

How is it possible that the one who spent 3 years preaching the Good News of God to all, the one who spent so much time healing people from all conditions and backgrounds, the one proclaiming the unconditional love of God to all, the one who had a group of devoted followers and disciples ended crucified on a cross, alone after having been tortured, mocked and renounced by his closest friends? How is it possible that the One who is the Son of God died alone on a cross a week after having been acclaimed as a king or a Messiah? When I think about what happened, it causes me to tremble, tremble.

The truth is that when Jesus entered Jerusalem among cheering crowds, they did not understand who He was. They had their own image of the Messiah, they were looking for a political savior. In Jesus riding a donkey, they saw a hope rekindled, an end to their injustice, an easier path to follow, a better tomorrow. So, they waved their branches and laid down clothes to welcome him as a king. But they did not see the loving Suffering Servant.

They shouted Hosannas from the depths of their hearts, and would have crowned Him there if they could. But they didn't understand. They didn't see Jesus, the Son of God, the Messiah, whose kingdom was not of this world.

Jesus knew. Riding a donkey as a messenger of peace, He knew why He had come. He knew what was lying ahead of Him. The Son of God humbled Himself, set aside divinity and royalty, and exchanged Heaven's robes for a towel and a basin of water.

He received their praise that day, but He saw their hearts, young and old alike. And He wept for them. And then He died for them on a cross, alone, mocked, and abandoned.

His closest friends out of fear left Him, and even denied that they knew Him. The Son of God, the expected Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth joyfully welcomed as a King by the crowds was abandoned, mocked and insulted by the same crowds a week later. Abandoned by those he came to save, abandoned by those he loved so much that he was willing to die for them out of His divine love.

Thinking about these events, I can not help but sing in my head the words of this hymn, were you there when they crucified my Lord? Were you there when they nailed him on the cross? Were you there when they laid him to the tomb? It causes me to tremble, tremble...

We left Him at the tomb, and we are invited to meditate about Jesus' amazing love for his Father and for each one of us. We are invited to see how so many times we too are betraying Jesus when we don't love God with all our heart and when we don't love our neighbor as He loves them. It causes me to tremble too, and I feel the need to repent.

But if we are gathered together today, if we are Christians, it's precisely because we know that Jesus' passion and death are not the end of Jesus' life and mission. We know that the last word of God about Jesus has been spoken on Easter morning. We know that Jesus' passion and death are the prelude to the resurrection with a new life offered to us and to all of humanity. This is what we are going to celebrate in the second part of our service

with the great Eucharistic Prayer. Today, let us look at the cross and realize that God turned this instrument of torture into a tool of salvation.

When I look at the blood All I see is love, love, love. When I stop at the cross I can see the love of God.

But I can't see competition, I can't see hierarchy. I can't see pride or prejudice or the abuse of authority. I can't see lust for power. I can't see manipulation. I can't see rage or anger or selfish ambition.

When I look at the blood All I see is love, love, love. When I stop at the cross I can see the love of God

But I can't see unforgiveness. I can't see hate or envy. I can't see stupid fighting or bitterness, or jealousy. I can't see empire building. I can't see self-importance. I can't see backstabbing, or vanity or arrogance. I see surrender, sacrifice, salvation, humility, righteousness, faithfulness, grace, forgiveness, love , love, love..... When I Stop at the cross, I can see the love of God.<sup>1</sup> Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> *When I stop at the Cross from Godfrey Birtill 2004*

*The 1st part of this meditation was inspired from a post from Rebecca Barlow Jordan*