

HOW WE SUFFER AND DIE

Lord of the new covenant, in Christ you draw all people to yourself: may we die with him to the powers of hate and let him show us a world loved by you, through Jesus Christ, the fruitful grain. *From Prayers for an Inclusive Church, Steven Shakespeare*

THE SUNDAY OF THE PASSION: PALM SUNDAY
 ISAIAH 50:4-9, PSALM 31:9-16, PHILIPPIANS 2:5-11, MARK 14:1-15:40
 MARCH 25, 2018

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We've heard the whole story. What did we hear?

Titled as it is, the Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ, it seems like the story is about how Jesus suffered and died.

But when you think of Jesus, was his life about getting people to pay attention to *him*? Was **he** the focus of his life and work?

Was there something else he was doing in his suffering and death?

We may be hearing: "this is how it was for Jesus, this is how Jesus suffered and died."

But my sense is Jesus was saying: "Look. This is how **you** suffer and die. I'm showing you, by giving myself to this world in this way: this is how it is with **you**."

Jesus is revealing how God remains in radical identification, the most profound connection with all of the ways we are confused,

we crumble before our commitments, collapse under pressure, betray one another, betray ourselves, distance ourselves from God, pander to power, and then, in the midst of all this undermining of our humanity, how God, in our fragile human bodies, physically bleeds and dies in us and among us....

Jesus is showing that God is not and will never be distant from this whole array of human failing and destruction and loss. God is answering forever the “where was God?” question that so often comes to mind in the face of any of the suffering and in any of the deaths we experience.

The answer is always: God is with us.

So this Holy Week, in love, great love, Jesus is continuing to enter, experience, and sanctify all that we encounter in these stories we are reliving with him. The focus is not on what Jesus experienced, but on how Jesus reveals that God accompanies us, companions us, strengthens us, helps us face what we must, endure what we must, calls us to be who we are created to be, how we are connected to God through it all – each of us, all of us, our world.

What we have just heard is unfolding yet again today, even now, here and everywhere.

We’ve heard the whole story. Are we listening?



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