

Reflection - With Open Hands
Good Friday, April 18, 2014
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The title of the Reflection: With Open Hands

Let us pray: Holy God, open our hearts to understand the meaning and mystery of this Friday we call Good Friday and then Loving God, open our hands to accept what you place within them and to serve and welcome one another with kindness and joy. Amen.

This evening we have the privilege of remembering the sacred story of our Savior's final hours in the spoken word of scripture, music, art and silence.

Five short days ago we gathered to commemorate the symbolic entrance of Jesus into Jerusalem during the Passover festival. It was a joyous occasion. Ordinary, hard working, well meaning people who were weary from the demands of their lives and the injustices in their world saw a glimmer of hope in the compassion and fairness of this wise teacher. Jesus listened to them, understood and loved them---Jesus eased their burden and then he challenged them to love one another. A few days later Jesus shared in the Passover meal with his disciples and in a symbolic gesture he washed their feet with open hands. They sang hymns and prayed together. And then Jesus began his journey home alone... praying in the Garden of Gethsemane *for this cup to pass from him.*

One cannot help but be amazed at the confidence, the sense of self, with which Jesus walks this way. It is not a smugness or self-assuredness, which often hints at arrogance or self-righteousness. No, Jesus of Nazareth had an inner peace that comes from a complete trust in God and a humble conviction of who he was and who God called him to be. With open hands, Jesus prays in the Garden and accepts the road God calls him to journey.

Even those who watched from a distance could not help but respect the integrity of this teacher whose strength was magnified in his willingness to speak truth to power and when the time came to surrender his own power with open hands. Jesus suffers, not because he does something wrong, my friends. Jesus suffers because he does what is right, which rubs the powers that be the wrong way. The Iona Community in Scotland describes the meaning of Christ's death with these words:

On the cross Jesus felt the pain of wood and nails, but more than this he felt the weight of all the evil, all the malice, all the pettiness, all the sin of the world heaped on his shoulders, He did not throw off that weight though he could have. He did not give back evil for evil, return malice for malice, take revenge on the petty minded, or spread hate on all who despised and rejected him. He did not return an eye for an eye. He did not give back the sin of the world though he could have. Instead he took it away to death and to hell, so that he could lead us into heaven.

As we journey with Christ to Golgotha on this holy night, we commemorate the mystery of the Christian faith, that Jesus Christ risked death and brokenness to give us life and to make us whole. Along the way of our journey to Easter morning, may we find the courage to open our clenched hands and give up whatever it is we are holding onto so tightly to the One who was wounded for our transgressions, to the One who is our Lord and our Savior. So be it. Amen.