

**From the Gospel According to Matthew 27:45-51**

“From noon on, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. And about three o’clock Jesus cried with a loud voice, ‘*Eli, Eli, (Lay-Ma Sa-bac-thani)?*’ That Is: ‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?’ When some of the bystanders heard it, they said, ‘This man is calling for Elijah.’ At once one of them ran and got a sponge, filled it with sour wine, put it on a stick, and gave it to him to drink. But the others said, ‘Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to save him.’ Then Jesus cried again with a loud voice and breathed his last. At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. The earth shook, and the rocks were split.  
*This is the Gospel of God*

**SERMON**

Good Morning, Thank you for allowing me to preach on the word of God today. It is an honor and I pray that the spirit works through us and our time here today.

“Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to save him.”

Wait --- don’t you hate being told to wait? Now there are seasons of waiting, seasons of patience. If COVID has taught us anything it's to wait. But when I think of Jesus being publicly executed on the Roman cross, the last thing I think about is waiting. Especially if I were one of the eye-witnesses. Most of them didn’t know/or believe the resurrection was going to happen and that Jesus was the Messiah; they were just watching what to some was an innocent man who spoke his truth to the colonialist powers of Rome, being put to death. Others were in the mind of thinking a local nuisance was being taken care of so as not to bring anymore political unrest.

As we read today’s scripture with our 2020 knowledge, “Wait,” is not what I am thinking of when I read this passage. In our Wednesday Bible study this week, many of the members pointed out the details that are being described in today’s Gospel.

This scene is dire. The snap-shot of Jesus' crucifixion that the author of Matthew writes about is full of omen, warning. A call NOT to wait. The waiting in this scene is insulting to who we know today as our Savior Jesus Christ. You can almost just see the mob of people, mockingly saying -- "Wait," lets see if Elijah saves this guy. I almost hear the Nelson character from the Simpsons, going "ha-ha."

How many of you would hope that you wouldn't be in the group of people saying "Wait," while darkness loomed over you and a man was crying out to God as he was executed?

I would hope I wouldn't be that person. I mean how many signs did these people need to not respond in this way? Of course us in 2020 can look back at them with a sort of self-righteousness thinking, "Well he was the son of man, they were so ignorant how could they not have known he told them so many times, there were so many signs."

And it's easy to live into that smugness of knowing in our comfortable 2020 lives thousands of years later. I almost here myself going, "Wait, you didn't know that was the son of God yet you crucified him?"

It can become a petty game of who knows more. But instead of saying, "Wait!" with any sort of smugness, or mocking, I wonder what would have transpired if the eye-witnesses would have had the humility to listen to Jesus' plea in the first part of today's Gospel. Or to take note of their environment. Verse 45 reads,

"From noon on, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon." and later in the text after the sassy "wait," comment happens in verse 51, the temple's curtains split, the earth shakes and the rocks crack.

You see, the non-human parts of the environment seem to know what's going on, while the eye-witness humans only had time for mocking.

The point of all of this, is it's been a long time since Christ was crucified and we will never know exactly what happened that day. But how it was written tells us that the environment was saying something. Creation knew something was afoot and it responded, it responded with humility and grief. Rocks splitting, earthquake, curtain ripped. These are symbols of grief in the Israelite culture at the time and still are to humans today. The tearing of one's clothes was a common sign of grieving a loss and of course, who doesn't feel shaken after witnessing something of violence and/or loss. As Pastor Mark preached about a couple of Sundays ago, stones. While rocks do not fall into a human definition of what it means to be living, they also do not qualify as dead either. But we know that they respond to the Divine and to humans. When you slide down a hill and the earth gives out. When Moses struck the rock for water. We believe these things, we read scripture that tells us Creation responds, speaks, talks, connects with the Divine and with us symbiotically. We are connected.

There were signs. But instead the humans said, "Wait!"

In 2018 there was a study done by Gallup on Millennials and Gen Z's views on climate change. 70% of adults aged 18 to 35, regardless of political stance, said they were worried about global warming and its effects on their local communities. They found there to be a very small political divide for younger generations. Most could agree that humans have a hand in climate change and they are worried about it. Many Millennials and Gen Z folks like myself have already, in our short lives, started to experience the negative effects of climate change in our communities.

I grew up most of my life in the beautiful state of Montana in the Rocky Mountains. I lived about 2.5 hours south of Glacier National Park. Many folks this week at the Climate Change Webinar spoke of their love and appreciation and grief about this National Park. This was my backyard. My memories of sliding down glaciers in the middle of July in my shorts are just that. Memories. I will never get to share this with my children. Most of the glaciers I grew up with and knew are gone. They don't exist anymore. I have had to evacuate my home more than once

because of high-intensity fires that reached a level of destruction unseen by any human before.

The people of my generation are listening. We are listening to the plea of Christ as he yells, “My God my God why have you forsaken me” and we cannot be asked to “Wait!” while the crucifixion of creation continues.

How are Christ’s death, resurrection and the environment not intertwined? It is shameful to think that the non-human parts of creation knew the son of God was being murdered, yet most of the earthly born humans at this time didn’t. They ignored the signs. Instead they chose petty phrases, creating their own reality to remain in instead of looking around them at what was happening. We in 2020 have the scripture, we know better. We know Jesus is our Savior, so why choose to ignore the parts of Christ that are written into the very earth that sustains us? The earth that knew our Savior yet we didn’t, who are we to think we somehow separate?

Martin Luther reminds us of this unwillingness to listen that is inherent to humankind. The arrogance that keeps us from seeing and hearing Christ in his final hour and then in turn from loving and listening to one another.

In his Letter to Romans, Luther writes about “*incurvates in se*” which in Latin means “curved in on oneself”. Luther writes,

“Our nature, by the corruption of the first sin, is being so deeply curved in on oneself that [humans] not only bends the best gifts of God towards themselves and enjoy them, rather we even use God himself in order to attain these gifts, but [humans] also fails to realize that they are so wickedly, curvedly, and viciously seeking all things, even God, for their own sake.”

Luther is writing plain selfishness, extreme individualism. The individual world we create for ourselves where we don’t have to listen to others' experiences, stories, perspectives, means we don’t have to act. And we can pretend like we aren’t in this

together. The earth is here for us to use and abuse and ignore. That is “incurvatus in se” at its finest. What would it look like if it wasn’t all about “I”, “me”? What would it mean to go outside of ourselves and look around, listen, connect.

Jesus didn’t die for just homosapians, he died for all. All creation. I too am creation, and so are you. WE. Humans are the part of creation that evolved into the part that is self aware and in that ability to reflect is listening, seeing the signs-- perspective. Not acting on ego, but with intelligence and curiosity, together. All generations have the opportunity to come together in our shared grief as a part of creation, together. Collective responsibility, collective grief, collective sin, collective grace.

Jesus is crying out, and creation is listening, are we? Are we ready to receive the gift of redemption together as a part of creation? To do so means we have to work together and listen, listen to the younger generations, listen to our neighbors not our TV’s and work together rather than asking the generations of the future to “Wait.” Nobody, no-thing should be asked to wait for redemption.

Jesus’s gift of redemption calls for interdependence. American author Adrienne Maree Brown describes interdependence as, “mutual dependence between things. If you study biology, you’ll discover that there is a great deal of interdependence between plants and animals. “Inter-” means “between,” so interdependence is dependence between things, the quality or condition of being interdependent, or mutually reliant, on each other.”

I will end with a story that Brown shares in her book from New Orleans resident and founder of *Soul Fire Farm*, Naima Penniman.

“When Hurricane Katrina slammed into the Gulf Coast, almost everything lost its footing. Houses were detached from their foundations, trees and shrubbery were uprooted, sign posts and vehicles floated down the rivers that became of the streets. But amidst the whipping winds and surging water, the oak tree held its ground. How? Instead of digging its roots deep and solitary into the earth, the oak tree

grows its roots wide and interlocks with other oak trees in the surrounding area. And you can't bring down a hundred oak trees bound beneath the soil! How do we survive the unnatural disasters of climate change...economic inequality, and displacement? We must connect.... my people! In this way, we shall survive.”

Amen! As people of God let us go out and connect