

Traditionally on Palm Sunday we think about the triumphant entry into Jerusalem when Jesus, hailed as a King, is at the peak of his power and popularity.

People are still expecting him to deliver them from Roman oppression, anticipating their liberation and freedom.

But Jesus knows that his is a different destiny, and they will soon be disappointed.

He also knows that this is the beginning of the end, and I find it fascinating to note that before he goes into the city, he stops, begins to cry, and says,

“If only you knew the things that make for peace.”

He is crying not for himself, but for a stubborn and selfish humanity.

These people still do not understand him or his ministry, and now he knows that they probably never will. It is a haunting moment.

In a way Jesus is crying for all of us,

for the ways that we fail to understand how to live and how to love, fail to understand what makes for peace within us and what makes for peace around us.

Of course, if the world broke his heart then, as he stood on that hillside overlooking

Jerusalem, the world would surely break his heart now.

If he were to return today, I could well imagine Jesus stopping on a hill outside of Washington DC, Baghdad, Boston, or Denver and weeping.

He would weep over our stupidity, violence, and hatred.

He would weep over hungry children and desperate adults.

He would weep over our greed and blindness and selfishness.

This image of Jesus crying is something that moves me every time I think of it. This strong and powerful man who was God in the flesh--heartbroken, devastated. How rare to get a glimpse of Jesus showing such anguish, vulnerability, and pain.

Of all of the great paintings and sculptures of Christ down through the ages, you hardly ever see a depiction of Jesus with tears flowing down his face.

You just don’t see that side of him very often, and I wish we did.

We need to see a weeping Savior as much, if not more, than we need a Savior wearing a Halo and surrounded by angels. We need a crying Christ.

It is comforting and helpful to consider how his humanity and sadness blesses our own, how his despair gives us the strength to endure our own.

I wish I had a photograph of our heartbroken Savior to look at every single day.

Because it is the human and fragile face of God that helps me the most.

I don't know about you, but in the dark and lonely valleys of my life, those times  
when it is always 3:00 in the morning day after day after day,

I do not long for a happy, successful Savior.

I do not long for a macho, confident, successful American Idol sort of God  
who offers me prosperity and popularity.

I get enough of that without even looking for it, frankly.

What helps me most is someone who has suffered.

Someone who has known hunger and thirst, loneliness, betrayal and despair.

A Savior with a broken heart and a tear-stained face has a magnetic attraction.

That is exactly the kind of God who can speak to us,  
and I believe that is what has drawn people to Jesus in every generation.

More than anything else, he attracts people because of his humanity.

His vulnerability. His broken heart. His tear stained face.

This suffering Savior means nothing that is human is foreign to our God.

There is nothing you have endured that is beyond God's comprehension or care.

In the 8<sup>th</sup> chapter of the book of Jeremiah, the prophet cries out on behalf of God.

Here Jeremiah is speaking for God, who is saying:

“Why have they provoked me to anger with their graven images and foreign  
idols? My grief is beyond healing, and my heart is sick within me.

The wound of my people is beyond repair, dismay has taken over.

Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there?

Why has the health of my people not been restored?”

Here again, we have an incredible image of a despairing God asking his people to  
bring about healing. God asking, “Is there no balm in Gilead?”

It is God who is asking for comfort and assurance.

Remember this glimpse of God appealing to humankind for help.

It suggests that we are called to be in ministry with God and even to God.

Because sometimes God is the one who needs assurance and care.

Sometimes God needs us, as much as we need God.

As he faced the beginning of the end, Jesus needed comforting, needed to know  
that he was not alone, that his ministry would continue, that it had been  
worthwhile.

It would have been so tempting at many points during that last week of his life  
to completely give in to despair.

Not just overlooking Jerusalem, but when Judas betrayed him with a kiss,  
when he was arrested and tried before Pilate, when Peter denied ever knowing him.

His agonizing and sleepless night in the Garden of Gethsemane., knowing his violent death is imminent.

At those times, despair must have been more tempting to Jesus than all the kingdoms of the world.

And while he does cry out to God, he does not finally give in to despair. His composure cracks, of course, but he continues to put one foot in front of the other, he continues to go on and fulfill his destiny.

He is so brave and strong, even in his loneliness, even with a broken heart.

Max Lucado's book *And The Angels were Silent*, tells about how Jesus felt in the Garden of Gethsemane, when he cried out to God to let this cup pass from him and spare him this violent death.

In this moving portrait of our vulnerable God, Lucado writes:

“His humanity begged to be delivered from what his divinity could see.

Jesus looks into the pit of suffering and asks,

“Can't there be another way?” He knew the answer before he asked the question.

But still, he asked to get out. There was a moment when, if he could have, he would have turned his back on the whole mess and gone away.

But he could not. Why?

He could not because he saw you. Peering down that long corridor of time, he saw you. Right there in the middle of a world which would never be fair.

Saw you cast into a river of life that you did not request.

He saw you with a body that would get tired and sick, saw you with a will that would grow weak.

He saw you betrayed by those you trusted and hurt by those you loved.

He saw you staring into the pit of your own failures and broken dreams, and saw you looking down into your own dark, cold grave.

He saw you even then, in the Garden of Gethsemane, and he knew he could not leave you to deal with the sorrows of this life all alone.”

How very different this world would be if Jesus had not made that choice, to fulfill his destiny and die upon that cross.

I know this is debatable, but

I happen to believe that Jesus did have a choice, that he was not bound to do it. His human will could have taken over and he could have avoided that brutal death.

People do it all the time, walk away from one path to pursue another.

People do not live up to God's intentions for their lives on a regular basis.

We have free will, and we have the power to choose.

Jesus could have hightailed it out of that Garden and gone back to Galilee, where he was loved and he could have lived out the rest of his life in relative peace and tranquility, performing a few miracles, teaching, preaching.

He did not have to be brutally crucified like a common criminal.

But he chose this path, and that makes it all the more meaningful for us. He believed deep in his bones, that he needed to die this way, this was his destiny.

He believed that this was what he had to do to be faithful to his vision and principles. And he did it with courage, love, and grace.

He was sorrowful, he was afraid, he was in agonizing pain.

But he did it, because he knew that humanity would forever relate to his suffering and take comfort in his tears.

And so, the next time you find yourself overtaken by despair, tempted to either escape or completely give up, remember this example of Jesus.

Think of how he faced his choices with humanity and courage.

Remember that you have a broken hearted Savior who knows and understands exactly what you go through as you journey through this life.

A Savior who saw you then, and sees you, even now.

Let us pray:

Eternal God:

As we go into this week we call Holy, help us to follow our suffering Savior.

Help us to learn from his anguish and take comfort in his tears. Help us to have similar courage for all of the sorrows of our lives. For blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the Highest.

Amen.