

March 30th, 2018
Year B; Good Friday
Isaiah 52: 13-53:12
Psalm 22: 1-11
Hebrews 10: 16-25
John 19: 1-37

“In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.”

“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

The Gospels of Matthew and Mark report this familiar line from Psalm 22 as the final words of Jesus just before he died....an anguished question from his desolation and loneliness....

In the darkness, the last words, his tortured question barely above a whisper...

“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

We have often heard the phrase: Jesus is The Answer.

We can often be reassured by this phrase, Jesus is the Answer, but I have been surprised to find in a new book I’ve been reading, that Jesus is far from a provider of answers but rather...an asker of questions.

The theologian Martin Copenhaver in his book: Jesus is the Question explains that in the 4 gospels Jesus asks a staggering number of questions:

307 different questions!

In turn, various folks ask Jesus 183 questions, and of those 183 questions he is asked, Jesus answers at most, 8 of those questions.

So Jesus is not a provider of the answers but rather invites us, many, many times, 307 times! To enter the questions with him.

The first words Jesus says in the Bible are when he is 12 years old and Mary and Joseph have been looking for him for 3 days.

The first thing that 12-year-old Jesus says is 2 questions:

“Why were you looking for me? Didn’t you know that I must be in my Father’s house?”

And as I said earlier, 2 of the 4 gospels report that his last words are a question too:

“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

On this Good Friday I find it strangely comforting that Jesus is more of an asker of questions....than a provider of answers...

On this dark day at the foot of the cross as our Savior...our Lord.....our Jesus hangs above, gasping dying....pat answers seem like cold comfort to me...

“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

The Jesus who walked this earth, that came not as a super powered adult.....but was born as a tiny helpless baby...just like you and me...

Our Jesus who lived a full and human life...God so loving God’s creation....loving us.....loving each of us so much that God wanted to draw closer.....God sent his son to live with us.....to live and to die...

To live like us.....and to die...like us.....like each of us.

To walk the dark valley ahead of us...so that when we are in anguish and feel deserted too...why have you forsaken me?.....Our Jesus knows and walks with us.....

I will close with a final word from Martin Copenhaver, (the writer of *Jesus is the Question*)

Copenhaver concludes about this Good Friday question:

“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

“Before a savior can share his light with us, he must first enter into our darkness, including the darkness of agony and despair. The story of Jesus despairing on the cross is the story of a God willing to experience our hopelessness, that we might have hope, and the story of a God willing to share in human defeat, that we might, in turn, share God’s victory.

For that reason, this despairing question that we find difficult to hear may end up being the most important—and ultimately, the most hopeful—question Jesus ever asked.” (Copenhaver, page 117)

Amen.

The Reverend Megan Limburg