

Biblical Reflection 7: “Keep Looking to Jesus”

March 30, 2021

When Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey on Sunday, the crowds rushed to the streets, laying down palms and shouting, “Hosanna!” In Hebrew, this term means, “Save us!” The Jewish people hated the brutal Roman military, and they wanted someone to save them from their oppression.

However, five days later, Jesus was dead.

What a shock and disappointment. How discouraging and heartbreaking. The disciples were sure that God was going to empower Jesus to liberate Israel, but by Friday, there he was, hanging on the cross, bleeding, dying, soon to be dead.

Of course, you know that that is not how the story ends, but during Holy Week, Christians are supposed to remember how horribly wrong everything had gone for Jesus and his disciples. And we’re supposed to reflect on our own dark nights and seemingly hopeless situations.

Surely, this time of suffering in Myanmar is a huge test of faith for all of you. It is for me. How are we going to handle our grief, desperation, and fear? How will we respond to this present evil? Will we give into our rage and hatred, and become evil, too? Will we abandon our faith or look for comfort in sin? Or, will we face our suffering and keep looking to Jesus to show us the way?

Jesus said, if anyone wants to be my disciple, let them deny themselves and pick up their crosses and follow him (Mark 8:34). While Christians may disagree on how to best respond to the present Myanmar crisis, we should all agree that following Jesus Christ on the way of the cross is our first priority. I’m not talking about literally dying—there’s too much of that already. I’m talking about “dying to ourselves,” by staying committed to honoring God and serving Christ in all we think, say, and do.

Well-known Christian philosopher, Dallas Willard, once said, “Christ was not crucified so that we wouldn’t have to be. He was crucified so we could be crucified with him. He did not die so that we wouldn’t have to die; he died so we could die with him. In death to self, you are crucified with Christ (Gal. 2:20).”

The writer to the Hebrews put it this way: “Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the sake of the joy that was set before him endured the cross, disregarding its shame, and has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider



him who endured such hostility against himself from sinners, so that you may not grow weary or lose heart” (Heb. 12:1-3).

I know that you are living through a horrific nightmare. From the safe distance of thousands of miles away, I’m in no position to tell you how you should handle this crisis. I don’t know what I would do if I were there. But I can tell you what I have learned to do in my own suffering that has helped me the most. I keep trusting in God. I keep looking to Jesus. And I keep asking the Holy Spirit to lead, guide, and strengthen me to face my trials, one day at a time. And that’s what I’m praying for you this Holy Week, and every week.

With Christ’s love, always,

Dr. Tim

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