

EXCERPT



Touch the Earth
Poems on The Way

January 10, 2023 | \$18, 192 pages, paperback | 978-1-5140-0269-8

In *Touch the Earth*, Drew Jackson continues the project he began in *God Speaks Through Wombs*, reflecting on the Gospel of Luke through poetry. *Touch the Earth* picks up in chapter nine and continues through the end of Luke's Gospel. Part protest poetry, part biblical commentary, Jackson presents the gospel story in all its liberative power. Here the gospel is the "fresh words / that speak of / things impossible."

We Feed Each Other

Luke 9:12-17

*"It's still that black abundance?" I asked LaThon.
"You already know."
Kiese Laymon, Heavy*

*There isn't enough to go around—
the engine that drives our way of life.*

We've been sold this narrative, and bought it
at the open-air market of neoclassical economics.

Scarcity.
The limited availability of a commodity.

Five loaves and two fish
will only get you so far.

But we were taught *ujamaa*
before we internalized the empire's mantra.

Blessing and breaking
what little we have.

—Taken from *Touch the Earth*

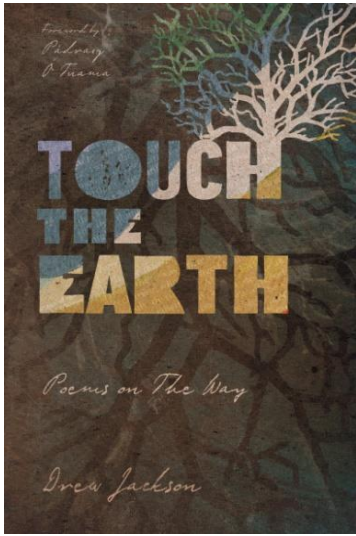


Tara Burns, print and online publicity
800.843.4587 ext. 4059 or tburns@ivpress.com

Krista Clayton, author interviews
800.843.4587 ext. 4013 or kclayton@ivpress.com



ivpress.com/media



EXCERPT



Touch the Earth ***Poems on the Way***

January 10, 2023 | \$18, 192 pages, paperback | 978-1-5140-0269-8

"I'm one of those people who likes the idea of reading poetry more than actually reading it. Occasionally, however, I stumble on a poet like Drew Jackson, whose lyrical language and urgent themes set a hook in me. Drawing on the liberating Jesus of Luke's Gospel, Jackson explores heritage, history, and a longing for freedom. Touch the Earth pushes back against the spirit of scarcity and invites readers into an achingly authentic spirituality. Whether you are a 'poetry person' or not, this book will leave you mesmerized."

—Jonathan Merritt, contributing writer for the *Atlantic* and author of *Learning to Speak God from Scratch*

"What is a gospel? Nobody knows really."

Of course, we kind of do: There are four gospels—a word meaning *good news*—accepted as part of the Christian Scriptures. And there are other gospels too: the Gospel of Thomas, the Gospel of Mary Magdalene. Whether accepted as canonical or not, whether written thirty or three hundred years after the execution of Jesus of Nazareth, there is a broad consensus that gospel is a form of literature.

The word is heard elsewhere too. "What kind of music are you into?" someone might ask. Gospel, someone would respond, and everybody with good taste nods their head in respect.

"Is that the truth?" someone might ask. Gospel, someone might reply.

But still, the question is, What is a gospel? Was it a brand-new form of literature invented two thousand years ago? In a way, that's kind of true. Gospel is at once a biography of a character—most often Jesus, son of Mary—but also a presentation of their political, theological, and social ideology. Do the gospels all agree? On some things, yes, but each gospel emerged in its own context, borrowing here, modifying there. What is gospel? It's hard to know exactly, but what we do know is that it's a genre less concerned with chronology than it is with community: how to act in the face of an empire, how to notice small moments of life, how to be interrupted, how to assert dignity in the face of demeaning treatment, how to challenge rules for a greater good, how to create common cause, how to get through.

So we have a genre, and here, in *Touch the Earth*, we have a response to a genre.

Drew Jackson has at least three areas of deep study: the gospels, poetry, and community. He reads the gospels through the lens of the other two. He loves poetry—I've seen his glorious bookshelves, and we've spoken about the books on those shelves. He also studies community. Sitting in his church one Sunday listening to him speak about Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s vision of the Beloved Community, I was struck by how community, poetry, and gospel are one thing for Drew. In *Touch the Earth* he uses his precise words to open up worlds of inquiry: How to read a text about redemption during an era of police violence? How to honor Black life? How to live in the wake of grief? How to love language while words are being cheapened in public life? How to hold images of war alongside images of giggling children you pick up after school? What do you do with the memory of the shoeless man you passed on the way to church?

These poems are a wrestle. They do not offer answers. I know that Drew believes in God, but I'm unsure if he believes in answers—they are too easy, and Drew is more likely to discomfit than he is to decorate.



Tara Burns, print and online publicity
800.843.4587 ext. 4059 or tburns@ivpress.com

Krista Clayton, author interviews
800.843.4587 ext. 4013 or kclayton@ivpress.com



ivpress.com/media



EXCERPT



Touch the Earth
Poems on the Way

January 10, 2023 | \$18, 192 pages, paperback | 978-1-5140-0269-8

Drew Jackson is the founding pastor of Hope East Village in New York City. He is the author of the poetry collection *God Speaks Through Wombs* and writes poetry at the intersection of justice, peace, and contemplation, with a passion to contribute toward a more just and whole world. He and his wife have twin daughters and live in Lower Manhattan. Follow him on Twitter: @djacksonpoetics. Visit his website at djacksonpoetics.com.

Through craft and question, through elegy (his mother sings in these poems) and imagination, through curiosity and compassion, Drew has written a poetic response to the gospels—the second in a series, the first being *God Speaks Through Wombs*—that shows what happens when you take language seriously: the language offered by religious literature, the language of public life, the language of private consideration, the language of community action. We go from the walkways of Jerusalem to those of Manhattan; we hear words of a mother and wonder whether it's the mother of Jesus or Drew (yes, is the answer); we hear empire's demands and then hear Drew's prayers for empire's doom. *Touch the Earth* is built on study: of literature, of life, of poetry, of friendship, of love. *Touch the Earth* is built on a theological imagination that takes the body seriously. *Touch the Earth* is built on a life of practice and love. It is a treasure of linguistic skill. It is also an invitation.

—Taken from the prologue by Pádraig Ó Tuama



Tara Burns, print and online publicity
800.843.4587 ext. 4059 or tburns@ivpress.com

Krista Clayton, author interviews
800.843.4587 ext. 4013 or kclayton@ivpress.com


ivpress.com/media