

The Rev. Wayne Nicholson  
St. John's Episcopal Church  
18 March 2018  
Lent V (B: John 12:20-33)

Jesus was greatly troubled. And his anxiety touches me deeply.

There has been a school of thought that because Jesus was divine he couldn't *possibly* have suffered the temptations, the pain, the suffering that we experience. But the letter to the Hebrews denies this – “In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears.”

And today's Gospel lesson, for me, denies this placing of Jesus on a divine-only pedestal as well.

In the sorrowful, troubled Jesus, I believe we can see the face of a compassionate God. That is the Jesus I need to see. The Jesus who will hold us, cry with us, shout for joy with us, dance with us and mourn with us. The Jesus who is fully divine – and yet fully human. I believe this is the Christ we need to proclaim to the world.

Too often we place Jesus on a pedestal that removes him from human reality – human joy, human suffering. We are too often reluctant to bring Jesus down off that pedestal cross so that he can weep with us – “Oh, please, Jesus is too holy to bother with me.”

*No, he's not!*

It seems to me that if we can embrace the *humanity* of the living Christ – the divine essence in every man, woman, and child, if we can embrace the *humanity* that is present in Jesus Christ we might pay more attention to what he said.

One of my favorite moments of grace before a meal is like this: “May this food strengthen us to be your hands at work in the world.” *Your* hands. My hands become *your* hands. The hands of Christ.

My prayer is that we be strengthened to be the hands, the heart, the feet, the *voice* of Christ in our broken world. That the hands of Christ take human form. That the healing heart of Christ take human form. That the compassionate heart of Christ become *my* heart, and that when we raise our voices to cry for justice, mercy, and the protection of our children we are speaking the voice of the living Christ.

I do believe God in Christ weeps for us and our brokenness. But that same God never gives up on us. The Eucharistic Prayer we say on Wednesdays says this: “But we failed to honor your image in one another and in ourselves; we would not see your goodness in the world around us; and so we violated your creation, abused one another, and rejected your love. *Yet you never ceased to care for us, and prepared the way of salvation for all people.*”

What wondrous love is this!?

What wondrous love.

Over and over we mess up and reject the love of God yet God never ceases to care for us! Never ceases to love us! Weeps for us and yearns for our healing but never, ever, ever stops loving us.

We are called to repent – especially during this holy season of Lent. But we are always called to repent the very grave sins we have committed individually, as a society, as a church, and that repentance means we must turn away from those sins and turn our whole selves toward the light that is Christ.

We must repent of the sin of racism. We must acknowledge – most of us here, that is – we must acknowledge our privilege and the institutional racism that stains our society with the blood of martyrs. We must repent and repent and listen and learn and be the voice of Christ that demands justice and fairness and love.

We must repent of the sin of power. We must acknowledge the power of money, the power of position, and then *use* that power for good: You know, those things Jesus told us to do – feeding hungry people, clothing the naked, sheltering the homeless, speaking up for those whose voices have been silenced or put down by others who have power and use it only for their own gain.

We must repent of the sin of indifference. We must call out those whose silence in the face of human tragedy *must not continue*. We must warn them in no uncertain terms that their time of power is up, that they can be replaced, that their indifference toward grave moral issues is no longer acceptable.

And we must weep. We must weep with Jesus for the lonely and the lost. We must weep with Jesus over the continued carnage in Syria which, it seems, has just gone on so long that the world is starting to ignore the endless suffering of those people. We must weep with the women who have been emotionally, psychologically, and physically abused by powerful men. We must weep with the children who are bewildered that the adults in our society seem to care more about money and power and the status quo than about *them!*

And then. And then. When our weeping has subsided and our tears are spent we must return to dirty our hands in the work of Jesus. There will be more tears, to be sure, for we are a broken species and there will always be tragedy.

But there will be tears of joy, as well, when we witness healing and reconciliation and mercy.

And we will laugh with God over our silly, petty problems as we do the larger work that God has called us to do.

Never give up.

In the Name of Christ, never give up.

There is too much at stake.

Never give up.

In the Name of Christ, Amen.