



Message from Pastor Tim

March 2011: A God who knows about Pain

When I was chaplain at the Village of Childhelp occasionally kids would show me the children's Bible that people had given to them prior to them coming to the Village. I remember one such Bible in particular. In between the long account of the Last Supper and the richly illustrated section on the empty tomb, there was half a page with a picture of three crosses far away on a hillside. The text wasn't much help in describing what happened in this scene. "Then Jesus was put to death", it read, "but he did not stay dead for long. God had planned a big surprise for him, which happened at dawn on Easter morning."

So that is all any child who read this Bible would know about the suffering and death of Christ. I'm guessing that the authors decided that God's pain would be too hard, too gruesome, too real for a child to understand and an adult to explain. So they left it out.

Children are not the only ones who endeavor to avoid the pain of Christ. Like them, many of us assume that anyone with the power to avoid pain would do so, which makes the death of the Jesus as much of a scandal when we share the story as it ever was when it happened two thousand years ago. Paul speaks of understanding Jesus' death as a means to atonement. Luther saw it as Christ's greatest act of identification with humanity. Having worked in the field for a while, I'm certain that if the crucifixion account were to be shared with a worker from Child Protective Services as an active report, they would most certainly investigate it as child abuse.

The irony in all this is that we need a God who knows about pain. Anyone who has ever suffered through even one night of deep hurt knows what it is to beg for relief. To speak of God in pain is not only to address the biblical stories of Christ's suffering and death, but also to proclaim the God who is present in our pain.

During the Wednesdays between Ash Wednesday and Palm Sunday at both 11 a.m. and 7:00 p.m., I will be sharing a series about God in pain. We will use the depictions of Christ on the cross by various artists over the centuries as our focus for these presentations. Following is a list of presentation titles and texts:

March 16 th	Believing What We Cannot Understand	John 19:1-3
March 23 rd	Someone To Blame	John 19:8-11a
March 30 th	The Myth of Redemptive Violence	John 19:14-16
April 6 th	The Triumphant Victim	John 19:28-30
April 13 th	The Suffering of God	John 19:28

I hope you will join me during this Lenten season as we explore the reality of God's pain and what that reality means for our lives and our faith

Peace,

Pastor Tim

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