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## I AM HE: A Liturgical Reading from John 18-21

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# I AM HE: A Liturgical Reading from John 18–21

LEE MAGNESS

*The liturgical reading that follows is drawn from the Gospel of John chapters 18-21, connecting the words of Jesus during his Passion to earlier affirmations from his lips and the lips of others recorded in the Fourth Gospel. N designates the Narrator, J represents the voice of Jesus, and other readers are referred to by 1 (preferably male) and 2 (preferably female).*

## **READING 1: THE ARREST: I AM THE CHRIST (JOHN 18.1-11)**

N When Jesus urged them out from the upper room,  
crossed the Kidron, gathered in the grove,  
Judas joined them,  
with soldiers and Sadducees,  
with torches and lanterns, swords and spears,  
and Jesus said,

J Who is it you want?

1,2 Jesus of Nazareth!

J I am he!

Who is it you want?

1,2 Jesus of Nazareth!

J I told you, I am he!

N It was as it was in the beginning,  
when Philip said,

1 We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law,  
and about whom the prophets also wrote—  
Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph. (1.45)

N It was as it was before,  
when the Samaritan woman said,

2 I know that Messiah (called Christ) is coming. (4.25)

N And Jesus said,

J I who you speak to am he.

N Jesus of Nazareth, Jesus the Christ.

**READING 2: THE TRIAL: I AM A KING (18.28-40)**

- N After Jesus was placed before the priest,  
 charged in the secret of night  
 with teaching openly in the light,  
 struck on the mouth for telling the truth,  
 they passed him on to Pilate,  
 and the emissary of the emperor asked,  
 2 Are you the King of the Jews?  
 J Is that what *you* think?  
 2 What is it you have done?  
 J My kingdom is not of this world!  
 2 Then you are a king?  
 J I am a king!
- N It was as it was in the beginning,  
 when Nathaniel said,  
 1 Rabbi, ...you are the King of Israel. (1.49)  
 N Jesus the carpenter, Christ and king.

**READING 3: THE CROSS: SON OF GOD, SON OF MAN, LAMB OF GOD (19.17-30)**

- N Jesus carried his cross until it carried him,  
 and a sign, a sentence,  
 2 Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews.  
 N One by one the scriptures were fulfilled.  
 One by one they divided his garments.  
 One by one he tended tenderly to the Marys and his mother.  
 Then he said,  
 J I am thirsty!  
 1 The cry of his all-too-human throat.  
 N And having felt his flesh again—his lips, his tongue—  
 he cried out,  
 J It is finished!  
 2 The cry of his no-less-than-divine spirit.
- N It was as it was in the beginning,  
 when John the prophet testified,  
 1 This is the Son of God. (1.34)  
 2 The It-is-finished Son of God.
- N It was as it was in the beginning,  
 when Jesus felt the prophet's mantle  
 and sensed himself as

- J the Son of Man. (1.51)  
 2 The I-am-thirsty Son of Man.
- N It was as it was in the beginning,  
 When the prophet John said,  
 1 Look, the Lamb of God,  
 who takes away the sins of the world. (1.29)  
 N The bowed-his-head and gave-up-his-spirit Lamb of God;  
 Lord and Lamb.

#### **READING 4: THE RISING: I AM THE RESURRECTION (JOHN 20.10-18)**

- N So early in the day it was still dark as night,  
 Mary saw the strangely open door of the strangely empty tomb,  
 and John saw the strangely empty clothes in the strangely empty tomb,  
 and Peter saw the strangely folded garments in the strangely empty tomb,  
 but on that dawning day they were still in the dark.  
 Mary lingered in the tomb-dark and the angel-light,  
 wondering why, wondering where, they had taken him away.  
 That's when Jesus said,  
 J Woman!  
 Woman, why are you crying?  
 Who is it you are looking for?  
 2 Sir, if you are the gardener, and you have carried him away,  
 Tell me where you have laid him, and I will get him.  
 J Mary!  
 2 Teacher!  
 J Don't hold on to me, for I have not yet returned to the Father.  
 Go instead to my followers and tell them,  
 I am returning to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.  
 2 I have seen the Lord!
- N It was as it was before,  
 when Martha lingered over Lazarus in the dark of grief:  
 2 If you had been here, my brother would not have died.  
 N It was as it was when Jesus dispelled her darkness with a word:  
 J I am the resurrection and the life. (11.25)  
 N It was as it was when Martha saw the light and testified to it:  
 2 I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God.  
 N Jesus of Nazareth, risen and raising, resurrected and resurrection.

#### **READING 5: THE CATCH: I AM THE BREAD (JOHN 21.4-13)**

- N Finding them where he first found them,  
 seeing them by the sea where he sent them,

Jesus stood on the morning shore.  
 And as they floated in an empty boat,  
 with empty nets and stomachs and hearts,  
 Jesus said,  
 J Friends, haven't you caught any fish?  
 1,2 No.  
 J Throw your net on the right side of the boat  
 and you will find some.  
 1 It is the Lord!  
 N So while the drowsy disciples rowed the bulging boat,  
 2 towing the all-but-tearing net,  
 their hearts and eyes full of Jesus,  
 1 Peter waded on ahead.  
 N Jesus had already banked the coals,  
 a few fish were fried, bread baked.  
 J Bring me some of the fish you have just caught.  
 N So Jesus came, took the bread, and gave it to them,  
 and he did the same with the fish.  
 J Come and have breakfast.  
 N It was as it was before,  
 when Jesus declared to his disciples,  
 J I am the bread of life. (6.35)  
 He who comes to me will never go hungry.  
 N Jesus of Nazareth, bread of life, water of life, life.

*Reading 6: The Call: I AM THE SHEPHERD, I AM THE WAY* (John 21.15-22)

N When they had finished the break-of-day breakfast,  
 the lakeside loaves, fish fried on the open fire,  
 Jesus turned to I-am-not-his-follower Peter and said,  
 J Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?  
 1 Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.  
 J Feed my lambs.  
 Simon son of John, do you love me?  
 1 Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.  
 J Take care of my sheep.  
 Simon son of John, do you love me?  
 1 Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you.  
 J Feed my sheep.  
 N Then Jesus added, like an ancient echo,  
 J Follow me; follow me.  
 N It was as it was before,  
 When Jesus said to his flock of followers,

J I am the gate for the sheep:  
1 whoever enters through me will be saved.  
J I am the good shepherd:  
2 the good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.  
J I am the good shepherd:  
1 I know my sheep and my sheep know me. (10.7,11,14)

N It was as it was in the beginning,  
when the wayward disciple Thomas asked,  
1 How can we know the way?  
N And Jesus answered,  
J I am the way. (14.6)

N It was as it was in the beginning,  
when Jesus said to Philip,  
J Follow me.  
N Carpenter, Christ; shelter and shepherd; way and word; leader and Lord.  
J I am he.

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