

In 2004, partly in response to the popularity and controversy surrounding Mel Gibson's movie, *The Passion of the Christ*, Time magazine ran a cover story on the question of why Jesus died. The piece was well researched and included the opinion of a variety of scholars, but it also delved into the feelings of ordinary people around this question.

All of us have moments when our world falls apart and when all we can do is put our mouths to the dust and wait.

One person who expressed her feelings was a young woman who, as a child, had witnessed her mother being murdered by a jealous boyfriend. Looking back on her mother's death, she senses, without being able to put it into words, that somehow her mother's blood is connected to the blood that Jesus shed on Good Friday and that his death, also unfair, somehow gives dignity to her mother's death.

Her hunch is right. There is a connection, even if we lack the words to explain it, between what Jesus tasted on Good Friday and what any person who is unfairly victimized tastes. We have our own Good Fridays and they are not unconnected to what happened on Calvary two thousand years ago. Indeed, what Jesus underwent on Good Friday is, as this woman says, what gives us dignity when we taste the blood of humiliation, loneliness, helplessness, and death. What did Jesus undergo on Good Friday?

Interestingly, the gospels do not focus on his physical sufferings (which must have been horrific). What they highlight instead is his emotional suffering and his humiliation. He is presented as lonely, betrayed, alone, helpless to explain himself, a victim of jealousy, morally isolated, mocked, misunderstood, stripped naked so as to have to feel embarrassment and shame, and yet, inside of all this, as clinging to warmth, goodness, and forgiveness. Good Friday, in Luke's words, is when darkness has its hour. What does that taste like?

- Whenever we find ourselves outside the circle of health and vibrancy, on a sick bed alone, with the sure knowledge that, despite the love and support of family and friends, in the end it is us, by ourselves, who face disability and disfigurement, who have to lose a breast or an organ to surgery, who face chemotherapy and maybe death, when we are alone inside of that, alone inside of fear, we are feeling what Jesus felt on Good Friday.
- Whenever we find ourselves alone inside duty, bound by moral chains we cannot explain, tied down in our freedom so as to be seen as too timid, too frigid, too afraid to pick up our own lives, when innocence and duty are seen as a weakness, when circumstance steals away our dreams and what we would want for ourselves we need to give to others, we are feeling what Jesus felt on Good Friday.
- Whenever we are misunderstood and because of that are made to look weak, bad, wrong, when we have to live with a misunderstanding that makes us look bad in the eyes of others, we are feeling what Jesus felt on Good Friday.

- Whenever we experience the pain of inadequate self-expression, when there are symphonies inside us that will never see the light of day because we cannot express ourselves, when we feel the pain that comes knowing that most of what is best inside us will die with us, unexpressed, seemingly wasted, we are feeling what Jesus felt on Good Friday.
- Whenever we find ourselves the object of jealousy, animosity, and threat because of what we believe in, when what is virtue in us is made to look like selfishness, when we are made to feel shame for what we believe in, when what is precious to us is deemed offensive to others, we are feeling what Jesus felt on Good Friday.
- Whenever we find ourselves alone and lost, before aging, before the loss of health, before the loss of sexual attractiveness and our former place in life, and before the loss of life itself, we are feeling the loneliness of dying and we are feeling what Jesus felt on Good Friday.
- Whenever we are unfairly made to be a victim, when we are made to carry someone else's sickness, we are feeling what Jesus felt at Calvary and we are tasting the darkness of Good Friday.

When we taste that bitterness there is little else to say other than what Jesus said when he was arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane and led away to humiliation and death: "But this is your hour—the triumph of darkness."

We know what that means. All of us have moments when our world falls apart and when, as the Book of Lamentations says, all we can do is put our mouths to the dust and wait. Wait for what? Wait for darkness and death to have their hour, wait for (as Matthew says in his Passion account) the curtain of the temple to be torn from top to bottom, and the earth to shake, and the rocks to split open, and the graves to open and to show themselves to be empty.

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