

## **Riding the Bus with Jesus**

John Shuck

First Presbyterian Church  
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*Luke 24:13-22*

When I was a kid, my parents would ask me, as parents are wont to do:  
“So Andy, what did you learn in school today?”

I responded with the usual: “Nothin’.”

If pressed I would make up something, just to satisfy them.

Oddly enough, many years later, I did the same to my kids.  
“What did you learn in school, today?”

One of them would offer a play by play of the days’ activities.  
The other would say, “Nothin’.”

It took me awhile to realize that people are different.

Some folks can process things immediately. Others take longer.  
I take longer.

When people ask me about my day or what I learned, I really don’t know.

But, I, like one of my kids, will spout off about odd things I have learned  
several weeks or months after the day in question and quite often at an  
unexpected hour.

Just ask my wife. She will then say: “Where did you get that  
information?”

“I don’t know.”

People have asked me about the bus ride I took at the beginning of the summer to Montana. Now that summer is ending, nearly three months later, I have something to say. Thanks for your patience. I just didn't know what had happened at the time.

Hear now, my story:

*Riding the Bus with Jesus*

Written in iambic pentameter<sup>i</sup>  
An heroic journey on a Greyhound  
Deserves no less. Not a tale as much as  
A philosophy, a theology,  
If you will. Life's journey is like a bus.  
From place to place and back, from Tennessee  
To Montana, and places in between  
And beyond, the bus stays its course and rolls

Unknowing for its sake whom it carries.  
Yes, the tickets have names and the baggage  
Claims declare to whom each parcel belongs.  
Yet the bus does not know who rides it, though.  
Regardless of whom rides or not the bus goes on  
Day and night, over hill, through city street,  
Dropping off, picking up indifferent  
To the cares and thoughts of its passengers.

The bus driver has more human concern.  
But even she or he is narrowly  
Focused on safety and order and that's  
A good thing. But the driver does not know.  
Too many come and go to pay notice  
To their lives, their real lives. Indifference  
Is the rule, the law of the Universe—  
The bus universe that is. But I see.

I see and hear more of what goes on behind

The faces. Nothing supernatural  
Have I. In fact, you would see, too, if you  
Were there. Who are these pilgrims who travel  
From Greeneville to Knoxville, Louisville to  
Sheboygan? Where are you going and why?  
We talk at times. I overhear half a  
Story, and wonder about their journey.

One woman who speaks loudly and laughs much  
Tells all who want to hear that she mimics  
The stars. She dresses up like Wynonna  
Judd and sings Wynonna's songs. I notice  
That she does resemble Wynonna a  
Little. One man is an artist and can  
Draw a picture of a race car in two  
Minutes. Another likes to dance. She looks

Streetwise, I guess is the word. She has been  
On the bus before. At the bus stop in  
Indianapolis I find myself  
Hungry. I head towards a White Castle  
Across the street. A man with a big grin  
Asks me where I am going. He can see  
That I don't belong at a White Castle  
In Indianapolis at three in

The morning. "Out West," I say and return  
The smile. We both know the routine. And sure  
Enough, after a little more polite  
Banter he asks me for a couple of  
Bucks. "I'm outta gas, man," he says. I keep  
Some ones in my left pocket for moments  
Such as these. I give him two and wish him  
Well. A tax for crossing the street at night.

Riding the big Greyhound bus with Jesus.  
I transfer there and wait in line with my  
Bags. A woman and her four children  
Wait behind me. "Where are they from?" I ask  
Myself. I am ashamed that I am such

A big dumb American that I can-  
Not tell if they are from India or  
Egypt. Maybe I should just call her an

Arab and make it simple. Why bother?  
Why do I need to know? It matters not.  
She, like me, is on the bus. It's rude but  
I look at her baggage tag. "Portland" is  
Their destination. They have a long way  
To go. I smile at her and the kids but  
She looks away and says something to one  
Of her children in a language I can

Neither understand nor identify.  
I imagine that she tells them that I  
Might be "Mister Stranger Danger. Stay close!"  
Waiting is a good bus word. You wait to  
Get on. You wait to get off. Some people  
Are better at it than others. One man  
Is upset that the bus is late and tells  
Ev'ryone in earshot that things are bad.

I watch the television monitor.  
Fox news is warning us that the gods have  
Raised the terror alert to "Orange." I  
Do not know quite what to do about that.  
I try, but I just don't feel terrified.  
I wonder if terror is like waiting.  
What is the point to fret about waiting?  
Why be tense? Life is one moment to next.

I have nothing better to do than be.  
Waiting is missing out. What's to wait for?  
The bus will come when it comes. No sooner.  
The bus doesn't care how we feel. It can't.  
It is a bus. We get on. We get off.  
In the meantime, what we call waiting is  
Living. I'm not waiting. I am living.  
We are all living, on the bus or off.

In Minnesota, I sit next to a  
Woman about sixty or so. “No more  
Hurricanes for me,” she says. “I’m going  
To Billings, Montana.” “Really?” I say.  
“I know that place well.” She has had enough  
Of Florida. She asks me if people  
Are nice in Billings. “Sure,” I tell her. “Nice.”  
She’s moving to a place she has not seen.

Some people ride the bus to start over.  
In the course of our conversation I  
Tell her I am a minister. That makes  
Her happy. She needed someone to trust.  
From St. Paul to Fargo we talk about  
Billings among other things. I tell her  
About things to do and see, places to  
Go. “You will like it there.” She is relieved.

On the bus we travel for a short time.  
We know where we are going. We know when  
We will arrive. We have no illusions  
That the ride will last forever. Of course.  
How silly to think otherwise! Because  
Of that, we see each other as riders.  
Pilgrims, journeyers, travelers, are all.  
Riding the bus with Jesus. Where is he?

In Luke’s tale, two friends walk to Emmaus.  
A stranger joins them and lightens their hearts.  
They invite him to stay for dinner, and  
As he blesses and breaks the bread, they see.  
He is Jesus. As soon as they see him,  
He vanishes. I think Luke wants to tell  
Us that Jesus is not a body, but  
Everybody. In the sacrament

Of human interaction, of kindness  
Shared, in the lightening of hearts, we see.  
The bus can’t see. We are the bus’s eyes.

We have the eyes to see the body of  
Jesus in everyone around us, whether  
We speak to them or not. We see. We hear.  
We are aware that their lives are sacred.  
Riding the bus with Jesus—is to see.

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<sup>i</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iambic\\_pentameter](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iambic_pentameter)