

Reflection for Christ the King Sunday
November 20, 2016 – Luke 23:33-43/C

So how did Christ the King Sunday get invaded by Holy Week? What's this story of Jesus, dying on the cross doing here in the middle of our festival day? Well, it is to help remember Christ – the One who revealed God to us. And this God is different than any other, for we worship:

A God who **Suffers**, one who grieves over Jerusalem and the death of his friend, Lazarus; the one who has mercy, and is “moved to compassion”;
A God who **Loves** enough to sacrifice through his own death on the cross;
A God who **dwells with us**, incarnate, enfleshed in our flesh;
A God who **companions us** through all our choices (both good and bad.)

And that is, perhaps, the most difficult and joyous part of the “freedom of the will.” Because making choices means there will be consequences. Pastor Don Prange says this, *(there is) no simple choice between perfect and imperfect, but between sinful forces of oppression and sinful forces of liberation...* That is because human choice is based on human pride, bad judgments and selfish motivations, which together illustrate our daily deaths both small and large. And that leaves us feeling angry, frustrated, *impotent!* It leaves us wishing for that Omnipotent God-who comes to take charge! And yet, God allows us the freedom to choose.

Our God has shown us that struggle fills us with honesty. When we are beat down, defeated and lost - struggle and pain ask us to become **who we really are**. To *avoid* suffering keeps us from our Christian identity. The *fear* of suffering keeps us from our Christian faith. This is what we call “a theology of the cross.” For our God, it is not about the glory, it's about the cost...

And because we know that to be true, only a suffering God can sustain us in our weakness - not with a show of force that gets our juices stirring - but with a show of heart that touches the best part of us.

So we are not here simply to get a weekly “pep talk,” nor to provide morality lessons for our children, nor to have at least one hour this week to relax...we are here to worship our King: to **rejoice together** in the beauty of song; to **give thanks** with our hearts and our tithes and offerings; to **learn** about God through Scripture & teaching; to **be forgiven and freed** from our selves and to be **nourished and sustained** in our faith

An empire-building God cannot provide that comfort, but only a God who knows our inmost being - who knit us together in our mother's wombs - who loves us better than we love ourselves. Only a God who has been with us - who has **been** us - can truly be our King. And thus, God is part of our Story; and we are part of God's.

Today, we are “remembering” the narrative - in our order of worship, in our statements of faith, in hearing the Word and sharing the Lord's Supper. To look again at what is so very familiar, yet so mysterious. It has been said that the “*religious paradigm of Christian God is **ridiculous** (because it's) not about the most powerful or empire-destroying king, but a God who gathers and sends...*” A God who loves. The Kingdom of our God, and of his Christ, is not somewhere else...The Kingdom of God is here where we live; and where Christ (God with us) is King. Amen.

Pastor Susan Langhauser