

## Mp3 John Tirro - Journey To The Jordan



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Thoughtful meditations on Christianity in today's world, with a communion liturgy for contemporary worship. 17 MP3 Songs GOSPEL: Contemporary Gospel, GOSPEL: Traditional Gospel Details: Journey to the Jordan is a reflection of fifteen years of spiritual questioning, which finally led to the writing of "Swimmin' in the Jordan," a song about the peace that comes from trusting a loving and forgiving God. Journey to the Jordan begins with "To You," which I wrote for Tyson House, a Lutheran-Episcopal campus ministry at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville. Every Sunday evening, as the students finish eating supper, Pastor Ward, Father Chris and I slip away to the chapel to light the candles and prepare for worship. I play the opening chords, and we sing: To You, all hearts are open, To You, all desires known. To You, there are no secrets, Almighty God, we come to You. The refrain repeats and builds as the students enter the chapel, adding their voices to the song. Once the congregation is seated, I bring the song to a close. After a period of silence, we sing: Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts By the inspiration of Your Holy Spirit That we may perfectly love You That we may worthily magnify Your name The next eight songs are kind of an extended confession and absolution, as they document the times I sorted out and brought to God the conflicts between the faith I was raised in and the world I lived in. "Yours Eternally" is one of the first songs of faith I wrote, as I came to recognize the simple fact of God's goodness and importance in my life: Under my own direction, My soul drifts steadily off course. When I guide my life by Heaven, I am brought safe to shore Well, it's one thing to recognize God's goodness and importance; it's another thing to respond to God's call, and the next two songs explore exactly this issue... The Worlds Finest Hour If I were Mary, and if I heard What looked like an angel announce That I would carry the living Word, That the very God I prayed to would come down, Down on me, and me so young, Could I possibly conceive that He would be the Son, The Son of Man, a son of mine? Would I whisper,

'Let the Lord be glorified?' Or would I laugh? Would I cry? In the face of embracing such Power, Would I run? Would I hide? Surely I could not deny the world's finest hour. If I were Joseph, and I were told My virgin betrothed was to give birth, And I was chosen to behold The coming of the King of all the earth When I woke, when I knew That it all had been a dream, would I think the dream was true And take Him in as my own? Would I lead her through the desert to my home? If I were Jerusalem, If I laid the palms at his feet, If I shouted, 'Crucify him!' When He rose, would I finally believe? Poor Me Poor Moses, the odds were stacked against him From the moment that they found him floating in the reeds Poor Noah, sweating in the sun Everyone staring, and the ark was still in pieces Poor Isaac, tied to the altar Waiting for his fathers hand to fall But aint nobody done Gods will Without that feeling of climbing uphill Its a long, hard battle and it always will be Even now, even I hear the calling And my heart starts racing, and my mind starts stalling And I know Hes great and good and all But how much more can He make out of poor me? Poor Jonah, sent to save a city Ran the wrong direction, hiding from the Lord He found himself in the belly of a fish Said, Anything You wish, Im ready to take orders. Poor people, free to falter Free to come back at a clip or at a crawl I make it so much worse than it has to be Nothing I cannot do will be asked of me Hes gonna make more, gonna make more Gonna make a whole lot more out of poor me! The next song looks a little more closely into the challenge of recognizing God's image in other people: Angels It's a simple lesson, rarely learned Love is given, never earned We walk blindly through our lives Confident and satisfied While on the other side of town Down on his knees pleading A man with hungry eyes Begs for what he's needing Someone passing by Stops without a reason to Shares of his own food Angels bring a message of hope, Bring a message of love, Bring a message on through. If a stranger can bring a message, then we Can bring a message, and we, We can be angels, too. For many years, I tried to justify my faith in God philosophically. The next song reflects on the point when I came to understand that faith must ultimately rest not on what I can prove, but rather on what God reveals: Reasons to Believe I can build you a strong defense for the hope that's in me. I can list you the arguments for the way I see this world. I can offer the evidence that I've felt in my life. I can hand you the books that help my faith to survive. But nothing I can say, nothing I can do, Can make the message seem true to you. Only God can give you reasons to believe. I can state you a case for prayer as a meditation. I can point you to nature and the order it reveals. We can talk of the ways that love has a mind of its own, And debate our conclusions based on logic alone. But if it's only you and me here, making sense, Nothing's proven but

coincidence. Only God can give you reasons to believe. Why is it so hard to hear? Why would the Creator's voice be small and still? Are we afraid He won't be there? Or afraid He will? Or maybe we're afraid to be deceived. Maybe we're afraid to be deceived. Only God can give you reasons to believe. So then the question was, what would it mean for God to give me reasons? How would I know? The next three songs are my best explanation of how I experienced God's revelation. "The Prince of Surprises" presents the necessary first step of opening the mind to the possibility that God might intervene. It is also the only song on Journey to the Jordan written as if God is the one singing. It's not a device I use lightly, but it seems like an appropriate way to communicate God's self-announcement: Your world is built on routine. It tells you what to expect, tells you what you dare not dream. But your world is the one I came to save, And I chose to get it done in an unexpected way. Do you tend to doubt the Power that made the universe would become a man? Is it too much to believe He'd care enough to come and lend a hand? Surprise, I love you! Surprise, you've been forgiven! Surprise, I died two thousand years ago, Surprise, I'm living! Sure as the sun goes down, sure as it rises, I'm the Prince of surprises... So once we're open to the possibility, what evidence do we have that God does intervene? The next song shares one way I know that prayer is answered: When I Pray for Peace When I pray for sun, sometimes the rain comes down. When I pray for time, this world keeps spinning 'round. Seems like some kinds of prayer Don't get me anywhere. But when I pray for peace, when I rest in the Spirit Of the One who is life to me I don't understand, I don't know the answer, But peace comes to me, when I pray for peace... And the next song is a prayer for peace: Shalom Salaam There is no God but God. The Lord your God is one, One God and Father of all. Shalom, salaam, peace be with you. Let us live, live in peace. Lord our God, grant us peace. Shalom, salaam, peace be with you. In the bread, in the wine, in the body and the blood All that keeps us apart is consumed in Heaven's love. No division remains, we are gathered into one. Love alone is the law, let God's will be done. Shalom, salaam, peace be with you. Songs eleven through fourteen are pieces that lead to communion. By the time these songs are sung at Tyson House, we've prayed, sung hymns, read scripture, and listened as the Gospel was proclaimed. We share Gods peace with one another, and then together we sing "The Lord Be With You," "On the Night He Was Betrayed," and "The Lord's Prayer" as the bread and wine are consecrated. We sing "Lamb of God" as the congregation comes forward to receive communion. "Swimmin' in the Jordan" is a song I often sing during communion: Swimmin in the Jordan, that wonderful water Lettin my burdens float on downstream Ive been a

sinner that's not important. I'm swimmin' in the Jordan, my soul is clean. Nothing can come between me and the Father. Through His forgiveness, I've been released. No longer sinkin' since I let the Lord in. I'm swimmin' in the Jordan, I am at peace. Jesus came to me when I was drownin'. He reached his hand out, he took my sins. His life eternal he traded me for them. I'm swimmin' in the Jordan, living again. "Safe as Baby Moses in the Rushes" is another frequent communion song: Sometimes it seems like there's no way of knowing why it's all worth it, or where we belong. Sometimes we pray for a way to keep going. Sometimes it's clear that we're carried along, Safe as baby Moses in the rushes, Floating toward what God has planned. That's the way the Father holds us: Dear in His sight, cradled in His hands. What if we knew all our worries were groundless. What kind of freedom would we all enjoy. Wrapped in a love and a power so boundless. Tenderly lifted like that little boy. Even when the river rolls the darkest and the deepest. We can rest and rest assured. He will always keep us. Safe as baby Moses in the rushes. From all I've experienced, when you rest in that kind of assurance, soon you want to share it, to become an active expression of God's love in the world. The last song on Journey to the Jordan, "Use me up," is a prayer: Use me up. Let me give everything I am. Pour out my heart and soul according to Your plan. Use me up. Let there be nothing of me left. No chance to love untaken, Not one regret. John Tirro, March 29, 2006 (John is a Music Minister at St. John's Lutheran Church, Knoxville, TN, and also at Tyson House, a Lutheran-Episcopal ministry on the campus of the University of Tennessee.)

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