

Jim Bob

I wish you had known Jim Bob. From his name, you might think he came from South Georgia, but no, he came from Detroit and was a cradle Episcopalian. He was one of the members of Holy Comforter who lived in a nearby group home, the same one as Grover. They were good friends with each other and with Dwight, another of the house mates. One day Jim Bob made up his mind to leave Detroit and move to Atlanta, where his brother lived.

Jim Bob, when I first met him, was a bear of a man and hugged like a bear. His deep bass voice boomed when he spoke and especially when he sang. Over time, age and illness, mixed with an eagerness to collect cash for participating in trials of anti-psychotic pharmaceuticals, took their toll, but his cheerfulness and graciousness never abated, nor did his dignity.

His group home was near Holy Comforter, and he often walked the shaded streets of the neighborhood, head held high, straw hat on his head or held nobly at his breast. He was one of 20 or 30 members who participated in the art program at Holy Comforter's day program, the Friendship Center. He was a painter. He was a regular at worship.

One Palm Sunday, my sermon traced the trajectory from the heights of Jesus' glorious, triumphal entry into Jerusalem to the depths of his rejection on Golgotha pondering the confusion thus wrought in his disciples. I asked, "How could triumph turn so quickly to defeat?"

Jim Bob sat on the front row just below the pulpit. Beneath his breath, in an almost subsonic rumble, he answered, "Ever watch football?"