

Jesus in the psych ward (8)

He's in group therapy, plastic chairs in a circle.
Paper cups with weak coffee. Everyone in the room has seeking eyes.

The Pharisees admitted him. They said things like,
He's more than we can handle. They let the rumors fly.

The other patients like him. They say, He listens to me.
He calls them by name.
And when one of them asks,
Is this our fault? Are we here because we sinned?
Jesus does not wait for the facilitator to speak.
He crosses the circle. He kneels down. He grabs their hands in his and
says,

*Child of the covenant, God loves you too much to ever wish you pain.
Bodies and minds crumble sometimes, but God's love for you does not.*

And after that
there were happy tears and the group was dismissed to lunch,
where they broke bread and no one talked of sin.

8 Inspired by the poem, Jesus at the Gay Bar, by Jay Hulmes. Published in The Backwater Sermons. (Canterbury Press, 2021). A note from the author: "In Jay's poem, Jesus offers words of grace in a modern-day setting. In a similar fashion, I placed Jesus in a psychiatric setting to continue dismantling unfair stigmas around mental health. For me, the image of Jesus in therapy with me offers immense comfort and validation. I hope you find the same to be true for you."

—Rev. Sarah (Are) Speed