

Good Friday 2024

When Jesus had received the wine, he said, "It is finished." Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

Amen.

Resilience is the capacity to be fully present with suffering and allow it to transform you.

I want to say that to you one more time.

Resilience is the capacity to be fully present with suffering and allow it to transform you.

Resilience doesn't mean we are present with suffering and then when that suffering ends we bounce back to where we were, like some sort of rubber band, it means we are so present with suffering that we allow it to transform us.

Jesus Christ walked through the world with deep and abundant resilience, and he died in the same way. Jesus was forever resilient in the face of suffering, others and his own. To me, Jesus is the epitome of resilience.

And, in this Good Friday story we have other humbling examples of resilience.

Meanwhile, standing near the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene.

I want us to imagine for a moment the resilience it took for each of these human's who were friends and family members of Jesus, to remain fully present with Jesus in his time of great suffering.

To be fully present as he was tortured and suffered and to remain with him, fully present until he died. It must have been total anguish. And yet, they did so, because they loved him.

There are really only two emotions for us as humans, love and fear. All other emotions are rooted in either of these.

Compassion in love. Anger in fear. Empathy in love. Hatred in fear. Resilience in love.

And this is why learning to be resilient is crucial for us as Christians. Because our greatest commandment is to love. To love, so deeply that we can be fully present with suffering and let it transform us, into even more loving humans.

This is what Good Friday is about, and why we call it good. Because in this story is the good example of these humans and of Jesus. The good example of what resilience looks like and in this story is our hope for letting it transform us too. When we practice being fully present with suffering AND allow it to transform us.

If love is the root of resilience, what do you suppose is the cause for the lack of it?

Right, fear.

And, In this story of the death of Jesus, we have many examples of people who lacked resilience. I want us to consider them as well, because they have much to teach us about the deep need for resilience and transformation.

I am curious, if Judas had been resilient, would he have given Jesus over to the empire? What about the disciples, if they had been more deeply practiced in resilience would they have fallen asleep, would Peter have denied Jesus three times?

And what about Caiaphas – would he have suggested it better for one man to die than to have to face the conflict in the country, if he had been a student of resilience?

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All of these people in our story today are acting out of fear. They all fear different things but yet they are all avoiding their own suffering by scapegoating another human, Jesus.

When we are avoiding suffering, our own or others, we often scapegoat other people, projecting our fears as anger or betrayal or hatred, on to other people, even to the point of murder or allowing others to suffer because we don't want to face our own suffering, our own fears.

This can happen in small ways – when we avoid conflict or disappointment by lying to others. Or in more systemic ways when whole groups or nations of peoples are blamed for suffering and attacked, rather than accepting responsibility for creating peace and security for everyone, by being fully present with everyone's suffering and not just our fear.

When we get caught up in fear and we scapegoat others or nations, we are being self-protective. And as I said earlier in the season of Lent, when we are self-protective and judgmental we collapse and become small. And when we are small and collapsed it is impossible for us to be open to movement, open to change and transformation.

Jesus and his friends and family, were fully present with suffering and all of them were transformed. Because of their transformation, we 2000 years later have their example to teach us how to live in a resilient way.

By looking directly at poverty, disease, homelessness, war, and violence and seeking to solve those social ills rather than ignoring them, because the thought of them causes us to suffer.

And we have this day, Good Friday, to practice being fully present with suffering, through this story of the great suffering of Jesus, and of those that stayed with him until the end.

Amen.