

“The Old Testament and the Passion”

“Come let us return to the Lord. He has torn us to pieces but He will heal us; He has injured us but he will bind up our wounds. After two days He will revive us; on the third day He will restore us, that we may live in His presence...For I desire mercy, not sacrifice.”

- Hosea 6:1-2, 6.

We uncover that the Old Testament is filled with passion. For most of the Old Testament and in today's story, it's the sinful kind of passion.

Hosea was torn to pieces by the passions of an adulterous wife. Yet Hosea did not tear his wife to pieces even though he was injured. Hosea had mercy on her to restore, bind up, and revive their relationship.

God does not tear us to pieces because of our sin. God has mercy on us in spite of our sin. Jesus restores our relationship with God, because of His passionate death and resurrection.

We should not tear others to pieces even though we may be injured by them. God wants us to have mercy on others to restore, bind up, and revive our relationship with them.

Jesus said: *“Do not think I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.”* (Matthew 5:17) Jesus did not ignore, change, or rebel against the Old Testament. Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament. The New Testament doesn't end with Jesus. It begins with Jesus. It continues with us.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, thank you for restoring our relationship with You and others. May we work towards mercy, healing, and restoration in our relationships. Amen.

Who do you need to restore a relationship with?

What can you do to restore relationships with others?

How can you offer mercy to others?

- Bob Brantsch

"Jesus in the Garden: a Prayer of Passion"

"Abba, Father, all things are possible for You. Take this cup away from me; nevertheless, not what I will, but what You will." – Mark 14:36, NKJV

We all recognize this passionate prayer from Jesus, but think about it. He is the Son of God and even He needs to reconnect with His father in heaven. How much more, we His creation, needs to reconnect.

Have you ever had to use such a passionate prayer, crying out as Jesus does above? Most times we ask for intervention and then give thanks for all of our blessings. Then we may ask to make me a better Christian. I know God knows what that means....but do I?

A commentator once said that if one prayed everyday like Paul, wonderful changes would take place in that person. What if I became that better Christian? That would be wonderful!

Paul writes to us "do not cease to pray" and in Colossians 1:9-12 he writes that there is more to praying than asking God to intervene. Paul gives us seven requests. His ideas are beautifully written, but go too fast for me to think about in depth, so I have written down my interpretations that are ready for my prayer. May I:

1. Be filled with spiritual understanding to God's will for my life and my study of His Scriptures.
2. Live a blameless life, like Jesus.
3. Do & say pleasing things to the Lord.
4. Be fruitful as a disciple of Jesus.
5. Increase my knowledge of God.
6. Be strengthened by God to do His will.
7. Grow in my love for God to be so deep, that I can't help but to give Him glory and honor.

This Lenten season, I'm just not giving up things, but I'm concentrating on the quality of my prayers. Why not try it yourself? Ask God for the strength to try!

Prayer

Heavenly Father, we worship and adore you and we want to do what is right in Your eyes. Our hearts are open to hear Your words and obey. We surrender our whole selves to you and ask that You strengthen us for Your earthy work. All this we ask in Jesus' name. Amen

- Sue Larson

“Passion and the Betrayal of Jesus”

Sometimes in life, timing is essential, timing is everything! A little over a month ago, a teacher in the Hudson school system, made some inappropriate choices involving a minor, got caught and confessed. He decided to take his own life! He never took the time to wait and see who would have supported or forgiven him, such as family, friends, church, and co-workers.

What good could have risen from his sin?

This story for me has direct connections to Judas’ betrayal of Jesus. In Matthew 27:4-5, *“I have sinned, he said, “for I have betrayed innocent blood.” “What is that to us? They replied. “That’s your responsibility.” So Judas threw the money into the temple and left. Then he went away and hanged himself.*

Judas sold Jesus, essentially as a slave, as slaves were sold for 30 pieces of silver in those days. Was Judas’ betrayal any more a sin than Peter’s denial of Jesus? Peter denied Jesus not once, but THREE times? When we look at sins, why do we always weigh them, some greater than others? Which sin here was greater, Judas’ for selling Jesus or Peter’s for denying him? Neither! In the end, God’s action plan weighed far greater than any sin could amount. Jesus was so gracious in his death and resurrection that we are forgiven of all sin whether great or small! We can all learn from Judas’ mistake, if we only take the time. Not everything is in our hands nor up to us. It’s in God’s hands. God’s plan came to fruition— Jesus’ death and resurrection!

How have you betrayed Jesus?

Have you ever thought of giving something up for the other 318 days outside of Lent?

What could you stop and take more time for in your life?

Prayer

Heavenly Father, we all have betrayed you whether it has been by our thoughts, words or deeds. I thank you for so graciously dying on the cross that no matter what sin I’ve committed against you, myself or others, I am forgiven! May we work more diligently toward bringing people to know your everlasting love and forgiveness. Amen.

- Heather Collins

“Peter Passionately Denies Jesus”

“Peter followed at a distance But when they had kindled a fire In the middle of the court yard, And had sat down together, Peter sat down with them”. - Luke 22:54-62

“Following at a distance” was one thing, but sitting down with them, was quite another thing. Once he sat down with them, he had to be like them, talk like them, swear like them. He didn’t dare be different from them. He would get in trouble. He would be identified and put on trial too. Once he sat down with them he lost his intention to “defend Jesus to the death”, like he promised he would do.

We experience that same thing. Our good intention to be different in life because of our relationship to Jesus often fails because of the company we keep. It is natural for us to want to “fit in” and to be like those around us, but we can’t if we want to keep company with our Lord. There are some people whose behavior can’t be our behavior; we can’t copy their attitudes and their values.

We have been “called out” to be different. Not in an arrogant or prideful way – but in a humble and obedient way, out of the power of Christ’s love for us. Peter was reminded of all of that and of his serious error of denial when “the Lord turned and looked at Peter”. Peter left the fellowship of the fire – went out into the night – and “wept bitterly” – as should we this Lenten tide.

Prayer

Dear Father, so grant that we too may see our “Lord’s Look” and turn away from “bad company” back into the Community of Christ. May we be faithful to the person we intend to be by virtue of your call and care. In Jesus name. Amen

Pastor Wayne Koenig

“Jesus Stands Before Pilate: The Passion of Truth”

"You are a king, then!" said Pilate. Jesus answered, "You are right in saying I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me."

"What is truth?" Pilate asked. With this he went out again to the Jews and said, "I find no basis for a charge against him."

Pilate seems to be struggling with “The Truth” in these Bible Passages. He is obviously being influenced by the belief of others as evident in the following passage:

“Pilate then went back inside the palace, summoned Jesus and asked him, "Are you the king of the Jews?" "Is that your own idea," Jesus asked, "or did others talk to you about me?"

I personally feel that Pilate believed that Jesus Christ is our King and he was letting others influence his decision making process. Although he clearly states that he doesn't find any reason to execute Jesus, he does permit it to happen. He basically escapes from the guilt and accountability of his decision by washing his hands clean of the situation. Although I would bet that Pilate didn't cleanse his heart of this decision. I can't imagine the countless sleepless nights he must have endured.

It is very difficult to stand up to truth when you fear something negative can happen to you as a result of being truthful. Our ego gets in the way and takes us down a destructive path. I know that I am guilty of this behavior sometimes. It is also very difficult when others are trying to influence your opinion of a person or situation.

I believe it is very important to always seek truth regardless of peer pressure or selfish reasoning.

“Everyone on the side of truth listens to me.”

Why do we let our egos push us away from seeking the Truth?

Why do we let others influence our opinions of others?

Why do we make decisions knowing that in our heart they aren't right?

- by Ted Sidloski

Passion of Simon of Cyrene

"...My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and punishes everyone that he accepts as a son."

- Hebrews 12:5-6

The job as a parent can be hard. When I find the need to discipline our children Marc and Lisa, it is often hard to do. Discipline helps to provide structure in our home because it enforces guidelines and reinforces expectations. Discipline is a tool to be used with love and grace and I feel that our home is more loving and runs much more smoothly when there is effective discipline. It is especially challenging to maintain order and discipline if I am tired or need to get some other things done. It takes a lot of effort and some stamina to maintain a home with discipline. It is also difficult to upset and disappoint your children. But can they learn the framework of the world if they get to do everything that they want? Will they understand or "get" the message that the discipline is intended to convey? There is also a balance because children are individuals and cannot all be disciplined in the same manner.

If I reflect on how this relates on the Lord's discipline on us, I have to wonder is it hard for our Father to discipline us? He has shown us what to do and has to maintain the law and structure of his house so that maybe someday "we can share in his holiness" (Hebrews 12:10). I believe that God uses discipline with Christ's grace. And that makes all of the difference.

Do I look for God's discipline in my life and accept that it is because he loves me and considers me his son or daughter?

Am I able to understand God's message when he disciplines me?

Prayer

Heavenly Father, help me to accept your discipline of me and help me to feel your love and be a worthy son or daughter to you. Thank you for the showing me grace through your son Jesus Christ.

- by Chris Cheline

Joseph of Arimathea: A Passionate Burial

“It was Preparation Day (that is the day before the Sabbath). So as evening approached, Joseph of Arimathea, a prominent member of Council, who was himself waiting for the kingdom of God, went boldly to Pilate and asked for Jesus’ body.” - Mark 15:42-43

Have you ever experienced having to meet a deadline before the end of the day? What special effort did you put forth to accomplish the task?

That Friday on Golgatha was not only the Day of Preparation for the Sabbath, but a gut-wrenching day for the followers of Jesus and His closest disciples, who had fled the area for fear of the Jews.

But there was one - a high-ranking, rich man, a member of the Council and a “secret” disciple (secret because he feared reprisals from Jewish elders). He was well-versed in the Jewish law that dictated a corpse be buried before sundown. Joseph of Arimathea, in his passionate desire to provide a proper and decent burial for the Son of God, went with boldness to get permission from Pilate to remove Jesus’ body from the cross. Joseph’s passion to care for the body put him at risk with the Sanhedrin - the risk of ritual uncleanness by coming in contact with the deceased. He acted against all who had condemned and crucified the innocent Jesus. With a sense of urgency and with *compassion* Joseph carefully wrapped Jesus in linen cloth and placed His body in a nearby hand-hewn tomb cut out of rock. All this was accomplished before sundown and the beginning of the Sabbath.

How might we prepare for our day of worship or for the day when Jesus will come again as He promised?

Will you start by preparing your heart with a passion to bring the grace of God to others through your service here on earth, thus bringing glory to God in heaven?

Heavenly Father, thank you for showing me through Joseph of Arimathea, to be willing to take risks to accomplish the tasks of each day that will glorify You. In Your name I pray, Amen.

- *by Deaconess Esther Williamson*

“The Donkey”

*Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, "Go to the village ahead of you, and at once you will find a **donkey** tied there, with her colt by her. Untie them and bring them to me. If anyone says anything to you, tell him that the Lord needs them, and he will send them right away." This took place to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet: "Say to the Daughter of Zion, 'See, your **king** comes to you, **gentle** and riding on a **donkey**, on a colt, the foal of a **donkey**.'*

- Matthew 21:1-4

Have you been to the Grand Canyon? Have you hiked down into the canyon? I only made it about half way down on foot. It's one of those hikes that never seems to end. You keep hiking, walking, and climbing, and you're still far from the bottom of the canyon to enjoy the cool Colorado River. It seems like taking those donkey trips in and out of the canyon would be easier, more peaceful, and gentle on your feet.

Jesus used a donkey. He could have used a horse. A big Arabian horse. A galloping horse like in the movie *Ben-Hur*. A strong horse the mighty Roman soldiers would have used. But Jesus used a donkey of gentleness and peace.

Matthew is writer of the first Gospel in the Bible, one of the twelve disciples, and a tax collector. Matthew is Jewish and he writes his Gospel to Jewish readers. Here Matthew quotes the Jewish prophet Zechariah, who lived in 520 B.C. Jesus fulfills this prophecy by riding on a donkey and being our king of gentleness and peace. Jesus did not come to destroy the Roman Empire. Jesus did not come with force. Jesus did not come to conquer like David. Jesus did not come to kill like Joshua. But Jesus is not just a symbol of peace. Jesus is peace.

When we remember our Baptism, we are members of a family of gentleness and peace. In our Communion service we share the peace of the Lord. In Communion we receive the body and blood of our gentle King. Jesus wants us to live as people of gentleness and peace. Palm Sunday is a day of gentleness and peace. Later this week comes the love. Wait for it.

How do you respond to peaceful people?

How do you respond to gentle people?

What ways can you be peaceful?

What ways can you be gentle?

Prince of Peace, thank you for coming as my king. Empower me to live as a person of gentleness and peace. Amen.

by Bob Brantsch

“A Feast of Love”

“What’s in it for me?” This has become a familiar attitude of our society and world. Many people choose not to help or “serve” because they “just won’t get anything out of it” or they don’t see any value in it for them.

Jesus shows us, through His willingness to serve others unconditionally; this is not how God would have us behave. Jesus gives us an example on how we should live with one another, with clear directions that no matter what our position is in life or society we are never above the call for service to others.

³Jesus ... got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. ⁵After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him. ¹⁴Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. ¹⁵I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. ¹⁶I tell you the truth, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. ¹⁷Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.

- *John 13:3-5,14-17*

Even though this action was usually done by the lowliest servant, Jesus, God in flesh, bent down and washed the feet of his disciples. Jesus taught us that to lead is to serve. We are called to serve others unselfishly and without condition. We have the blueprint of what we are called to do. Through our service to others, we can demonstrate what it means to be a disciple of Christ, completely and unconditionally loved.

How do you show servant love?

Do you serve conditionally, with an eye on the prize?

Are you willing to follow Christ’s example?

Whom can you serve today?

Dear Lord Jesus, thank You for loving us so much that You completely and unconditionally bent down and gave Yourself in service. Thank You for showing us what it means to love through Your example. Help us find opportunities to serve others in order that we may share our Christlike love and Your message of salvation. Amen

- *by Denise Klaus*

“Wait for It”

*Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him;
do not fret when men succeed in their ways,
when they carry out their wicked schemes.
- Psalm 37:7*

The movie and TV show M*A*S*H takes place near the battles of the Korean War at the 4077th Mobile Army Surgical Hospital. It's not only my favorite show, but *it is the best show ever*. It's not my opinion. I can prove it. Match any TV show against M*A*S*H:

- A major motion picture movie
- 11 seasons
- 251 episodes
- 134 award nominations
- And a record breaking final episode of 106 million viewers never to be matched since it aired in 1983.

The only actor from both the movie and series was Gary Burghoff as Corporal Walter O'Reilly. He knew what people would say before they said it and what they were thinking. His nickname was Radar. Before choppers loaded with casualties would arrive he would say: “Wait for it.”

I wrote a devotion on Palm Sunday on the peace and gentleness of Jesus. I closed that devotion to prepare you for the love of Jesus coming on Good Friday. The love of Jesus was evident throughout His life. He turned water into wine. That's love. He healed the sick. That's love. He brought the dead back to life. That's love. He fed the hungry. That's love. He taught profound truths. That's love. I closed my Palm Sunday devotion with the words “Wait for it.” Well here it is! The love of Christ we've been waiting for is most evident on Good Friday, through His death on the cross. Like the bloody, dying wounded arriving to be healed by personnel of the 4077th, we are healed of our sin, by the blood of Christ.

The Old and New Testaments are full of prophets, who like Radar predicted future events. The prophets predicted Jesus' birth, death, and resurrection. To best sum up the work of the prophets and the work of Jesus we can use the words of Radar: “Wait for it.”

Like I proved M*A*S*H of being the best show ever, I can prove that Christ is our Savior as well. Time is measured based on the birth of Christ. The church has 2,000 years of history to prove it. World history proves it. Archeology proves it. God's Word proves it.

Come again on Sunday. The love of God is coming again in a new and better way. And like Radar says: “Wait for It.”

How do you wait for Christ?
How do you prove your faith in Christ?

Lord Jesus, thank You for Your love through Your suffering, death, and resurrection. Guide me by Your Holy Spirit to wait for it. Amen.

- By Bob Brantsch

“Wait for It...Again”

*I waited patiently for the LORD; He turned to me and heard my cry.
Psalm 40:1-3*

Radar from the TV show M*A*S*H knew what people would say before they said it and what they were thinking. Before choppers loaded with casualties would arrive, Radar would say: “Wait for it.”

I wrote a devotion last Sunday on how Palm Sunday is a day of gentleness and peace. But I did not mention the love of Christ. I ended that devotion by saying later in the week on Good Friday comes the love. And to wait for it.

Then I ended my Good Friday devotion by saying come again on Easter Sunday. The love of God is coming again in a new and better way. And to wait for it.

Are you tired of waiting for Christ?

Christ is Risen! Alive and victorious over sin, death, and the devil! That’s the good news of the Gospel. Jesus is risen and is alive now and forever. It’s easy to celebrate Easter. The difficult part is that you have to wait for it. And now the difficult part is you have to patiently let the Holy Spirit work in you as a result of the Risen Christ.

The Holy Spirit worked through these people to write our devotions. And the Holy Spirit works through our singers, musicians, leaders in worship, ushers, counters, altar guild ladies, quilters, knitters, office workers, Council members, board members, committee members, Prayer Path workers, and our Christian Education teachers. And the list goes on and on how the Holy Spirit works in and through us.

So don’t worry about waiting for the forgiveness and eternal life from Christ. It’s here now and forever. The Holy Spirit’s work in you is more difficult to figure out. Let the Spirit do its work in you. And if you don’t know what that work is. Wait for it.

How can you let the Holy Spirit work in you?

Lord Jesus, thank You that by Your resurrection I have forgiveness and eternal life. Let Your Holy Spirit work in me. Help me to wait for it. Amen.

By Bob Brantsch