Truth That Appears

Drama, Presence, and the Christian Imagination

"We shall not cease from exploration,
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time."

— T. S. Eliot



Giotto — Washing of the Feet

Week Four — Bearing Truth

"I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you."
— John 13:15

Our Question

How should we then live?

If truth is something we learn to perceive (What do I see? What is happening here? How do I facilitate an encounter?), our calling is not only to understand it but to ***embody*** it—to carry what has been entrusted to us into the lives of others.

We bear wounds and grief, because we are human.

But we also bear beauty, joy, victory, gratitude, reconciliation, and hope. Some joys are too large to remain private. They seek witnesses, celebration, song, feast, dance, and testimony.

This week we ask how truth becomes a life: through service, courageous action, hospitality, memory, vocation, inherited stories, shared victory, resurrection, return, and grateful witness.

A Central Claim

To bear truth is to give faithful form to what has been entrusted to us—sorrow and joy, memory and hope, wound and victory, fire and rise—and carry it into the lives of others.

Bearing is more than enduring. We bear truth when grace becomes action, when memory becomes fidelity, when beauty is spent for others, and when joy is made shareable.

The final theological word is not endurance. It is joy borne together.

Scripture for Reflection

Read John 13:1–17 slowly this week. Notice the bodies, the movements, the objects, the resistance, and the command.

- What does Jesus know before he rises from the table?
- What does he remove, take up, pour, wash, and restore?
- Why is Peter's resistance part of the drama?
- What changes when the Teacher gives truth the form of a servant's action?

As you read, ask not only, "What does Jesus teach?" but also, "What does Jesus make visible—and what does he ask his witnesses to bear into the world?"

Also Hebrews 11.

Works We Will Encounter

This week's works form a movement from service to grateful testimony. You are not expected to master them in advance. Encounter what you can. Attend especially to what is being borne, who bears it, and whether the burden is sorrow, joy—or both.

- **Jean Valjean lifts the cart — Les Misérables**
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y-Rhb1_B_Rc&list=RDy-Rhb1_B_Rc&start_radio=1

  Grace becomes bodily, costly, and public. Valjean bears another man's weight and risks the identity by which he has learned to survive.

- **Babette's Feast**
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-dgLHsscOt8

Hospitality becomes artistic self-gift: beauty is not displayed before others but spent for them, and a community is reconciled through joy.

- **Leslie Marmon Silko — "The Man to Send Rain Clouds"**
  A community bears its dead through ritual, water, memory, and participation. Attend to what Father Paul can do only after he ceases trying to control the meaning of the encounter.
- **Fyodor Dostoevsky — The Brothers Karamazov, conclusion: Alyosha and the boys at Ilyusha's stone**
  A shared memory of having once been good together is entrusted to the future. The event disappears; the witnesses must carry it.
- **George Strait — "Amarillo by Morning"**
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FbVISS-lEAc&list=RDFbVISS-lEAc&start_radio=1
  Loss and vocation travel together, but so do freedom, open country, and an undefeated spirit. Is the rider enduring a burden—or bearing a joy? Or both?
- **Cody Rhodes finishes the story — WrestleMania XL**
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AUKFxpiw0MY&t=2868s
  Inherited stories reach a climactic finish before a family, a company, and an audience that have borne it together. When does an outcome become a shared act of joy? Start video at 38:00.
- **Gustav Mahler — Symphony No. 2, "Resurrection," Leonard Bernstein conducting**
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FZEusNJLoRw
  Suffering, silence, solitary voices, chorus, conductor, and audience are gathered into communal proclamation. What kind of hope can carry everything that preceded it?
- **T. S. Eliot — Little Gidding, conclusion**
  The course returns to where it began. But return has become vocation: fire and rose, purification and beauty, suffering and fulfillment are borne into reconciliation.

We ask of each work a related question:

How does truth become a life—and how is that life carried into the lives of others?

Questions for Conversation

As you encounter these works, consider:

- What is being borne—and by whom?
- Where does belief become action rather than explanation?
- What is the difference between enduring a burden and bearing witness?
- How do grief and joy (fire and rose) inhabit the same work without canceling one another?
- When does private joy become communal testimony?
- Can victory be possessed by one person, or must it be received and borne by witnesses?
- What does faithful memory ask us to carry forward?
- Which of these works most clearly joins beauty to service?
- What has been entrusted to you that should not end with you?

Reading and Viewing — Optional but Encouraged

Return to a Course Companion

Nicholas Wolterstorff, Art in Action

Revisit Wolterstorff's claim that art belongs within human practices of celebration, mourning, worship, remembrance, and communal life.

Further Reading

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Life Together

A companion for thinking about Christian life not as an idea privately possessed but as a reality practiced, received, and borne in community.

A Thought to Carry Into the Week

Some truths are too costly to remain ideas.

Some grief can only be borne when it is shared.

Some joys are too large to remain private.

We bear truth when we give faithful form to what has been entrusted to us—and make a place for others within it.

The final theological word is not endurance. It is joy borne, through suffering, together.

"All things shall be well
And all manner of things shall be well
When the tongues of flame are enfolded
Into the crowned knot of fire
And the fire and the rose are one."