave went back to *Makaria*! She looked pretty ‘honored’ to me.”

Peteria: “I just don’t believe it. Just because a couple of people held her hand doesn’t mean it’s all better now.”

Andrea: “Remember what we learn in God’s Word, Peteria: ‘Do not fret because of the wicked. They will soon fade like the grass, and wither like the green herb’. You know that.”

Peteria: “But look what’s happening right now!”

Andrea: “I know, Peteria. I know. But just remember what the scripture says: ‘Yet a little while, and the wicked will be no more. . . . Better is a little that the righteous person has than the abundance of many wicked.’”

Peteria: “But they take our land! They take it all! You heard Aquila! How much of the land can we lose?! You know what the taxation does to our people. You know that’s why Makaria is

destitute, why she is part of the *ptōchoi*. Her husband had to work on that road because the Romans already took their land. They had nothing left.”

Jesus, opening his eyes and looking up to heaven: “The humbled will inherit the land.”

(Jesus closes his eyes and returns to prayer.)

Peteria: “What? That’s the *problem!* The humbled, the *praeis* as you just called them, *don’t* inherit the land! They *lose* the land!”

Andrea moves toward Peteria to calm her down. Peteria shrugs her off.

Andrea: “I know it might not mean much . . . but just look down there in the valley. Look at that beautiful valley with all of those people. The Makarias and the Priscas and even the Cornelias. They are all there together in that beautiful valley. Even if it’s just for a moment, even if it will end soon . . . *that’s* what Jesus is trying to say. *This* is where the honor is. It starts right here . . . in this valley . . . and we take it with us wherever we go.”

Peteria grunts.

Andrea: “Just look, Peteria. Look out there in the valley.”

Peteria stands up begrudgingly and looks into the valley.

Andrea: “What do you see, Peteria?”

Peteria: “People. So many people.”

Andrea: “Do you see any Romans?”

Peteria: “Well, yes, of course, there’s Cornelia.”

Andrea: “What’s she doing?”

Peteria: “Well . . . it’s hard to say . . . I mean . . . it *looks* like she’s gone back to Makaria. Like she’s talking with Prisca. Oh! Wow! Aquila put his arm around her! Makaria put her arm around her! They’re taking her back! They’re acting like she’s one of them!”

Andrea: “Maybe she *is* one of them. Maybe she just needed to see. Maybe she was just blind before.”

Peteria: “I guess I just really need to remember what God’s Word says: ‘Do not fret because of the wicked; do not be envious of wrongdoers.’”

Andrea: “‘Trust in the Lord, and do good; so you will live in the land, and enjoy security.’”

Peteria: “‘Refrain from anger, and forsake wrath.’”

Andrea: “Do not fret—it leads only to evil.”

Peteria: “For the wicked shall be cut off, but those who wait for the Lord shall inherit the land.”

Andrea: “I think that’s what Jesus was trying to say.”

Peteria: “We just have to decide we want to live that way.”

Andrea: “And we have to believe that people can change their hearts and minds. Because they can.”

Peteria: “It’s hard for me to change.”

Andrea: “Maybe God can take our small attempts and turn them into something really big.”

Peteria: “Like that crowd that came to hear Jesus?”

Andrea: “Like that crowd that came to hear Jesus.”

Peteria: “Almighty God, we are drawn to those in power, and we ignore those who cannot defend themselves. Like Moses at the bush, send us to defend your people who suffer oppression

and cannot fight for themselves. Grant us courage to speak justice to the oppressed, even as Christ did. Amen.”

Notes

1. The scripture quotes in this skit are as translated by Bible study author Margaret Aymer and skit author Gusti Newquist.

2. This line is a reference to the Hollywood films based on Rocky Balboa, a fictional boxer brought to life by Sylvester Stallone. Rocky is a sympathetic “everyman” character who overcomes great odds to become a champion.

Greatly Honored Are Those Who Are Famished and Parched for Justice!

A Skit to Accompany Lesson Four of *Confessing the Beatitudes*

Scene: The same day as mentioned in the skits for Lessons One through Three; back in the valley, shortly after 1:00 PM.

Makaria, Cornelia, Cornelia's slave, Prisca, and Aquila have put their blankets together, sitting around the edges, facing one another. Their food baskets are in the middle.

Prisca: "I wish we hadn't already eaten that loaf of bread. We could have shared it with you."

Aquila: "And I wasn't even *really* all that hungry. Just eating because I was supposed to. It was noon, after all."

Cornelia: "Well, I have plenty. Didn't you see? Sweets and breads and nuts and fish. Makaria, you can have some of mine."

Makaria (glancing at Cornelia's slave): "I don't think so."

Cornelia (shocked): "What?! But why? Come on, Makaria, it's no big deal. I have so much, and I'm happy to share."

Makaria looks longingly at the food, but then shakes her head no.

Cornelia: “Well, suit yourself. Prisca? Aquila?”

Prisca starts to grab a sweet, but Aquila pulls her back.

Aquila (sharply): “No, Cornelia. We’re not hungry.”

Prisca looks at Aquila puzzled.

Aquila looks pointedly at Cornelia’s slave. Prisca follows his glance. Cornelia’s slave looks down at the ground.

Prisca: “Oh! No, Cornelia. Aquila is right. We have all we need.”

Cornelia: “But you don’t! You only have bread and some fish. You need nuts and sweets to round out your diet. Makaria! You only have that small crusty loaf of bread. Here. Let me help you!”

Makaria, Prisca, Aquila, all at the same time: “No!”

Cornelia starts to cry: “But why!?”

Cornelia’s slave lifts her eyes.

Cornelia's slave (softly): "Miss?"

Cornelia (sharply): "What?"

Cornelia's slave (softly again): "I think it's because of me."

Cornelia: "But what does any of this have to do with you?"

Cornelia's slave (with a bit more courage): "I think it's because they think you should offer some food to me."

Cornelia stares at her slave, speechless.

Cornelia's slave (more steady now): "I'm the only one without a basket, Cornelia. Even Makaria has a basket. Even Makaria has a little bit of food. But I don't have anything. I carry your basket. I carry your food. I eat when you think to let me eat. But . . . well . . . I'm sorry to say that sometimes you forget. Sometimes I go whole days. Sometimes I get so hungry . . . so incredibly hungry . . . well, I just can't help myself. When you're sleeping, sometimes I . . . well . . . sometimes I take a small piece of bread from your basket just so my stomach will stop clenching so hard. It hurts you know? Hunger pangs are real. It's not like just missing a meal. It's like my insides start pulling at each other, and I wonder if there's anything left inside of me."

Cornelia: "But . . ."

Cornelia's slave: "I know you think you take really good care of me. I know you do. And yes, most of the time I have at least a little bit to eat. And this is a nice dress I am wearing. And usually I have a place to sleep. But I don't eat like you think I do. You don't give me what you think you do. And I'm so hungry . . . all . . . the . . . time! And I'm so tired . . . all . . . the . . . time! And your mother wants me to carry everything for you all the way to Caesarea. And I can't! I can't! I'm too tired!"

Makaria: "She's *peinontes*, Cornelia. Do you remember what that word means? She is famished—*peinontes*. Jesus just said that those who are *peinontes*—who are famished—are greatly honored. Yet you didn't offer her anything from your basket."

Cornelia: "But . . . I . . ."

Prisca: "You just weren't thinking, were you?"

Cornelia (starting to cry): "No. I'm so sorry! I just wasn't thinking! I'm so sorry!"

Prisca puts her arm around Cornelia. Cornelia's sniffles turn to full-fledged sobs.

Cornelia: "I didn't know! I didn't know! I didn't know!"

Prisca: "It's easy to be blind when you don't have to know. When you're someone who gets to eat so much that you are actually stuffed—I think Jesus just used the word *empimplemi* to

describe being so stuffed—well, it’s hard to notice when others aren’t the same way. I know, Cornelia. I used to have everything I wanted, too. But then we lost it all. That was when I started to notice others like Makaria. Like your slave. And then I found out that all the best produce goes to Rome. And even knowing all of this injustice exists, there are still times when I don’t notice those who are famished. Not always.”

Aquila: “I was so ashamed when I couldn’t feed my family. That’s what I’m supposed to do! I mean, we make it alright these days. But not like we used to.”

Cornelia (looking at the crowds all around): “Oh, I feel so overwhelmed! I don’t want to see! All these people are famished! They all are *peinontes*! There are so many of them! I don’t have enough food for all of them!”

Makaria (gently): “You have enough for us.”

Cornelia: “But you won’t eat it!”

Makaria: “I think . . . if you just talked to your slave . . . just . . . well . . . do you even know her name? If you just talked with her . . . maybe you could eat together. Maybe you could even be fed and pastured together by God. Jesus said that all who are famished for food and justice would be fed . . . I think the word he used was *chortazo*—those who are famished will be *chortazo*—pastured and fed.”

Prisca: “I’ll eat if she eats.”

Aquila: “Me, too.”

Cornelia (taking a deep breath and turning towards her slave): “Well, what do you think? Will you join me for dinner?”

Cornelia’s slave: “I’d like that very much.”

Cornelia pulls out the extravagance of her basket of food and passes it around, starting with her slave.

Makaria: “God of the harvest, many are hungry. Many more thirst for justice. Awaken us to how we contribute to the hunger and thirst of our neighbors. Teach us to feed your people with food and justice, even as you fed your people with manna, that all may be satisfied. Amen.”

Cornelia (chewing loudly): “So where did that Jesus guy go?”

Prisca: “I saw him go up the mountain with a couple of people. Maybe he wanted to talk with them personally. I don’t know why.”

Cornelia: “I wonder if *they* have enough to eat?”

Cornelia's slave (laughing): "Something tells me they do."

Makaria: "Well, one thing is for sure. We who are famished are greatly honored!"

Aquila: "But it's more than just the food, isn't it? That's what Cornelia's slave taught us."

Prisca: "What do you mean?"

Aquila: "It's about justice—I heard someone say that Jesus also talks about people being famished for justice. The word he uses is *dikaiosyne*. Cornelia's slave wasn't just hungry for food. She was hungry for justice! For *dikaiosyne*!"

Prisca: "You're right! And now we are all eating together, because of her!"

Aquila: "Yeah, but we still don't know her name . . ."

Greatly Honored Are the Merciful!

A Skit to Accompany Lesson Five of *Confessing the Beatitudes*

Scene: The same day as mentioned in the skits for Lessons One through Four; back up on the mountain, about 1:30 PM. Peteria and Andrea stand close to each other. Jesus is nearby, his eyes closed in prayer.

Peteria: “I don’t believe it! I don’t believe what I just saw!”

Andrea (yawning): “What is that, Peteria?”

Peteria: “Well, there they were. The two who were destitute, weeping, humbled, famished. They stood their ground! And now that Cornelia girl is sharing her food, and they all are laughing, and they are happy, and they all really seem to like each other.”

Andrea: “Cornelia shared her food?”

Peteria: “Yeah!”

Andrea: “Well, you know, I kind of thought she would.”

Peteria: “You did?”

Andrea: “Well, I saw her face when her slave first decided not to follow her. Remember? When Makaria was crying and Cornelia wanted to leave? But her slave said no. And Cornelia’s face looked shocked. And then angry. And she could have caused a really big scene. There were guards around, you know? She could have done something really bad to that slave. But she didn’t. For just a minute . . . just a brief minute . . . she looked . . . almost . . . in love.”

Peteria: “In *love*?!”

Andrea: “You know . . . like she had a deep, steadfast love for her slave . . . sort of like God’s steadfast love—some call it God’s *hesed* or God’s *eleos* . . . and it’s a love of loyalty. It was like she wasn’t going to leave her slave or call the guards because it would have been a betrayal . . . of her *slave*! I think somehow Cornelia knew that!”

Jesus, opening his eyes and looking up to heaven: “Greatly honored are those who show steadfast love, or covenant loyalty, for the same will be shown to them.” (Jesus keeps his eyes open and listens to Peteria and Andrea.)

Peteria: “So Cornelia was merciful?”

Andrea: “In a way. But so was her slave.”

Peteria: “How do you mean?”

Andrea: “Well, in the end, Cornelia’s slave accepted Cornelia’s food.”

Peteria: “But first Cornelia had to repent.”

Andrea: “Right! So Cornelia showed mercy by not going after the guards. And Cornelia’s slave showed mercy by telling Cornelia why Makaria, Prisca and Aquila would not accept Cornelia’s food. She took a great risk. She told the truth. She gave Cornelia a chance to see the error of her ways. And Cornelia did!”

Peteria: “They both showed mercy.”

Andrea: “Right. And then they had a really big party.”

Peteria: “That was my favorite part!”

Andrea: “And look. Look at the rest of the crowd. What do you see?”

Peteria: “Well. There are a lot of people, that’s for sure. But they seem to be different than before.

Before, they were all looking at Jesus, not each other. But now . . . now they seem to be in different groupings together. Only they aren’t the groups like you think they would be.”

Andrea: “Okay . . . so what are you saying Peteria?”

Peteria: “Well, at first they weren’t really paying attention to each other. Like Cornelia. She didn’t even see Makaria at first.”

Andrea: “Neither did Prisca or Aquila.”

Peteria: “Right. But now, they’ve put their blankets together and are sharing their food and having a great time.”

Andrea: “Exactly!”

Peteria: “But they aren’t the only ones. That’s what I’m trying to say. It’s happening all over the crowd. There are all these small groups with all different kinds of people . . . people who don’t even see each other most of the time. And they’re eating, and they’re talking and they all seem to really like each other.”

Andrea: “Exactly!”

Peteria: “So what *are* you trying to say Andrea?”

Andrea: “I’m just thinking about our anger, you know? I mean, it’s real. The injustice is real. The pain is real. It doesn’t seem to go away. But here we are with Jesus telling us what we need to hear, even if we don’t like it at first. And when we feel really angry, he tells us to be merciful. Steadfast. Loyal. Don’t give up. Love. Speak the truth. That’s what Cornelia’s slave did. She had

the courage to speak the truth. Makaria, too. And Cornelia changed her mind. She changed her heart.”

Peteria: “Yeah, well, that’s only for an afternoon, though. We’ll see if it sticks.”

Andrea: “That’s always the risk isn’t it? Maybe she’ll go back to her father’s house and fall right back into the same old patterns. But maybe . . . just maybe . . . she won’t. Maybe she’ll say something to her mother. Maybe she’ll even say something to her father.”

Peteria: “She wouldn’t dare!”

Andrea: “Maybe not. But maybe she would. I mean, didn’t her slave take a huge risk in telling *her* the truth? Maybe Cornelia will feel empowered to take the same risk with her parents. And wouldn’t it be great if she did?!”

Peteria: “Do you think Cornelia’s parents will show her mercy because Cornelia has also shown mercy?”

Andrea: “Something like that.”

Peteria: “Well, I have to confess: it’s really hard for me to show mercy. I just want everyone to *get it* already!”

Andrea: “But don’t you think people show *you* mercy?”

Peteria (somewhat shocked): “What do you mean?”

Andrea: “Well, like Jesus, for example.”

Peteria: “Jesus? Showing *me* mercy?!”

Andrea: “You don’t think so?”

Peteria: “Well, of course not! I haven’t done anything for which he would need to show me mercy!”

Andrea: “You don’t think so?”

Peteria: “No!”

Andrea: “And you don’t think you ever will?”

Peteria: “No! I would rather die than dishonor him!”

Jesus (shaking his head): “Do you love me, Peteria?”

Peteria: “Yes, you know that I love you!”

Jesus (pointing to the crowd in the valley): “Peteria, feed my sheep.”

Andrea: “Merciful God, fill our hearts with mercy for your people. Move us to act with mercy on their behalf. Steady us to dedicate our lives to the Christ-like way of mercy. Transform us into people who show mercy, as you show mercy, that we may truly be your people. Amen.”

Greatly Honored Are the Pure in Heart!

A Skit to Accompany Lesson Six of *Confessing the Beatitudes*

Scene: The same day as mentioned in the skits for Lessons One through Five; back up on the mountain, shortly after 1:30 PM. Peteria and Andrea stand close to each other. Jesus is nearby, his eyes closed in prayer.

Peteria, praying *Psalms 51:1*: “Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy, blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.”

Andrea: “What are you doing?”

Peteria: “I’m praying from the psalms.”

Andrea: “I know that. But why?”

Peteria: “Because Jesus seemed to be telling me that I needed to repent. I’m not sure why. But if he said I need to do it, I guess I will.”

Andrea: “I thought it was more about showing mercy to others. He wanted you to get over your anger and start feeding his sheep, right?”

Peteria: “No, I think he was just flat-out telling me I’m not good enough. I want to be good enough. I want to be the one he can trust.”

Andrea: “We all want that, Peteria.”

Peteria: “But I *really* want it!”

Andrea (laughing): “Well, what are you going to do to get it, then?”

Peteria (laughing back): “I *told* you! I’m praying!”

Andrea: “May I join you?”

Peteria (sigh): “I guess so.”

Andrea: “Let’s continue praying the scriptures together.”

Andrea and Peteria, praying *Psalm 51:6*: ““You desire truth in the inward being; therefore teach me wisdom in my secret heart.””

Andrea: “Okay Peteria . . . so, just checking—what part of your heart is ‘secret’?”

Peteria: “All of it!”

Andrea: “Alrighty, then!”

Peteria: “Can we just keep praying?”

Andrea: “Okay.”

Peteria and Andrea continue with *Psalm 51:10–12*: ““Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me. Do not cast me away from your presence, and do not take your holy spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and sustain in me a willing spirit.””

Jesus, opening his eyes, joins in prayer with *Psalm 51:17*: ““The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.”” (Jesus keeps his eyes open and listens to Peteria and Andrea.)

Peteria: “But really . . . have I done something wrong?”

Andrea: “It’s not what you’ve done wrong, Peteria. It’s what God has done right.”

Peteria: “What do you mean?”

Andrea: “I mean, you are seeing God, are you not? Like Jacob, our forefather from the scriptures, wrestling with the angel. You’re so honest with God about how you feel. The world

is not right! The world is unjust! And you want to make it just! And your passion is beyond compare!”

Peteria: “That’s true, but what are you saying?”

Andrea: “Well, I’m just saying that you are seeing God, right here, right now. And it’s not all fun and games.”

Peteria: “What do you mean?”

Andrea: “Remember Jacob? Remember that angel? Remember the limp he got in his hip just because he saw God?”

Peteria: “But Jacob was desperate for a blessing. That’s different.”

Andrea: “Ahem? Really?”

Peteria: “It *is*!”

Andrea: “You aren’t desperate for a blessing?”

Peteria (chastened): “Well . . .”

Andrea: “We all are, Peteria. Of course we are. Better to just admit it than to pretend otherwise.”

Peteria (choking up): “I just *do*, I guess. I just *do* want God to bless me.”

Andrea: “As badly as Jacob did?”

Peteria: “As badly as Jacob did.”

Jesus: “Greatly honored are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.” (Jesus returns to prayer as Andrea and Peteria step away to talk together)

Andrea: “I think your heart is pure, Peteria.”

Peteria: “Why do you say that?”

Andrea: “Because it’s not about getting everything *right*. It’s not about perfection. It’s about loving deeply. And you do that.”

Peteria: “That’s why Jesus told me to feed his sheep?”

Andrea: “He asked if you loved him, right?”

Peteria: “Right.”

Andrea: “And then he said to feed his sheep?”

Peteria: “Right.”

Andrea: “So what are you still doing up here on the mountain?”

Peteria: “What do you mean?”

Andrea: “He told you to feed his sheep!”

Peteria (a bit bewildered and exasperated): “I know. But I think I am missing your point!”

Andrea (pointing out to the crowd in the valley): “His *sheep* are *down there!*”

Peteria: “But I want to be close to Jesus! Jesus is up here!”

Andrea (sighing): “You still don’t get it, do you?”

Peteria (frustrated): “Get *what!?*”

Andrea: “*Jesus is down there with them!*”

Peteria: “Down there?”

Andrea: “Down there. With the crowd. If you want to be greatly honored, if you want to be pure in heart, if you want to be with Jesus, if you want to *see God*, then *get down off this mountain and get out into that valley where God’s people are, and feed them! Do like Cornelia did! She is pure in heart now!* Jesus just used the word *katharos*—and you know what that word means! Pure in heart!”

Peteria: “Oh, my! You are right! You really are!”

Andrea (laughing): “Of course I am!”

Peteria: “Can we pray together one last time before I go?”

Andrea: “Of course.”

Peteria and Andrea: “We confess, oh God, that you are sovereign and just, faithful to those in need. Purify our hearts and strengthen our resolve to live out our confession in truth. Fix our eyes on you, that our lips and our lives may reflect, with integrity, our discipleship to our Savior. Amen.”

Greatly Honored Are the Peacemakers!

A Skit to Accompany Lesson Seven of *Confessing the Beatitudes*

Scene: The same day as mentioned in the skits for Lessons One through Six; back in the valley, around 3:00 PM

Makaria, Prisca, Aquila, Cornelia, and Cornelia's slave are still feasting. Peteria walks up to them.

Peteria: "*Shalom.*"

Makaria, Prisca, Aquila, Cornelia and Cornelia's slave: "*Shalom!*"

Cornelia's slave: "Would you like some bread?"

Peteria: "I'd love some."

Cornelia: "Please, join us."

Peteria sits down and begins to eat.

Aquila: "I saw you! Before. Up front with Jesus. Were you with him on the mountain!?"

Peteria: “Well, I’ve been with him from the beginning . . . in the very first group, actually. He had a couple of things to say to us privately.”

Prisca: “Anything we ought to know?”

Peteria: “Oh, no. Just some of the strategies for the movement. You know . . .”

Cornelia: “Strategies? What do you mean?”

Peteria: “Well, it’s all about resisting Rome.”

Cornelia: “I am so tired of hearing how bad Rome is! They’re trying to bring us *peace*! It’s the revolts that are the problem. My dad says—”

Aquila (cutting off Cornelia): “Cornelia! Are we really back here again? Have you not heard anything!? Makaria’s husband is *gone*! Our food is *gone*! Our land is *gone*!”

Cornelia: “But the *Pax Romana*—”

Aquila: “—is nothing but a *big fat lie*!”

Cornelia: “But—”

Aquila (standing up): “I can’t believe this! I just can’t believe this!”

Aquila starts to stomp away. Prisca jumps up to follow him.

Prisca: “Aquila, come back!”

Aquila: “No way. I’m done.”

Prisca: “She’s come a long way, Aquila. She’s a good girl. We can help her the rest of the way. You know that’s what we have to do.”

Aquila (with a deep breath): “Okay. But you do the talking.”

Prisca: “No doubt about it!”

Prisca and Aquila return to the group.

Prisca: “Cornelia, I know that your family has benefitted from what is called the peace of Rome—the *Pax Romana*. And your father is even part of the army. But peace for the Romans is nothing more than violence for the rest of us.”

Cornelia: “But the whole point is *not* to have violence! The point is to protect you from the rabble-rousers!”

Prisca: “But that’s not really how it works in the day-to-day of life, Cornelia. Put yourself in our position. We already told you how the creation of those larger farms called *latifundia* resulted in so many of us being kicked off our own land. We already told you how our best crops go to Rome while our children are malnourished. You know about Makaria’s husband. Why do you think we revolt, Cornelia? We’re desperate!”

Cornelia: “But—“

Prisca: “And that’s not all, Cornelia. Our leaders are not with us, their people. They are with Rome! They tell Rome whom to crucify! We walk past all these crosses, all the time! They shame us into submission, Cornelia. That’s not peace! That’s war!”

Cornelia: “But my dad would never do that! He’s a really good man!”

Cornelia starts to cry.

Prisca (comforting her): “Cornelia, he may not know what he is doing. Or he may think he is doing the right thing. But for us, it is more than we can bear.”

Cornelia: “It’s more than *I* can bear! What am I going to do? I love my dad. I love my family. But if he’s doing all these bad things, what am I supposed to do? I can’t leave! I have nowhere to go.”

Prisca: “Is there any chance you could talk to your dad? Tell him what you have learned here?”

Cornelia: “Are you kidding? I’m the daughter. The *youngest* daughter! I have no right to talk to my father that way.”

Aquila: “She’s right, Prisca. She has no status to speak to her father that way. It would be way too dangerous for her.”

Prisca: “But her slave had no status to speak to *her*, either. And she did it. Jesus gave her the courage. Jesus helped her claim her honor.”

Aquila: “That’s true. But doesn’t Cornelia have more to lose?”

Prisca: “Maybe. Maybe not. I bet her slave would help her.”

Cornelia: “Hey! Did you forget I’m here? You’re talking about me like I’m not here!”

Prisca: “Oh, sorry.”

Peteria: “And I’m here, too.”

Makaria: “Me, too.”

Cornelia's slave: "Me, too!"

Prisca: "How embarrassing! You're right. We really do need to be talking to each other."

Peteria: "Well, there is one thing Jesus said to me before I left. I think it might be important."

Cornelia: "What's that?"

Peteria: "He said, 'Greatly honored are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.'"

Cornelia gasps. Aquila, Prisca, Makaria, and Cornelia's slave clap and shout, "Amen!"

Cornelia: "How could he say that? Caesar is the son of God! He's going to get into *really* big trouble! Somebody needs to warn him!"

Peteria: "Oh, he knows what he's doing, all right. I told you. This is all part of the strategy. All part of the movement. We're going to overthrow Rome!"

Makaria: "Wait a minute, Peteria. Didn't he say, 'Blessed are the *peacemakers*'? That doesn't sound like a movement to overthrow an empire."

Cornelia's slave: "I think it is, actually. But in a different way than it sounds. What would happen if all of us—me, Cornelia, you, Prisca, Aquila—what if everyone who is here in this

valley really believed *we* were the sons of God? Not Caesar. What if we really believed *we* received God's inheritance, God's property, God's own name, even God's status? We wouldn't have to be afraid anymore. We could tell the truth and know that, whatever happened, we had the honor of God with us. That's how it felt when I told you the truth about me. Like I really did belong to God. Like I really did have the right to speak the truth of the injustice I was experiencing. And you listened."

Cornelia: "So you're saying that if I trust that I am the . . . oh, this is really hard to say . . . that *I* am the 'son of God' . . . I can't say it! I can't!"

Aquila: "It sounds like blasphemy, I know."

Makaria: "But it's not, Cornelia. It's what gives us courage to live in true peace with one another."

Cornelia: "I'm scared."

Makaria: "I am, too Cornelia. But I have to tell you, if you talk to your father, if you tell him what you have learned, if he listens to you . . . well . . . if my husband is still alive, maybe your dad will let him come back to me."

Cornelia: "I could make that happen?"

Cornelia's slave: "God could make that happen through you."

Cornelia: "I'll do it! I promise. I'll do anything to help you get your husband back."

Cornelia's slave: "God of peace, we long for the wholeness that your *shalom* promises to us and to the whole world. Teach us how to make peace, a peace brought not by war but by justice, to all your people. Help us to follow our sovereign Jesus Christ, our Prince of Peace. Amen."

Greatly Honored Are Those Who Have Been Persecuted for the Sake of Justice!

A Skit to Accompany Lesson Eight of *Confessing the Beatitudes*

Scene: The same day as mentioned in the skits for Lessons One through Seven; back up the mountain, around 3:30 PM.

Jesus and Andrea are sitting quietly together in prayer.

Andrea: “Blessed God, we give you thanks that you are always with us in times of trouble, sorrow, and joy. Open our hearts that we may do justice in your name. Amen.”

Peteria comes huffing up the mountain and sits down, oblivious to the fact that they are praying.

Peteria: “Oh, wow. Oh, *wow!* Did you see what just happened?! That was amazing!”

Andrea looks up. Jesus keeps praying.

Andrea: “What was it?”

Peteria: “Cornelia! That girl is one tough cookie. She’s going to confront her father, the Roman guard! She’s going to ask for Makaria’s husband back! She’s really going to do it!”

Andrea (sighing): “Oh, dear.”

Peteria: “What do you mean, ‘Oh, dear’? She’s going to do it!”

Andrea: “Do you have any idea what will happen to her, Peteria?”

Peteria: “What do you mean?”

Andrea: “Peteria, Cornelia is incredibly vulnerable right now.”

Peteria: “No she’s not. She thinks she’s the son of God!”

Andrea: “Well, in a way she is. But that might not be enough.”

Peteria: “Come on, Andrea. Of course it’s enough!”

Jesus: “Greatly honored are those who have been persecuted for the sake of justice!”

Andrea: “See?”

Peteria: “See what?”

Andrea: “Jesus knows what will happen to Cornelia. She may fail.”

Peteria: “But . . . I thought that was the point . . . if she is a child of God, a son of God to be specific, then she’ll just go to her dad and tell her dad what she’s learned and Makaria’s husband will be released. It’s all supposed to turn out right in the end. All things are supposed to work together for *good!*”

Andrea: “And they do. I think they really do. But that doesn’t mean it will be easy. Or successful, even. At least not the way we think of success.”

Peteria: “But why?”

Andrea: “Because, Peteria, Cornelia’s father has all the power. And he has a lot to lose if it gets out that he can’t control his daughter. What do you think those other soldiers will do to him if he releases Makaria’s husband? If he releases *any* of those guys? What if they find out he did it because his daughter asked him to? He could lose his job. He could lose his honor. He could lose everything. Do you think he’s going to risk that?”

Peteria: “Well, no. But I thought the point was that he would *also* be a son of God for his peacemaking.”

Andrea: “Well, he would. But that’s where Cornelia is most vulnerable. What would you do if your daughter told you to change your ways because she was the son of God?”

Peteria (laughing): “Well, when you put it that way . . .”

Andrea: “I know. But it’s not funny, Peteria. It could be her life.”

Peteria: “It all just depends on how her father responds.”

Andrea: “True. But that’s not all. Remember, her father is a Gentile. We’re not even talking about the same God. So, first Cornelia has to convince him that our understanding of God is the right one . . . *and* that, since our God is asking him to resist the very same *Pax Romana* that is feeding his family, that he should just do so.”

Peteria: “Oh. That does put a damper on things.”

Andrea: “And don’t forget about her slave. She’s got loads of trouble waiting for her, too.”

Peteria: “How do you mean?”

Andrea: “Well, think about it. Cornelia’s slave is supposed to be obeying her master, her husband, and now God. What does she do when her master and her husband tell her to stop doing what her God is telling her to do?”

Peteria: “She and Cornelia could both be in trouble.”

Andrea: “Big trouble.”

Peteria: “So what do we do?”

Andrea: “We have to help her.”

Peteria: “How?”

Andrea: “We have to talk to her father first. “

Peteria (looking nervous): “Gulp.”

Andrea: “I know.”

Peteria: “But he’s a . . . he’s a . . . a *Gentile!*”

Andrea (exasperated): “Peteria, I just don’t get you. Are you truly working for peace or do you just want revenge?”

Peteria (nearly shouting): “I want revenge!”

Jesus (emphatically): “Greatly *honored* are those who have been persecuted for the sake of justice. For heaven’s dominion shall be made of them.”

Peteria (chastened and reluctant): “It’s not about revenge.”

Andrea: “It’s not about revenge.”

Peteria: “It’s about justice.”

Andrea: “Right. So what are we going to say to Cornelia’s father?”

Peteria: “It has to be the right words. It has to be!”

Andrea: “Well . . . yes and no.”

Peteria: “What do you mean?”

Andrea: “Don’t you think God will give you the right words?”

Peteria: “Ummm . . .”

Andrea (laughing): “I guess that means no.”

Peteria (laughing, too): “It’s so hard to trust sometimes, isn’t it?”

Andrea: “Yes it is. But God really is with you.”

Peteria: “And also with you!”

Andrea: “Fill us with your emboldening Spirit, oh God, that we may follow your call faithfully, even as our ancestors did. Amen.”

Greatly Honored Are You Who Put Your Honor on the Line for Christ's Sake!

A Skit to Accompany Lesson Nine of *Confessing the Beatitudes*

Scene: The same day as mentioned in the skits for Lessons One through Eight; back in the valley, around 4:00 PM.

Makaria, Cornelia, Aquila, Prisca, and Cornelia's slave are packing their belongings.

Makaria: "Well, that was the best afternoon of my life."

Aquila: "Yeah, me too."

Prisca (teasing): "I told you so!"

Aquila (laughing): "Yeah, yeah, I know. I'm really glad we came. You were right."

They hug each other. The group finishes packing up, then looks at each other, not sure of what to do next.

Aquila: "Well . . ."

Makaria: "I think we should say a prayer for Cornelia."

Prisca: “Yes, let’s lay hands on her and pray for her together.”

Cornelia kneels, while the others lay their hands on her head and her shoulders.

Makaria: “Fill Cornelia with your Spirit, Creator God, and speak to her through your word, revealed in Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.”

Cornelia, Aquila, Prisca, and Cornelia’s slave: “Amen!”

As Cornelia rises, Peteria, Andrea, and Jesus come toward them.

Peteria: “Wait! Don’t go yet!”

Aquila: “Peteria! We thought you’d gone.”

Peteria: “I just had to tell Jesus what happened here.”

Andrea: “Ahem.”

Peteria: “Oh, right. I mean, I had to tell Jesus and my friend, Andrea, what happened here.”

Andrea (to the group): “*Shalom.*”

Makaria, Aquila, Prisca, Cornelia, and Cornelia's slave: “*Shalom!*”

Peteria: “Jesus came with us. We wanted him to meet you.”

Cornelia: “So . . . ? Is there more? We thought the preaching was over.”

Prisca: “Cornelia!”

Cornelia: “What?”

Prisca: “I know none of us like long-winded preaching, but show some respect!”

Cornelia: “Oh, sorry. I didn't mean . . .”

Andrea: “Of course you didn't mean anything rude by it. You just honestly thought Jesus had finished the sermon.”

Cornelia: “So *is* there more? I'm all ears!”

Peteria: “Well, there is a bit more. You see, we're kind of worried about you.”

Cornelia: “Oh . . . okay . . .”

Peteria: “Well, we think when you go home and start telling people what you’ve heard here—”

Andrea: “—and start *living* what you’ve heard here—”

Peteria: “Right. And start *living* what you’ve heard here . . . Well, we’re really worried that your father will feel that you have shamed him.”

Cornelia: “Um . . . *duh!* Of *course* he will feel that way.”

Peteria stares at Cornelia, dumbfounded.

Peteria: “I mean, we’re *really worried*, Cornelia! There’s no telling what he will do if he feels dishonored by his *daughter*. It could get ugly.”

Cornelia: “I *know*, Peteria. We already talked about this, remember?”

Peteria: “But, I mean, no, I didn’t realize . . .”

Andrea: “What Peteria means is that she knew the damage the Roman Empire was doing to *us*. But she didn’t understand the consequences for *you* if you became a disciple, if you really started living the gospel that Jesus was preaching.”

Cornelia: “Well *I* did! I knew what you were asking me to do, and I knew what the consequences could be. My family. My friends. My livelihood . . . maybe even my *life*! Peteria, I know the risk. I’m doing it anyway.”

Jesus: “Greatly honored are you when you put your honor on the line for my sake.”

Cornelia: “See!”

Peteria: “But it’s too much! If you were my daughter . . . I just feel too responsible. Let me do it. Let me talk to your father.”

Cornelia just stares at Peter, shocked.

Peteria: “I’ll convince him.”

Andrea: “*We*’ll convince him.”

Peteria (humbled): “Right. We’ll convince him.”

Cornelia (laughing): “You don’t know my father.”

Andrea: “We know that, Cornelia, but we just think it’s too great a risk for you. Your honor is at stake.”

Jesus: “Shame on you whenever all people speak well of you, for in this way, their ancestors treated false prophets.”

Cornelia: “See! It’s not about my so-called ‘honor.’ It’s not about my *dad’s* so-called ‘honor’! It’s about justice!”

Peteria: “I know. I just want to help you!”

Peteria and Cornelia look intently at one another, while the rest of the group looks questioningly at each other. Then Andrea goes to stand by Cornelia.

Andrea: “I think we should support her, Peteria.”

Peteria: “But that’s what I’m trying to do! That’s what you *told* me I should do!”

Andrea: “No . . . I think you’re trying to do it *for* her. But nobody can be a disciple for anybody else. We each have to do it our own way. Maybe this is her way. We shouldn’t do it for her.”

Peteria: “But you said—”

Andrea: “I said we should talk to Cornelia’s father first.”

Peteria: “Right!”

Andrea: “But I didn’t say she shouldn’t talk to him at all. That’s her choice, not ours.”

Peteria: “But . . .”

Aquila: “She’s right, Peteria. God uses all of us. We don’t know what it will take to change the heart and mind of Cornelia’s father. Maybe hearing it from his daughter *is* the best way. We just don’t know.”

Cornelia: “I want to try.”

Cornelia’s slave: “And I want to help her.”

Peteria: “So does that mean we say nothing?”

Everyone else: “No!”

Peteria (bewildered): “So what *does* it mean?!”

Aquila: “It means we pray. We pray for Cornelia. We pray for her father. We pray for God to show us the best time and place for us to talk to her father. It may be soon. It may be later. But someday God may ask all of us to do it. And God will give us the words. And something tells me this will be a really big deal when it happens.”

Peteria: “But she can’t do it alone!”

Cornelia’s slave: “She won’t be alone. I’ll be with her.”

Makaria: “And I’ll be with her in spirit.”

Prisca and Aquila: “So will we.”

Andrea (to Peteria): “And so will we.”

Jesus: “I am with you always, even until the end of the age.”

Cornelia: “See? I’ll be okay. I mean, even if I’m not ‘okay,’ I’ll be okay. I have my God, and I have my slave.”

Everyone looks at each other awkwardly.

Cornelia (sadly, to her slave): “You know, I’ve been with you my whole life. But I don’t have any idea what your name is. I’m sorry. Will you tell me?”

Cornelia’s slave (pointing to Jesus): “My dear child. He knows. He knows my name.”

(to Jesus) “Don’t you?”

Jesus nods.

Cornelia: “What is it, then? Tell me! Tell me!”

Everyone else: “Yes, tell us. We all want to know.”

Jesus: “Her name . . . is Christian.”

Gusti Linnea Newquist serves as copastor of St. Mark’s Presbyterian Church in Tucson, Arizona.