

GOOD FRIDAY, MARCH 30

JESUS IS CRUCIFIED (JOHN 18:1-19:42)

They have come for you. You've known it was the obvious next step, the consequence of the way you had been living with radical grace and boundary-breaking hospitality in the public square in broad daylight and around the dinner table in lamp-lit homes. And now it has come. But to say that you're ready for it might be a stretch. Ready as in rooted and centered and so full of love that there's no room to not do it - yes. But ready as in unafraid - no.

And yet they have come. What does holiness look like when they have come for you and you are staring death in the eyes?

When I look at Jesus's life on his last day, when I read of his actions and his words, I see a picture of what holiness looks like in the most difficult of situations. It's a holiness marked by courage.

If we believe that Jesus is fully human, he had a million moments to back out and he didn't. And he moves not as a superhero unaffected by the grief and gravity of the moment but he feels and expresses his grief. He does not simply dismiss and let it roll off and, yet, he resolves with courage to walk his path anyway. To walk in faith toward what will likely bring you death and to be brave enough to feel it is courageous holiness.

Courageous holiness looks like looking doubt in the eyes and seeking the God who accompanies those who suffer. This story is soaked with feelings of abandonment. Where is the God who hears the cries of the oppressed and hurting? Where is the God who delivers God's people from the oppressive and dehumanizing political regime? After all, this story takes place during the annual Passover festival, which remembers God's deliverance of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt so many years earlier. Courageous holiness asks what are we learning about God and ourselves in this moment when things are not how we wish that they were?

Courageous holiness looks like being our full honest selves in the public square. It is the bold act of not hiding. I'm struck by Jesus's sharp statement in the synoptic Gospels' account when the soldiers came to arrest him. "Am I leading a rebellion?" he asks. "Why," he wants to know, "when you had the chance to confront me in the daylight while I was teaching, did you not take it then? If you are so sure of yourselves, why wait until the covering of night?" Courageous holiness calls out the tendency to hide.

Courageous holiness looks like refusing to escalate violence. Jesus did not fight back. He did not shout back. He did not often speak up to correct. Unlike a tormented Pilate, who acted to “satisfy the crowd,” Jesus refused to play along with the rules that the crowd had seemingly established. And yet, as he “breathed his last,” he did so with “a loud cry” to which the whole earth responded. This is not silence. It is also courageously not playing by the rules of violence.

This last day was marked by grief, anguish, and fear. It was also marked by courage and love. So, also, is our time. We may not feel ready and yet we must respond.

As you think about the events of “Good Friday,” spend a few moments praying for courage for when you face moments of difficulty and uncertainty. What calls us to this kind of courage in our time and place? How do you want to respond?