

SOON after 3pm on a Maundy Thursday, I pulled into the supermarket car park. I had been stuck in a one-way back street behind a truck, revving impatiently. It was not the ideal lead-up to Easter.

From my car radio came the mellifluous tones of Lucky Oceans's afternoon show on Radio National. Lucky introduced an album called *Pretty World* by Sam Baker. The backstory is that Baker was in Peru in 1986 on a train blown up by the Shining Path Maoist group. He sustained permanent injuries and watched the 14-year-old boy next to him die. Baker had to relearn to play the guitar so he could fret with his right hand. Brain damage resulting from the injuries meant he had to "go picking for words – like you'd pick fruit in an orchard".

All of this is evident in the song *Broken Fingers*. You can hear a certain heaviness in the emphasis and pronunciation; the words don't come easily. You can tell they are sung by a man who has to hunt and pick. Baker was surrounded by a crew of supporting artists, friends willing him into



making his music again. The album is Baker's tribute, invoking the memory of the boy and naming his own loss. The lyrics are simple and eloquent. *These broken fingers / some things don't heal / you can't wake up from the dream when you know the dream is real.*

Baker's song takes hold of me. Suddenly I am weeping in the Safeway car park. I do the shopping with a new gratitude.

It is important to be able to acknowledge that "some things don't heal". There is a respectful knowing that doesn't try to force healing or hope on people. It doesn't mean you don't believe that transformation can happen, but it can't be commodified, even in religious terms.

In my childhood I periodically heard preachers insisting on a kind of victorious Christianity. It was as if barracking for Jesus put you on the winning team where nothing could touch you. It felt like denial.

In the evening I go to the foot-washing ritual our church holds every Maundy Thursday. The night recalls the Last Supper, when Jesus washed the feet of the disciples. Later that same night, in the Garden of Gethsemane, they abandoned him.

Prayers are spoken by candlelight in the darkened church. I am offered water for my feet, and fragrant oils, then towels to enfold them. I am offered wine to drink and bread to eat. In the quiet darkness I remember people who carry wounds that don't heal.

Julie Perrin is a Melbourne writer.