

Passion Sunday B
March 25, 2018

Grace Church, Lexington
Fr. James

Isaiah 50:4-9a Psalm 22:1-21 Philippians 2:5-11 *Mark 14:1-15:39*

Not a Victim

Here is the story of a man who prays for rescue, his friends fail him, he is betrayed, arrested, humiliated, arraigned, convicted on false charges and executed to the catcalls, derision and spittal of passersby. If ever one seemed less in control of events in his life, this man Jesus seems to have lost control. And yet he is no victim.

The manner in which he conducts himself shows that he is no victim. “He gave his cheeks to those who pulled out the beard” He is responsible for himself until the very end. He does not protest his unjust, and untimely death. Rather he accepts it, and forgives his executioners. How hard it must have been for the them.

They must have been used to being cursed and abused. And I doubt they cared. They must have been used to some of the guilty, cringing and crying out for mercy, but *they* deserved the death they received in the eyes of the executioner. But here was a

man who it was rumored was innocent. Even Pilate, the Roman Governor had said so publicly—even one of the guilty thieves with him defended him. And yet he spoke no accusatory word. He died without reproaching anyone. He died blessing and forgiving the ones who put him to death.

He was no victim. The death of the Christ is central to all I believe. He died for what he believed. He died because evil power always must do away with good men and women. Silencing goodness is absolutely essential when it opposes the official will, whether that goodness is a public protest, or the rights of minorities, or labor or migrants or the defeated.

Not only did Jesus die for what he believed, he did so without any claims to immortality or special privilege. He died resigned to the unexplained and poorly understood will of his heavenly Father.

From Psalm 22 he cries out, “My God, my God, why, why have you forsaken me?” Even then he does not curse or regret his life or his death. He is no victim.

How different from the way I feel—often. How different from the way a large percentage of us act. We live as victims, damning, accusing, blaming. Whenever you hear yourself, someone else or me blaming in any circumstance, you can know that Jesus is not in the act. Jesus has no part in blaming. He was no victim.

It was this man who was exalted by God to the position of honor, who had “bestowed on him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

But God does the exalting, and so the lessons are not to be learned from the resurrection, the lessons are to be learned from the cross. Obedience, silence, love, humility. Those are the hard lessons of death impaled on a wooden stake. Obedience, silence, love, humility. Those are the hard lessons of life hammered out in the corridors of time and in the flesh of a good man named Jesus.

So be it.