

## Always a Guest: Speaking of Faith Far from Home

**Barbara Brown Taylor**

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By turns funny, heartbreaking, and inspiring, Barbara Brown Taylor's sermon collection *Always a Guest* delights in the possibilities of God and faith.

Made up of sermons that Taylor delivered while guest preaching during important congregational milestones, graduations, and other special events, the book is prefaced with an address that speaks to the power of being a guest, a position that allows one the latitude to explore controversial subjects like politics and power. The sermons themselves are dated across the past twenty years, and they include meaningful commentary on difficult times in American history. But Taylor also engenders nostalgia for a time in which Jesus walked along the dusty roads of Nazareth sharing parables, and digs deep into tender issues like privilege and power in the process. For example: she considers Mark's gospel and Jesus's words to a rich young ruler to find fresh, pointed insights about what wealth requires.

The book's first sermon explores anxiety, making the intriguing observation that "Jesus' life-saving news is that our redemption is embedded in the things that cause us the greatest anxiety." Taylor expands on this idea as the collection moves forward to consider a variety of other worries—such as money, evil, and the apocalypse—all while locating reasons to maintain hope in the messages of the gospels. The text ends with a pair of sermons that parse the thorny parable of the ten bridesmaids and the missing oil, rendering the bridesmaids a stand-in for the difficult parts of people's lives and noting that sometimes Jesus wants people to ask questions instead of "bowing our heads" and "closing our eyes."

*Always a Guest* is a pitch-perfect sermon collection for these anxious times.

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