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## Who is Jesus? Reflections on S. Endo's "A Life of Jesus"

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## Who is Jesus? Reflections on S. Endo's "A Life of Jesus"

### Abstract

In lieu of an abstract, below is the essay's first paragraph.

"Shusaku Endo was a Japanese author born in Tokyo in 1923. He was raised by his single mother who became a fervent believer in Christianity. With her influence, Endo himself was baptized by the age of twelve. Having grown up in Japan, Endo was obviously very knowledgeable about Japanese religion and customs and most especially Japanese ideals. He claimed that "the Japanese have a traditional saying to the effect that the four most dreadful things on the earth are fire, earthquakes, thunderbolts, and fathers" (4). Obviously, as this quote illustrates, the image of a strict father is not very appealing to the Japanese; instead, according to Endo, the Japanese prefer the image of a maternal figure. This is precisely why, Endo argues, that the Christian religion is such a minority in Japan. Because God has always been depicted as a stern father in western cultures, Christianity has never caught on in Japan. So to help his Japanese audience better understand his beloved religion, Shusaku Endo wrote the novel called A Life of Jesus. To accomplish this purpose, Endo depicted God and Jesus in a very different way from which western readers are used to seeing. Because the Japanese identify more with the maternal side of things and are more "responsive to one who „suffers with [them]“", Endo decided to depict God as a caring maternal figure and Jesus as a man who had such great love that he was willing to die even for those who did not yet believe (1). In this way Endo is able to greatly bring out the humanity of Jesus. When A Life of Jesus is read with this perspective in mind, it makes a lot more sense in terms of the arguments made, the type of soft language used, and the tear jerking metaphors presented. Overall, this book serves its purpose, which is to present and in a way to "sell" Christianity to a Japanese based audience who know very little, if anything, about Jesus."



Aisha Arshad

## **WHO IS JESUS?**

Reflections on S. Endo's "A Life of Jesus"

Shusaku Endo was a Japanese author born in Tokyo in 1923. He was raised by his single mother who became a fervent believer in Christianity. With her influence, Endo himself was baptized by the age of twelve. Having grown up in Japan, Endo was obviously very knowledgeable about Japanese religion and customs and most especially Japanese ideals. He claimed that "the Japanese have a traditional saying to the effect that the four most dreadful things on the earth are fire, earthquakes, thunderbolts, and fathers" (4). Obviously, as this quote illustrates, the image of a strict father is not very appealing to the Japanese; instead, according to Endo, the Japanese prefer the image of a maternal figure. This is precisely why, Endo argues, that the Christian religion is such a minority in Japan. Because God has always been depicted as a stern father in western cultures, Christianity has never caught on in Japan. So to help his Japanese audience better understand his beloved religion, Shusaku Endo wrote the novel called A Life of Jesus. To accomplish this purpose, Endo depicted God and Jesus in a very different way from which western readers are used to seeing. Because the Japanese identify more with the maternal side of things and are more "responsive to one who 'suffers with [them]'", Endo decided to depict God as a caring maternal figure and Jesus as a man who had such great love that he was willing to die even for those who did not yet believe (1). In this way

Endo is able to greatly bring out the humanity of Jesus. When A Life of Jesus is read with this perspective in mind, it makes a lot more sense in terms of the arguments made, the type of soft language used, and the tear jerking metaphors presented. Overall, this book serves its purpose, which is to present and in a way to “sell” Christianity to a Japanese based audience who know very little, if anything, about Jesus.

A Life of Jesus is broken up into thirteen chapters, each of which, in great detail, describes the hallmark events of the familiar story of Jesus’ life. Interestingly enough, Endo does not start off his book with any type of birth story of Jesus and does not go into great detail about the virginal birth. Although this part of Jesus’ life is not crucial into getting the author’s own point across, I do think that the story of Jesus’ life is incomplete without this event and that it is necessary in understanding the divine nature of Jesus around which today’s Christianity centers.

In any case, the first chapter of Endo’s book is called “Farewell to the Daily life of Nazareth”. And Endo starts off by trying to paint a picture of Jesus for the reader. Ironically, he himself states that no one really knows what Jesus physically looked like. However, Endo says, we do know that Jesus was a carpenter who probably learned the trade from his foster father Joseph. Endo informs us that Jesus was a poor man and that he “knew firsthand the smelly sweat of men and women who do work” (10). Because Jesus lived in Nazareth, he was familiar with the everyday crippled lame and poor who were common sites in Nazareth. Because of his surrounding situation and upbringing, Endo argues, Jesus was already, at a very early age starting to think about what answers he sought from God and therefore even at this stage of his life, Jesus’ heart was already in turmoil.

Next Endo sets up the stage and the time and place in which his story is taking place, which is namely the Roman Empire and the time at which Caesar was at the height of his power. This is also the time during which Herod Antipas was ruling Judea. Endo then ends the chapter with the coming of a prominent figure in the life Jesus, John the Baptist, who emerges from the wilderness to bring forth the word of God to the people. And in the 15<sup>th</sup> year of Tiberius, Endo relates how Jesus decided to cease his daily life and to follow the man who came out of the wilderness into Judea.

Endo entitles his second chapter “Near the Dead Sea”, and describes the next major stage of Jesus’ life. Here Jesus makes his way to the River Jordan among the multitudes of people to witness the fiery prophet known as John the Baptist who comes out of the wilderness of Judea and commands the people to repent because the Kingdom of God is at hand. John the Baptist then baptizes Jesus who remains with the Baptist and his group for a while afterwards. During this time, Jesus has gained an enormous amount of respect for John the Baptist and is a firm believer in many of his ideals. However the author contrasts the fiery image of John the Baptist and his ideals with Jesus’ own view of God. Endo describes the image of God which Jesus had at this point in his life when he was still grappling with the idea of who God exactly was. He states that, “His heart was like a maternal womb to engender an image of God which more closely resembles a gentle mother” showing that at this point in his life Jesus already had a very loving image and sense of who God was (25).

During this time Jesus entered into a forty day retreat into the desert which was supposed to be a time of reflection, fasting and prayer. Here is when it is traditionally believed that Jesus was tempted by the devil in the desert. But Endo puts his own take on

it bringing into light historical references of the surrounding area of Jesus' retreat. Endo introduces us to a very interesting parallel starting off with the discovery of the Dead Sea scrolls in 1947. He states these scrolls included two manuscripts known as *The War Scroll* and *The Scroll of the War of the Sons of Light Against the Sons of Darkness*. These scrolls reveal how the Qumran community (a community living in the area where Jesus took his retreat) were waiting for the day to come when through war they would win their right to leadership and then would wait for the world to submit to the Jewish nation. In essence they were waiting for an earthly Kingdom of God (26). Endo then suggests that this community was the one and the same "devil" who tempted Jesus in the desert by trying to recruit Jesus as their leader or as one of their own. So, Endo argues, that even though Jesus was only metaphorically tempted by the devil, he came to understand, through this ordeal, what it was that he was truly seeking in relation to God and that it most definitely was not power.

The next chapter in Endo's book is called "Perilous Beginnings" and basically describes the beginnings of the ministry of Jesus. It starts off with the description of the investigation of John the Baptist by the Sadducees, the Pharisees, and the high priest of the temple in Jerusalem who were becoming well aware of the movement of John the Baptist and how it could potentially turn into an anti-Roman movement. They began to investigate John the Baptist and naturally the name of Jesus also appeared on their list. So Endo makes the point that the Sadducees and Pharisees were already aware of Jesus early on.

During this time Jesus begins to break away from the movement of John the Baptist whom he much admires and starts to travel. During his travels he starts to acquire

his first group of disciples. Endo emphasizes, however, that these first group of disciples saw Jesus as a potential leader for their anti-Roman movement and were not following Jesus for the reasons he would have them follow him. Jesus, however, openly accepts these early disciples perhaps hoping that he could change their mind in light of what he knew was his mission and his knowledge of what was to come for him in his near future. Jesus and these disciples then move about teaching in various towns and synagogues about the coming of the Kingdom of God. On one of these occasions, Jesus decides to travel through the town of Samaria which Endo reveals is a lesson on its own. During his walk through the place Jesus begs water of a Samaritan woman and confides in and speaks his true mind of his intentions to her and his message of the God of love. This demonstrates many things. Firstly, during this time, Jews and Samaritans openly despised each other, therefore, by taking this route, Jesus wished to demonstrate to his disciples to always reach out to the lowliest and most rejected of society. Secondly, by confiding in a Samaritan woman things he had yet to speak of to his disciples, Jesus demonstrated that he knew that he was truly alone still even when he was surrounded by his disciples. Around this time, John the Baptist was also executed by Herod Antipas deeply saddening Jesus but because of this incident his disciples come to see Jesus as a second John the Baptist and potentially widening the gap between their understanding of Jesus and Jesus' understanding of himself.

The fourth chapter in A Life of Jesus is called "Springtime in Galilee". At this point in the book, Endo starts to distinguish two sets of thought on the perception of Jesus during this time. The first perception, held by the Jews, sees Jesus as a savior and a cause to rally behind. They see Jesus as their leader for the anti-Roman movement against an

establishment which they feel so oppressed by. The second point of view, as seen through the eyes of the Sadducees and the Pharisees, paints Jesus as a threat and a trouble maker. The high priests of the temple and those associated with the Sanhedrin would gladly see Jesus put away for good because Jesus is a threat to their positions at the temple. Jesus is aware of these sets of perspectives. Endo highlights the fact that Jesus feels even more alone after he realizes this because his true desire is bear witness to the love of God.

During this time Jesus continues to teach along with his disciples yet Endo makes a point of contrasting the manner of Jesus' teaching with that of John the Baptist. While the Baptist's teaching was fiery one (he is often quoted as saying "you brood of vipers!"), Jesus' teaching is done with much more loving. He uses parables to do his teaching and never does his language reflect that of his mentor John the Baptist. To supplement this, Endo emphasizes Jesus' ability to heal. Jesus' focuses his attention on healing the poor, lame and the forgotten of society. Not only is he able to heal these people but he is able to take people's miseries, and burdens and make them his own. As the people suffer, so does he, and the peoples' pain is his own as well. This ability, Endo states is different from that of any other person during this time, and this difference is what makes Jesus' so unique.

"Spies", the next chapter describes, more in depth, the relationship between the Sadducees, Pharisees and Jesus. There were, what Endo refers to, as spies who hid themselves amongst the crowds that surrounded Jesus to hear him speak. These spies would try to gain evidence of the fact that Jesus was indeed a heretic and a traitor of the Roman Empire even if they had to falsely get some blasphemous idea of him by force. In order to do this these henchmen would often heckle and debate with Jesus on certain

issues by asking him the type of questions that they thought would prompt a blasphemous response out of Jesus. However, most of the responses which Jesus gave were so just that they were often shamed into quiet. This made the crowds who surrounded Jesus rally about him even more and finally at the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus informs the crowd that he has no intention of becoming what they want him to be, a leader for an anti-Roman rebellion. This flat out refusal of the crowds' wishes disillusioned the crowd to such a degree that they left him, and the spies were undoubtedly ecstatic. Endo states that "this was the day that marked the beginning of the end" because at this point all the hopes that the crowd had in Jesus were diminished and Jesus no longer had the popular support that he had held before (68).

The next chapter entitled "The Son of Man Has Nowhere to Lay His Head" describes the peoples wavering of faith in the person of Jesus as previously described. Now, more than ever, people wanted quick benefits from Jesus rather than hearing him talk and teach. Drove of people still came to him but there chants were one and the same, "Cure us! Cure us!" they cried everywhere Jesus went. They wanted to be healed and cured and cared nothing about Jesus' ideas of the love of God. Feeling disheartened, Jesus goes back to his hometown Nazareth but news of his unpopularity has already reached there and he his highly unwelcome; so much so that people even tried to throw him off of a cliff. The number of disciples even started to wane, trickling down the numbers until there were only a few left. Even those who decided to stay did not do so for the right reasons. The interior struggle which Jesus felt could be explained by no other besides him. Such was the despair which Jesus felt and such was his dilemma that which passing day he plunged further and further into loneliness.

Finally Jesus reveals to his disciples his true intentions in “Jesus the Ineffectual”. He tells his disciples what is to become of him, that he must suffer and die at the hands of the high priests, members of the Sanhedrin and those who will betray him. Jesus then bids his disciples to go to other towns and teach and to spread the word about the Kingdom of God. When the disciples come back happy with their accomplishments is when Endo tells us that the first Messianic declaration occurs. Here Peter asks Jesus whether he is the Messiah and Jesus responds in the affirmative, however, it is important to realize that both men were referring to two different types of Messiahs. Peter was referring to a leader of the nationalist movement or a messiah who would expel the foreign conqueror from the land of Judah. Jesus on the other hand meant the Messiah of love who would be the eternal companion of mankind everywhere (88). Through this comparison Endo, again hints at the degree to which Jesus was misunderstood.

Before Jesus’ story can hit its climax, Endo first needs to talk about a very important character who he claims is highly misunderstood. This is the character of Judas Iscariot, the one who betrayed Jesus. In his chapter, “Judas the Dolorous Man” Endo begins to pick apart the person of Judas in order to reassemble him in a different light. This point in the book brings us to a time just short before Passover. As thousands of pilgrims filled the city of Jerusalem, there again started to emerge a rallying behind Jesus as there were high hopes that he may lead a nationalist movement against Rome. As the crowds behind Jesus called out “Jesus for Messiah”, Endo relates that Judas was the only one out of the multitudes of people as well as among the disciples who understood that Jesus had no intentions of being the messiah that everyone rallied after. He alone was aware of his master’s secret. Judas truly had the confidence of Jesus as Jesus had

entrusted him with many things in the past and in time Judas came to be able to decipher the true intentions of Jesus. He was the only one of the disciples who came to grasp the idea that Jesus would be betrayed by not just one, but all of the disciples and that he would truly suffer and die alone. Perhaps, Endo argues, that because of this knowledge Judas was able to justify his betrayal of Jesus.

In the next chapter, “Jerusalem! Jerusalem!” Jesus makes his grand entrance into Jerusalem by way of the Mount of Olives. The multitudes of people before him treat Jesus like a king who has come to save them. Their hopes have been rekindled in light of the Passover events. As Jesus rides in on his donkey there are shouts “Hosanna to the Son of David” (104). The crowd no longer sees him as a do nothing but as a man of action. Jesus then performs the cleansing of the temple on Wednesday of that week when he overturns the tables of the money changers and tells them to leave and to stop corrupting the place of worship. This action only added to the hysteria surrounding Jesus. But Jesus knew that his popularity among the people would soon turn sour and lead to disaster. Jesus knew that the time for his death was close at hand but again Endo stresses that probably the only other disciple who was aware of this fact was Judas Iscariot.

Towards the end of this chapter Endo continues to further analyze the psyche of Judas. He points out that Judas’ motives were perhaps not as simple as the Gospels make them out to be. He states that, “Were he [Judas] the owner of a simple mentality, he would have quit the master long before” (111). But the fact that he didn’t seem to suggest that perhaps Judas thought that Jesus would change his mind after all. Endo describes the fact that Judas had an interesting relationship with Jesus and that the more Jesus looked worn out the more Judas was fascinated by him. Endo says that Judas

“loved Jesus as he loved himself and he hated Jesus as he hated himself” (112). Judas’ feelings towards Jesus were very dynamic and intermingled with his feelings and portrayal of himself, and that most definitely was not complete hatred of Jesus that led to his betrayal.

Finally Judas’ betrayal becomes public in “The Night of the Arrest”. This chapter begins with Thursday of the week of Passover where Jesus has his famous Last Supper with his disciples. Endo makes a point of describing the atmosphere of the supper to the reader. He states that unlike common depictions of a closed atmosphere of Jesus sitting at a table with his disciples with bread and wine that it was most likely multitudes of people who had come to see Jesus during the week of Passover lined up outside of his dwelling. Perhaps they were waiting to hear him speak or some sort of miraculous event take place but whatever it was that they were expecting did not happen. Instead what took place was analogous to the Sermon on the Mount. Here again, Jesus tells the crowd that he is not going to be a leader for their cause and has no intentions of becoming the type of messiah that they want him to be. The crowd again is very disheartened by this comment and most are very angry. A short while later Judas explodes into a fit of rage and leaves with the disillusioned crowd. This is the point where the crowd transforms from the crowd whose hopes were riding on Jesus to the crowd that will eventually help condemn Jesus to death.

Next Jesus tells the rest of his disciples that his death is at hand and that he will be betrayed by them. He then is in great anguish and goes to pray in the Garden of Gethsemane. As his night of torment moves along Judas steps out into the open and kisses him, signaling to the officials he has brought with him that this is the man called Jesus. Jesus is then arrested but none of the disciples are arrested. Endo wonders why this

is so. Endo then suggest his theory. He writes that as the scattered disciples go back together to discuss their plight, they chose Peter to represent them in order to go to the high priest and beg for amnesty on behalf of their group. Endo states that this is the real way in which all of the disciples, especially Peter betray Jesus. Judas on the other hand was present at the “trial” of Jesus. Endo believes that Jesus had betrayed Jesus believing that his life would be spared. Now as he sat at the trial and realized that Jesus was going to be crucified, he was disgusted with himself and realized that he had betrayed an innocent man. When the sentence of death was given to Jesus, Judas Iscariot decided that he too must die and realized that he would be condemned by the whole human race forever. At this point in time, Endo states that Judas came to know the true meaning of Jesus’ life and that in spite of what the Gospels say about him, Judas really did believe in Jesus.

The story continues into the next chapter entitled “Men Who Sit In Judgment”. Here Jesus is sent before Pilate and condemned to death by crucifixion. Endo claims that Pilate was pressured by members of the Sanhedrin and the high priests to give Jesus the death penalty. Although Pilate tired to side step this by trying to let Jesus off by a flogging or giving him a special pardon due to Passover, he was over powered by the priests as they said to him “If you let this man go, you are no friend of Caesar’s” (141). In the end Pilate was forced to give Jesus the death penalty and declared the place of execution to be Golgotha.

In the next chapter called “Into Thy Hands, O Lord, I Commit My Spirit”, Endo mainly tires to focus on the figure and depiction of Jesus before and after the passion. The author states that before the passion Jesus is depicted as a miracle worker, who is

able to solve everyone's pains. But after the passion we are drilled with the helpless and weak figure of Jesus making his way Golgotha barely being able to carry his own cross. He was able to cure so many pains before but now he can't even ease his own suffering. Why is this so? Endo states that in Jesus being ineffectual and weak lays the mystery and the core of the Christian beliefs. He says that, "[T]he meaning of the resurrection is unthinkable if separated from the fact of his being ineffectual and weak. A person begins to be a follower of Jesus only by accepting the risk of becoming himself one of the powerless people in this visible world" (145). In other words, the humanity of Jesus is brought out by a great deal through this depiction, and this is what allows people to be able to identify with Jesus. And in this way, Endo tells us, Jesus dies on the cross, weak and alone.

Thus ends the story of Jesus, but does it really? In the final chapter called "The Question", Endo explains Jesus' resurrection events through the eyes of the disciples and their experiences after Jesus' death. The main question that Endo poses is "How were the disciples able to endure all manner of persecution and even death" when before they were so cowardly in their betrayal of Jesus (157)? Endo explains that Jesus became the sacrificial lamb for the disciples. Because the Sanhedrin had made a deal with the disciples that if they openly rejected Jesus, they would not be killed. When the disciples realized that Jesus had died because of their own treachery to save them, they looked upon Jesus as one who carried the burden of their sins. Because of this the disciples thought the Jesus probably hated them for what they had done but then they heard the words that Jesus had uttered last "Father forgive them for they know not what they do. My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me? Father, into thy hands I commit my

spirit” and they realized that Jesus in fact did not hate them (170). They realized the great love that Jesus had had for them and that because of this love he had been willing to die for them so that they may live. They realized how much Jesus had understood them and how much they had misunderstood Jesus. And they began to realize what type of a man he was. This revelation spawned in them a great respect for Jesus causing them to lay their lives on the line so that they could carry out the message the Jesus had wanted people to know all along which was the God of love.

In my opinion this book would not have been very informative or tolerable had a person not known about the background of Shusaku Endo and why he wrote this novel. From a western standpoint, this book is too soft spoken and some of the ideas and metaphors and the over excessive use of the word “love” may induce one never to put this book down and never pick it up again. However, when taking into consideration the author’s reasons for writing this book, the presentation, and format of the novel make a lot of sense. As I specified before, the main reason Endo wrote this novel was to present Christianity and Jesus to a Japanese society in an attractive way. Therefore all undertones of harshness had to be omitted and Jesus had to be depicted as a very human person who was able to understand the suffering of those around him, therefore taking on a very maternal role.

This theme can be seen throughout the novel. The first technique that Endo uses in order to get this image across is to compare Jesus with other characters. For example, in the beginning Endo contrasts Jesus a lot with John the Baptist. He describes the fiery figure of John the Baptist as practically yelling at the crowds when he preaches. He is always quoted as say “you brood of vipers!” (16). On the other hand Endo always depicts

Jesus as a very soft spoken person who never uses language like that. Jesus talks in parables, heals the sick and is able to feel the suffering of humanity. This is another way in which Endo shows Jesus as a maternal figure. Not only is Jesus able to heal people but he has the unique ability to feel their suffering. When he heals people, their suffering becomes his suffering, even when the woman in street only touches his clothes, Endo describes the fact the Jesus is able to feel her suffering through her touch and then turns around and asks the crowd who touched his clothes. Endo works all of these qualities in to make his Jesus seem as attractive as he possibly can to his Japanese audience.

Endo uses another almost subliminal technique which is very interesting although I am not sure if it added to the quality of the reading. Every so often Endo brings in quotes from the bible and little prayers which are scattered all throughout his novel. One prayer is interwoven throughout the entire book is “Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn for they shall be comforted”. This phrase is present even in places in which it sometimes does not make sense. Again reading it as a western audience we may be annoyed by it repetitious behavior, but if we remember that this book is targeted towards a Japanese audience who know nothing about Christianity, its presence makes sense.

The part of this book which was most interesting and thought provoking for me however, was Endo’s break down of the psyche of Judas. Endo analyzed Judas Iscariot’s psychology in a way that I have never seen done before and he pieced Judas’ back together in a new light, finally in the end making the argument that Judas’ did not betray Jesus because he misunderstood him. At first in chapter eight Endo relates how Judas most likely was the only one of the disciples who came to understand Jesus’ true

intentions and he recognized the significance of the woman Mary and her act of anointing Jesus. Endo states that in Judas's questioning Jesus about the perfume and Mary that "the words of Judas imply something deeper. Judas is saying it clearly- that Jesus will never become the messiah that everyone seeks" (100). He also lets Jesus know that his kind of love does not pay off, that the people want something more than just an eternal companion. Judas says to Jesus "Master, you have resolved to meet death in order to become the eternal companion of mankind. The people's demand is, however, different. Obviously, they only want to be cured...that's human nature" (100). Here, again, Endo shows that Judas' understanding of Jesus was beyond what the Gospels show us at face value. That Judas' did indeed understand Jesus well but that Judas' also understood Jesus better than he thought. Endo goes on to state that in the end even before he officially betrayed Jesus, Judas despised himself, it was not about the money for Judas. Judas betrayed Jesus thinking that Jesus' life would be spared. When this was not done so, Judas resolved to die as well. Even in this dilemma the humanity and the love of Jesus is brought out by Endo who says that Jesus understood well the suffering of Judas because that was after all his gift and that, "by means of his own death Jesus poured out his love even on the man who betrayed him" (128). This again shows how Endo almost "sells" Christianity and Jesus to the Japanese people by painting a picture of Judas, that is not evil as most see him, but as a human man who suffers as well, and relating this to how not only did Jesus understand this man but loved him and died for him too.

The last point about the book that I would like to analyze is, of course, the disciples. Unlike most other authors and perhaps the bible itself Endo describes the disciples in almost a negative light. I would say that using this approach, as with Judas

made the disciples more real for me. They weren't just a backdrop of me who always surrounded Jesus. In the beginning of his talk about the disciples, Endo describes them as almost very stupid people, who kept misunderstanding what Jesus had to say. They wanted Jesus something to be something that he was not. Endo states over and over again throughout the book how the disciples misunderstood Jesus. In the end, they too betray Jesus. Endo compares the disciples to humanity by saying, "The nincompoops! The jellyfish! The disciples so like ourselves base and cowardly. Nevertheless, these same disciples after a while became a powerful group of men who flinched not even at martyrdom" (127). I think that in this statement, he is trying to make a point. Not only did he just humanize the disciples for the reader in an interesting way but he also compares the disciples with society. But what he is really trying to say in my opinion is that even the most stupid, cowardly people like the disciples can overcome adversity and odds when they realize the love that Jesus had for them. For it was only after the disciples realized that Jesus had forgave them on the cross even as he died, and in fact died for them so that they could live, did they pick up with great fervor and move on with the work that they believed Jesus had wanted them to pursue. In this analyses, of the disciples, I think, lies the true lesson of Endo to the Japanese people which begs them to believe as the disciples came to finally see that Jesus really is the eternal companion, that he not only suffered with us but also suffered for us and that he is with you even when you don't know that he is present (as the story of the road to Emmaus confirmed).

In conclusion, this book was an interesting book and brought to light a lot of facts and relations that I never really had thought about before (such as Judas and the disciples). It did fulfill its purpose which was to help Japanese people understand Jesus in

a way in which they could relate to him. Aside from the super soft language I think that this book may universally do that. It was able to show Jesus as an eternal companion and God as a God of love rather than a stern father. It brought out the humanity in Jesus but also the humanity in those who surrounded him. It showed that even the biggest non believers and cowards (such as the disciples who greatly misunderstood Jesus), much like us can be willing to give their life for a cause once they truly understand the caring nature that was Jesus. In this way I think that this book was a fresh read and should not be read if the intention of learning more about Christianity but with the intent of getting a different perspective on Jesus.

*Work Cited*

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