

Is this what you expected?
The Messiah on a cross?

And like a season finale episode
where a main character dies at the end,
it doesn't get any better.
He doesn't get off the cross.
He doesn't use his power,
which until now has proved considerable,
he does not use it to save himself.

Is this what you expected?

Is this what Jesus expected?
From the time he sat in the synagogue
talking scripture with the Pharisees and the Scribes;
or when he called the 12 to follow him down the shores of Gallilee,

is this what Jesus expected:
to be hanging from a cross,
not to come down
but to fall...lifeless?

Whatever he said
about being handed over to the chief priests and the scribes
and on the third day rising again,
whatever he said about that
and believed about that,
I wonder if hanging there on the cross,
in the face of the hurting and the humiliation,
I wonder if this is really what he expected his life to become.

I would say no;
not if it's really meant to be powerful.

After all how much faith does it require to follow a course
if its efficacy can be guaranteed,
we might even give up our lives
for a cause we could be sure was righteous
and an outcome we could be sure of.

But real faith is a wondering,
a halting uncertainty
if this is the right thing.
Or another wrong thing.
Or just a thing.
Worst of all a meaningless thing.

How can we know?
Do we ever know...really?

The question becomes:
can we sit in that uncertainty?
Even just for this week?

I know we'll all be here next week;
we'll be somewhere next week celebrating Easter.
Flowers
and joy
and eggs
and chocolate.
It will be glorious and grand.

But between now and 7:00 next Sunday morning,
 can we just sit still with a savior who died,
 and not hurry him out of the tomb?

Because all this week
 he will be dying
 or about to die
 or wishing that he wasn't about to die,
 or asking God to take the cup away,
 or feeling the sting of betrayal
 or the ache of abandonment.

All this week
 we will be sitting between life and death.

Kelly Reed wrote a meditation in Mockingbird this week,
 all about the space between life and death,
 about how we are loathe to be still in that space.

*The chasm between death and life,
 like a brightly lit room turned suddenly dark,
 has a foreboding,
 disorienting effect;
 it's nearly impossible to see even a hand in front of you,
 much less any obstacle in your path.*

*You may choose to risk it and continue upon your tasks,
 ...but movement doesn't change the state of darkness.
 Paradoxically, in this space,
 it seems the best course of action is inaction —
 standing still
 and allowing time for your eyes to adjust.*

*The patience to endure
 until this point is a matter of faith;
 a choice to rest,
 to wait in the instinctual hope for what is to come.*

*In the shadow of the Cross,
this is what I've woefully take for granted all along:*

hope.

*Hope is not an innate human disposition,
bereft of pain or discomfort.*

*Rather, it is a gift from God,
born of suffering.*

*As Paul describes in Romans 8,
it is the foretaste of glory
amidst the anguish of childbirth,
a tightly held promise for life,
while in the throes of death.*

*Karl Barth explains the inextricable nature
of suffering, patience, and hope in Christ:*

*"If we suffer with Him in this hope
...we can and may and must suffer in patience:
answering His patience with our patience...
with our waiting for redemption."*

*In suffering,
hope.*

*In hope,
patience.*

*In patience,
redemption.*

For who hopes for what they already have?

Come and wait with me this week,
with **all** your companions
who walk this way with you.
Come and wait together.

Come at 12:15 on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday.

Come at 5:30 on Wednesday.

Come at 7:00 Thursday night
and see the whole story unfold before you,
foot washing,
Last Supper,
betrayal.

Come on Friday
when we behold the cross,
terrible in truth,
wondrous in what God has made of it.

This week is Holy,
not because all that happens will be wonderful or even good.
This week is Holy
because it tells the truth, unflinching.

This is the world,
this world we share,
this is where God chose to be born.
This is the unflinching truth that Jesus told once he got here:
God loves everybody.
The same truth that got Jesus killed:
God loves everybody.
Whoever you are wondering about,
whoever springs to mind.

The truth is
God loves everybody,
yes, even them.

This is the way of the cross.

Is it the way of redemption?

Is it the wrong thing?

Or just a thing?

Or worst of all,

a meaningless thing?

How can we know?

We'll just have to wait
and see.