

**Sermon: Communion with the Crucified****Scripture: Matthew 28****Preacher: Rev. Will Burhans****Date: June 6, 2020**

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This is one of the ways Jesus is with us, “even to the end of the age”; when the church gathers together and recounts his Last Supper and partakes of his body and blood. We continue to absorb Jesus into our lives, represented here in this sacred act, and we become what we eat, living our lives as Jesus’ hands and feet and heart in this world.

It is striking to note that here at the end of a week of great unrest and protest in our country over the execution of an innocent man by the authorities, we gather in sacred space to worship and pray and gain strength and inspiration from whom? An innocent man executed by the authorities.

To the troubling question of why is there evil in the world, represented this week by a white man’s serene face as he kneels on the neck of a suffering dying black man, our religion offers no pat answers, but neither does Christianity turn away. Our faith tradition does not call such evil an illusion or does it claim that it was somehow within God’s purposes or that it doesn’t matter because it’ll all be fixed in the afterlife. I know there are such interpretations out there but I believe they are distortions of Christian belief. The Christian Faith offers no pat answers but rather lifts up once again and forever in the face of all evil, Jesus’ crucified and dying form, Jesus’ inability to breath from his cross.

It is a strange and holy response and a mystery to hold close to our hearts, to meditate upon and pray into; suggesting among other things that God suffers with us, that God in fact is struggling to breath under the knee of the white man.

And that God's Holy Spirit is in the angry grief-stricken cry of George Floyd's family and the people on the streets. It doesn't pretend to be a satisfactory answer to why there is such evil in the world, such depravity even in our own hearts, but it is maybe the most compelling portraits of the human crisis, being rooted to the earth, raised to the heavens and somehow torn asunder in between and it can cause us to raise our eyes up from the despairing valley of death to the hill from whence our hope must come. For Jesus' crucified form is the proclamation of transformation and new life that is promised in even the most gruesome and awful of events.

It doesn't make the suffering and death ok or a part of God's plan, a sort of a privileged person's new age spirituality of "everything happens for a reason" but it does offer the hope that even in the very worst that we can do in our terrible human freedom that is granted to us by our creator, God's Spirit will be at work to weave it all into something that serves the broader and hard-to-see arc towards ultimate good in the world. Do you believe it?

We partake of communion today with that hope. We bind ourselves through baptism with the crucified one and to his death. We then are bound to Him as he is transfigured and transformed through that horror of a death into the glory of resurrected life, which is communal, and so we partake month after month of communion, as together we remember his death and proclaim his resurrection and recommit ourselves as being those who enact his resurrected life in the here and now even unto the end of the age to come.

And how do we do that? We know how. We forgive when we've been wronged. We act when we witness injustice. We care for others when we see them suffering, even if that means sacrificing our own well-being for that action.

We pray for instead of seek to destroy our enemies. We acknowledge our own complicity with evil. We choose life and recognize and forsake the ways of death. And so on and so forth.

But we start with the simplicity of this. A piece of bread and sip of wine. The broken body and the spilt blood... of one who cannot breath. And he becomes us and we become him.

So let us be innocent children of God for just a moment as we gather at Jesus' table, those to whom Jesus said the Kingdom of God belongs. And let us bring to this moment our own bread and cup to be consecrated by Judy so that we can be a part of the feast that is to come.

Come my friends, for all things are ready.