

The story we just heard is the story of Jesus' arrest, his trial, and his death. But it's not only a story about Jesus. It's a story about us and who we are.

The last five weeks of Lent, we've been confronted with our own shortcomings, our failings, the ways we come up short in our own lives and the lives of others. We looked at the brokenness of life with honesty, and engaged the path of Lent courageously. But we see today in the story of our Savior, who it is we are: In the suffering Jesus endured, we see a clear and full and inescapable reflection of who we are and all that we're capable of.

We heard in our reading a catalog of how it is we inflict suffering. We do it through blame. We do it through self-delusion, justifying the suffering we inflict. We betray, we lie, we seek vengeance for our own weakness. We do the popular thing, placating the crowd. We seek to preserve ourselves - the way we are, the way we live. We self-medicate with the spectacle of violence. Do you see in this story that clear reflection of not only the society we live in, but our own tendencies? Our own comfort with the suffering we inflict?

You might have heard too in this story a reflection of the world we live in. A world full of blame, division, demonization, the wielding of power and overwhelming injustice. In order to keep control, keep things the way they are, truth is denied and disposed of. And the world keeps turning, just as it did, its gears oiled with the bodies and lives of the crushed innocent.

In this way, perhaps we heard too a reflection of our own suffering. For we endure our own sufferings as well. The realization Peter has when the cock crows. The turmoil Judas must* have felt. The religious leaders defending their people from the heavy influence of Greco/Roman culture that was seducing their young away from the faith “we raised them in.” The physical pain Jesus endured. The emotional pain of abandonment he knew. The humiliation and ridicule and human cruelty he suffered. Do you hear your own experience of suffering somewhere in there?

This is where we begin Holy Week - confronted by ourselves. Our world revealed, ourselves revealed fully. But this is not where Holy Week ends. It will end with a different reveal.

Richard Rohr describes God as “Suffering love.” He writes,
If we are created in God’s image, and if there is so much suffering in the world, then God must also be suffering. How else can we understand the revelation of the cross and that the central Christian logo is a naked, bleeding, suffering man? (Daily Reflection 4.8.2022)

For, he continues, “Jesus does not observe human suffering from a distance; he is somehow *in* human suffering, **with and for us...** *revealing and redeeming* the plight of the suffering as his own.”

This is the path of Holy Week, a path of discovery that leads us toward this revelation. But we are not there yet. Today, we are simply the crowd proclaiming *Hosannas*, and crying “Crucify him.”

The path from here continues with the *Triduum* - the Three days. Starting on Thursday, these services are considered one service over three evenings (each starting at 7:00). The *Triduum* is a retelling of the story - a retelling with bread and wine and water, with prayer before the cross, and in vigil, with scripture, song and light.

Through these services, through our worship this week, God comes near, however far we feel from God through the suffering we know and do. God comes near, revealing who God is and what God does (not only in response to us and to this world) but for its very sake.

Thanks be to God.

AMEN

reveals us in all our ... fear, cunning, institutionalized oppression, corruption, our desire to be entertained, distracted from our own lives and the destruction of the world and communities.