

As I got older I realized that for whatever reason, I had lots of trouble being connected to the idea of a Savior who died for us, for me. Sure, I had those words—I wasn't completely useless as a Baptist! But the actual significance of the meaning of the Cross of Christ on a human level, was just not there for me.

I don't think the church or my parents sheltered me from it, I just think that the whole thing did not really compute. When I did, quite young, have a moment of acceptance for the need of the forgiveness that comes through Christ, it was not at all really connected to the injustice of a sacrificial death of a real innocent person, who was also in some way the creator of the universe. It was a moment of acceptance *driven by the love of a God who would do such a thing in the first place*. The suffering of Christ didn't come into it at all then. Oh, I knew the words, I knew the story, and could say them back to you—with passion even. Don't you worry about that! Again, I wasn't completely useless as a Baptist!!



To be really honest, it was not until many, many years later that I began to realize and understand the betrayal, injustice and suffering that is Holy Thursday and Good Friday. And when that understanding did come, it mainly made me angry at first. Love should not be connected to suffering! Of course, I also had not yet suffered any real loss in my life, a real broken heart and grieving heart, of any kind.

At some point the process of my Easter Joy shifted. No longer was Easter proceeded by a nice and pleasant (from my perspective anyway) dinner at the church, where the tables were set up in the shape of the church “logo.” The Cross became connected to the reality of what that ‘logo’ was supposed to remind us of. When that began to sink in for me, well it was

something else! It happened by degrees, thankfully—I don't think I could have taken it if it came as a sudden realization. But now I understand, mostly anyway. I dare to understand a little bit more and more each day.

I am truly glad for that understanding, and truly sad at the same time...and that is how it ought to be. That is the contradiction of Holy Thursday and Good Friday. There cannot be resurrection, without as Detrick Bonhoeffer said, drinking the human cup, even to the very dregs, to death on a cross. What this understanding finally let me do, was to *begin to grasp just how all encompassing, how immense God's love for us is*. THAT kind of love was what I was responding to all those years ago when I first responded to that feeling that I needed God's forgiveness.

Now, here we are today, in this moment, in the midst of worldwide struggle, and it is the last two days of Holy Week—and I, for one, and I am leaning into this moment. I think we all need to.

Yes, it is Holy Week. Yes, this is the particular moment of remembering and recalling the betrayal of Holy Thursday.

Yes, this is the moment of remembering the fear, confusion and disbelief of injustice, suffering, death and sadness that is Good Friday.

Yes, all the moments we now find ourselves living in today carry those same kinds of feelings of betrayal, fear, confusion, disbelief, injustice, suffering, death and sadness. And I know that many are thinking, do we really need to be remembering and thinking about more of the same? I think we do-- today more than ever.

Holy Thursday, where Jesus and the disciples celebrated God's great acts of intervention to bring freedom from bondage and oppression to an entire people, is the moment where the institution of the Lord's Supper happened—where Jesus gave us the central ritual and *the grace-filled sacrament that binds us together as people of faith*.

Good Friday, where Jesus willingly chose the way of the cross, with all its injustice and suffering, happened so that God through Christ would ‘drink the early cup to the dregs’, to death on a cross... And in so doing triumph over all injustice and suffering by literally experiencing all the worst that life can hold. God, in God's very self, became one with humanity, with

each one of us, so we might *never again have to live in separation from the unlimited and unending love that IS God.*

That is why, with all that the world is going through today, I think that *it is so important for us in this moment lean into this moment with the certainty of God's enduring love for us, for all people. We must not forget what these days of remembrance hold for us as a Post-Easter People: Hope for Grace, Salvation, and Newness of Life.*

We are Post-Easter People. Nothing now can separate us from the love of God. We are no longer a people who have no hope.

As we continue the slow walk from Holy Thursday and through Good Friday, we need to remember that the tension, the contradiction, the anger, the suffering, the sadness... all the darkest parts of the human experience that these days seem to be showing us, are all surrounded by one sure and certain thing: God's Love.

Especially during this journey of remembrance that is Holy Thursday and Good Friday, Lean In. *We are a Post-Easter People. Nothing now can separate us from the love of God and we are no longer a people who have no hope.*

Lean In!

Pastor Mark

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Daily Reflection
From
Pastor Mark



Holy Thursday &
Good Friday
April 9-10, 2020

Lean In!

By: Rev. Mark Breese

Pastor Mark is the Agency Minister and the Director of Ministry & Community partnerships at Community Missions.

When I was growing up, as strange as it may sound, I was I was never really aware of the significance of Holy (or Maundy) Thursday and Good Friday as part of Easter. Mainly that was because, religiously speaking, I was very much in the bubble of my small Baptist church. And it was not one of those fun hoot'n and holler'n Baptist churches. It was really, really sedate and it just did not go in for showy or emotional stuff.

There was, however, one tradition we had, which was a cover dish supper on Maundy Thursday. Table were set up as big cross... you know the logo of the church... in the fellowship hall, and we shared a meal. The pastor said a prayer and a few words about it being a meal in memory of the night Jesus was betrayed, and that was about it—or at least that's all I remember.

“We are Post-Easter People. Nothing now can separate us from the love of God. We are no longer a people who have no hope.”

Now thinking back, I do remember that my Catholic friends were much more engaged in ... some kind of religious stuff from Thursday thru Saturday. They were in church all the time! But me, there was Palm Sunday, a nice cover dish supper at the church on Thursday, a big Easter Egg hunt on Saturday with our large extended family, then a Sunrise Easter Service & Breakfast at the church, and later on Grandma came over for either a ham or roast chicken lunch—that lasted a long time. Grandma talked endlessly, had no teeth, and so took a long time to eat. That was it.

Maundy Thursday and Good Friday they were just teeny-tiny blips on the way from Palm Sunday to Easter. There was just not much significance to me for Holy Thursday and Good Friday. That has changed for me over time.