

Barbara Brown Taylor, formerly rector of Grace Calvary Church in Clarkesville, Georgia, preached a memorable sermon on Easter Sunday 1996. Using an empty cicada skin to illustrate her point, the Rev. Taylor argued, gently, that the greatest miracle of Easter might not be the empty tomb, but life outside the tomb, even as the cicada skin, remarkable as it is, is less wonderful than the living creature that left the skin behind.

Sitting in church that morning, listening, both my mind and eyes wandered to the life around me, much of it outside the window where I sat, outside the church proper, outside the cicada skin. Here, in verse, are captured moments from that morning.

James Brewbaker



James Brewbaker and Rinda, his wife, are longtime members of St. Thomas Episcopal Church in Columbus. He is professor of English education at Columbus State University and editor of *Poems by Adolescents and Adults*, published by the National Council of Teachers of English (2002). Rogers and Jolene Brewbaker, his son and daughter-in-law, have recently joined St. Paul's in Newnan where their infant daughter, Emma, will be baptized Easter morning.

It Isn't the Tomb

By James Brewbaker

Barbara points out that it isn't the empty tomb that matters about Easter.

What matters could be a ladybug, a sprinting jewel on the white painted sill, working its way across crazed glass in thin early morning light pausing, testing, tasting flecks of candle wax left from Christmas Eve three months ago.

What matters could be an old man painfully helping his hunched wife out of their blue Buick in the handicapped space or those two fat-breasted gray brown doves, their search done, exploding straight up into the branches with a perfect strip of white paper towel.

What matters could be that yellow-haired boy in the navy blue blazer, pouting, ten years old, whose mind is on bugs and baseball cards, not Jesus —or those squirrels scabbling across winter's drab earth under gaudy yellow and pink branches of forsythia and redbud.

What matters could be a balding father holding his curly-haired little girl's hand as she climbs two steps into St. Julian Hall or this green yellow light falling across men and women and children at the altar rail.

Barbara smiles knowingly, shows us the delicate cicada skin one last time, invites us to leave the empty tomb behind to find our own miracles.