

GOOD FRIDAY, APRIL 10th, 2020

death

Gospel of Mark 15:22-32 and Gospel of Luke 23:44-49

Then they brought Jesus to the place called Golgotha (which means the place of a skull). And they offered him wine mixed with myrrh; but he did not take it. And they crucified him, and divided his clothes among them, casting lots to decide what each should take. It was nine o'clock in the morning when they crucified him. The inscription of the charge against him read, "The King of the Jews." And with him they crucified two bandits, one on his right and one on his left. Those who passed by derided him, shaking their heads and saying, "Aha! You who would destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself, and come down from the cross!" In the same way the chief priests, along with the scribes, were also mocking him among themselves and saying, "He saved others; he cannot save himself. Let the Messiah, the King of Israel, come down from the cross now, so that we may see and believe." Those who were crucified with him also taunted him.



It was now about noon, and darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon, while the sun's light failed; and the curtain of the temple was torn in two. Then Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said, "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit." Having said this, he breathed his last. When the centurion saw what had taken place, he praised God and said, "Certainly this man was innocent." And when all the crowds who had gathered there for this spectacle saw what had taken place, they returned home, beating their breasts. But all his acquaintances, including the women who had followed him from Galilee, stood at a distance, watching these things.

THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION:

As I write these words, on Monday morning of Holy Week, 2020, a death plague is gripping the world. As of this moment, more than 70,000 persons across 210 nations and territories have died from the COVID-19 global pandemic in one month. Death is no stranger to us. We attend funerals of friends and celebrate their lives. We care for those who grieve and we are embraced by others offering compassionate attention when we grieve. Packaged into our faith is the belief that death does not have the final word. On numerous occasions, it has been my blessing to be with an individual in their moments of lucidity prior to their last exhale of earthly air. It is my practice to encourage them to 'move toward the light' because others have affirmed they see light in these moments. My theological reason is reported by Luke in his telling of Jesus' dying moment as Jesus says, "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit." In this phrase, we are invited behind the curtain into the sacred space of Jesus' relationship with and commitment to God as heavenly Father. The Aramaic word, 'Abba,' describes an intimate relationship of trust. Let us nourish an intimate relationship with God so that on the day of our last exhale, we know God as 'Abba.'

QUESTION:

If you knew today was your dying day, what would be your last prayer?

POEM:

I now bring my breathing to its plenary cessation,
Entrusting to Your hands alone my spirits' invocation.

(by DW Foust)

PRAYER:

Abba, I am in awe of Your suffering love. Forgive me for being more willing to be taught than to be spiritually transformed. Forgive me for discounting Jesus' death on Golgotha by bartering the cross of discipleship for an easy way of religiously cultured living. Abba, help me nourish an intimate relationship with You so that on my dying day, others will sense I am merely relaxing into Your arms for a nap. AMEN

QUOTE:

"It's too bad that dying is the last thing we do; for it has so much to teach us about living."

(Robert Herhold in *Learning to Die, Learning to Live*)