

From the Rector's Study, the Rev. Bryce Sangster

April 10th, 2022, Passion Sunday

Luke 19:28-40 Isaiah 50:4-9a Psalm 31:9-16 Philippians 2:5-11 Luke 23:1-49

I can see people asking the question today what is it all for? What is the point? Without looking at the whole story in detail, it feels and looks like Jesus coming across as a victim. Jesus has lost and the powers that be of won. What can be said today without pointing to Easter? The resurrection.

The question for me is: what kind of God do we worship? One who needs a sacrifice to re-establish a relationship with us, therefore his son must die for us to get back in God's good graces?

This image and idea make me very uncomfortable and not one I want to espouse. There must be more to this.

Diana Bulter Bass in her book *Freeing Jesus* when she talks about Jesus as Saviour addresses this. Jesus is not just our saviour from death, and it comes after his death, but his death on the cross is because of his saving love of those he meets.

Luke 4:16-21

When Jesus came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to bring good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives
and recovery of sight to the blind,
to let the oppressed go free,
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. Then he began to say to them, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."

“Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.” Not after the resurrection in the future but today. Setting people free from various afflictions and oppressions would over time make the authorities very uncomfortable and really offering an alternative. Which is:

The way of the cross as opposed to the way of the emperor. The way of the emperor is to eliminate and kill one's enemies the way of the cross is to love one's enemies and be willing to sacrifice for their benefit.

Another way of looking at this is the emperor's way is the Darwinian survival of the fittest. Or the spoils go to the winners, the alphas. This suggests Christianity is for the weak, the losers and those on the margins instead of the winners.

Are we strong enough, or are we just not interested in being an alpha? That there is not enough meaning in life being the centre of our own universe. This means using our talents and strengths not so that we can get ahead, but to help and support those less fortunate than ourselves. This means there is a priority in life beyond being the centre of our own universe. Being willing to sacrifice for the benefit of those we care about and love.

So, this is part of what Jesus is Modeling for us today. The hope and the challenge of the way of the cross instead of the way of the emperor is a way of living in community and loving and caring for one another. Moving from fear to love.

Amen