

vii. Drawing apart.

(Mt. 16:20-20:28; Mk. 8:30-10:45; Lk. 9:20-18:14.)

Peter dreams impatiently
of how Jerusalem
will rise and cheer
our wild conspiracy,
but he grows pale with fear
on learning how the city will become
an engine of your defeat -
and your rising when the journey is complete.

Climb with Peter James and John
to this high place of solitude,
where two good men of wounded song
will tame their attitude.

Moses hears the angry murmuring
on the journey to the promised land;
they curse him for their blistered feet
and the cruel midday heat
and bitter suffering.

Elijah seeks my hand
in his cavern of despair
after slaughtering his enemies.
I lead him gently through the desert air
and touch him in the silent breeze.

You stand in vivid and unearthly light
as Peter makes his wide eyed plea
to build three dwellings on this holy ground;
the ancient sound
of fatherly delight
fills your friends with dread.

Weave your troubled way
down into the dead-eyed crowd,
where foaming mouth and quaking head
lie bereft and grey
in their grimy shroud.

The twelve, with claims to proud command
and hidden sword held high,
scorn the traitor's hand
and, when the child comes passing by,
you hold him close and gently speak
of welcome for the foolish and the weak.

Tell them how my love must be
at it is spoken at the start –
no divorce, no drawing apart.

The words lie awkwardly.
Your friends all fear your foolishness
and you are solemnly advised,
as the newly chosen king,
to make your smile unwavering
and your voice an unfamiliar sound.

The cheerful and despised
and friendly hoard gather round
with little ones for you to bless;
your friendly arms defy
all frowning reverence.

A youth approaches with the elegance
of privilege. You greet him tenderly,
as the twelve politely note
his measured and remote
and serenely winning ways.
They dream contentedly
of noble brows and smiling influence,
until the young man's folly is revealed
by your disquieting gaze.

Now go and lead the lurching dance
into Jerusalem's high festival,
where enemies will proudly shed
your blood and you will close your eyes
in death and, on the third day, rise.