

Love Killed

*They went out and followed him,
Those who had sat with him at the table.
He led them to a garden
Where he prayed while they slept.*

*He was kissed,
And because he was kissed he was arrested,
And when he was arrested, his friends fled,
Some to go into hiding,
One to stand beside a bonfire,
And say I never knew him,
I never knew him...
Until the cock crowed.*

*He was brought before the religious authorities
And accused of the sin of blasphemy
And of threatening insurrection.
Having no power to deal with him,
They handed him over to the state governor,
Who listened to the accusations
And then asked the accused
What have you to say?
To which the response was silence.
He had said it all.
He was not found to be guilty of any criminal charges
But because he was an embarrassment,
It was decided that the people should determine his fate.
They shouted
Crucify him!
Crucify him!
Crucify him!*

*He was cursed and spat on,
Whipped and humiliated.
And on his shoulders a cross was placed,
Which he accepted with grace.*

*Under the weight of it
He stumbled and fell
Stumbled and fell
All the way to Calvary.*

*On top of a garbage dump,
He was nailed to a cross of wood
And left to die,
While soldiers gambled,
Critics joked,
Religious leaders smiled with satisfaction
And his mother watched and waited*

Why are we here today on this horrific Friday in the story of our faith?
Would it not be much easier to refresh the palms that are strewn upon the floor and celebrate once again with a parade?
Why would we want to engage in this dark day?
Why enter into such a gruesome story?
I do so with both trepidation and a heavy heart
I do so with a mixture of theologies and contexts
And yet it is this story that speaks to the core of our faith,
for me not because of how Jesus died but why he died.

These palm branches that lay before us were waving in celebration of salvation, as we shouted “Hosanna’s” Just a few days ago. On that day we remembered Jesus’ brave entry into Jerusalem; his courageous entry into the place where he stared into a jumble of eyes that offered honor and injustice, wonder and mockery, love and hatred, life and death array.

It was not long after his triumphant entrance into Jerusalem that Jesus confronted the corruption in the temple. He challenged the arrogance and exclusion of the authorities as they attempted to trip him up with questions of paying taxes and following laws.

As the palms stopped waving Jesus faced an interrogation of Pharisees, Sadducees and Romans challenging his version of the truth. And so, he reminded religious leaders of their scriptures and the commandment to love God and neighbour. But this truth telling only agitated them more. They demanded to know how this carpenter dare to tell them to love? How he dare to tell them that what the poor choose to give is as good as the abundant wealth from which they offer? How dare he tell them that those they have judged are worthy of more? How dare he?

How could he dare to show such compassion? A compassion that led him to experience a betrayal of the deepest kind. A betrayal so disturbing so repulsive it’s hard to believe it is a betrayal of humankind. For in the face of love a close companion sells Jesus for just a little wealth.

On this day every year my heart breaks open with the psalmist and Christ as we cry why? Why God have you forsaken him?

Why does he not defend himself?
Even the baffled Pilate does not understand.
Where are you from? He asks.
What is the truth? He inquires

He does not speak and so in silence we look into his eyes and see truth.
We see in those dark, strained loving eyes “I am truth” “I am love beyond all measure”
“I AM” the truth and the love you abandon. I am the truth and love you were created to be. And yet because I am calls us to a love and truth our world does not know the soldiers wove a crown of thorns and put it on his head, and dressed him in a purple robe. They mocked him, spit on him and struck his face. And then they set an innocent Jesus on trial.

The decision had already been made for unconditional love brings to the untrusting great fear. To look in the face of Jesus brought crisis to humankind because it called for them to be different than they were, it called for them to be transformed.

And so as the mock trial ends even the authors of our scriptures seem to find it hard to bear the horror of the story; for we are left only to imagine the depth of pain and suffering. As they take Jesus; and he carries his cross until he can carry it no more, and then a stranger journeys with him to the place of the skull where they crucify him.

This death and suffering like all death and suffering confronts us. However this death confronts me in a way that causes my stomach to churn. For this death stares me straight in the face and says this is what we do with love.

This is what we do with the one who calls us to see all creation, and all people as equal and loved by God. This is what we do when today we choose to oppress, and ridicule, and set apart those who are not worthy of our company. We say they are not worthy of God, or Christ, we say they are not worthy of love, we say they are worthy of condemnation or even death.

It is not God who calls them unworthy. It is not Jesus who says some should not be accepted. He died to prove love.

So as you look this day into the face of the crucified Christ know that he is love, and know that he understands your pain, your places of rejection, your innocence, your guilt and your grief and he loves you anyway.

Good Friday, God’s Friday calls us to grieve injustice; our own, and that of others.

This day reminds us that our God has known the darkest of times in the deepest of ways and God grieves with us.

In his death we are shown that God entered fully into our human experience, even unto death. We have a God who shares in our suffering. Hebrews says “For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who in every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sin.”

Isaiah had written: “By a perversion of justice he was taken away. Who could have imagined his future?” How could great love, live such death? How does it conquer sin and injustice today? Is this the end? If it is what is the future of love?

We are the future. We now have the opportunity to be the truth and love. Don't dismiss it, although that is the easiest thing to do. Don't turn from the face of love in unbelief. Live love so that, that piece of work which Jesus finished in his death we will accomplish in your life.