

# TAKEAWAY OF THE CRUCIFIXION?

Almighty God, we pray you graciously to behold this your family, for whom our Lord Jesus Christ was willing to be betrayed, and given into the hands of sinners, and to suffer death upon the cross; who now lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

*The Collect for Good Friday, Book of Common Prayer, p. 221*

## GOOD FRIDAY

ISAIAH 52:13—53:12, PSALM 22:1-21, HEBREWS 10:16-25, JOHN 19:1-37

MARCH 30, 2018

### ST. MARK'S-IN-THE-VALLEY

EPISCOPAL CHURCH AND PRESCHOOL

Los Olivos, California

THE REV. RANDALL C.K. DAY, D.MIN., PRIEST AND RECTOR

*“The seasons don’t fear death, nor does the wind, the sun, or the rain. The moon doesn’t fear falling into darkness, nor does the caterpillar fear its cocoon. The dew on a blade of grass has no fear as it’s given wings by the warmth of the morning sun. We can be like they are, and have no fear.”*

~Br. Nicholas Bartoli, SSJE

I’ve been re-thinking what the takeaway of the crucifixion can be for us – and what may have been in Jesus’s mind in entering his death in the free way that he did.

Christian religion – and the Church as its institutional representative – in many different forms through the centuries has proffered a number of ideas about the crucifixion – proffered ideas

about it being a sacrifice for sin, something God required for salvation.

And around that, devotionally, there has been a great deal of focus, some of which we hear in hymns and prayers this evening, [focus] on hardship and suffering attached to Jesus’s death. Some of us may remember that movie that actor Mel Gibson made in 2004 – The Passion of the Christ – the depicted the final hours of Jesus’s life through extreme violence and an anti-Semitic tone.

Without detaching from what Jesus did experience – and the horrors of many deaths of many people before and since – it seems to me that Jesus’s act was not intended to fit the shape of a

religious act and not intended for its own purpose. Rather, it seems to me his aim was a much larger intention to dismantle the fear, the terror we attach to death.

In John 10 we hear: “I came so that they could have life—indeed, so that they could live life to the fullest.”

Our fear undermines life – and our primary fear is fear of death or non-being. It is the source of our anxiety, recognizing that we can suffer smaller and larger deaths in the course of our living, in the course of every day.

So if Jesus is actively walking into a violent death, not cowering before those who terrorize others, is it possible he is opening a path away from fear and into life at its fullest?

Also, it seems to me that what Jesus intends to give in ascending the cross is not meant narrowly for a sect or group but for all people in all times and places. The life of which Jesus speaks, the fullness of

life that is his desire for the people of earth is not in any way limited to some who fit a certain definition or a collection of thoughts about him, dogma, doctrine, or catechism.

For Jesus, all means all, as they say.

As long as we fear, we are in danger of exploitation – by circumstances, the dangerous habits of our own minds, and the nefarious designs of others....

It may be hard to see, but is it possible that our takeaway from this death, willingly entered, is God’s desire for everyone’s freedom from fear?

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