

## Power and Force

Wayne Waibel – 03/24/2024

Let's just take a moment to let that scene settle on our collective hearts. Today's lection actually calls for the entirety of Mark chapters fourteen and fifteen. Traditionally the scripture is read as a play with various members of the church reading portions of the scripture. No sermon is offered after that. It is very difficult to fully layout the massive content of the story within the confines of a sermon and still do the story justice.

But Mark is a very stark gospel. Too much of it at one time can defeat the intent of proclaiming the good news. And so, we tend to strip away some of the darker images and focus on an aspect or two to illuminate our worship, and allow us to absorb the truth and still move on with our day.

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There are too many dynamics at play in this excerpt from Mark to identify and elaborate on in one shot. This is not a time for pontification anyway. The close of the Lenten season is a time for reflection and commitment. So, I invite you to reflect on this:

Of all the players: the crowd, the Chief Priests, the Pharisees and the scribes, the Roman garrison, the temple guards, the Prefect (that would be Pontius Pilate), and the disciples – who are nowhere to be found by the way – of all these people – the only ones to defend and acknowledge Jesus - are his executioners.

The Centurion who carried out the order of execution proclaimed that Jesus truly was the Son of God, and Pilate – who issued that order, when pressed by the crowd to crucify Him, asked, “Why, what evil has he done?” Why indeed.

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Power and force never achieve their ultimate goal of transformation. If you want to change someone – you cannot make them – you have to let them. And the way to let them is to teach them.

Before a servant can teach, a servant must learn. This is the nature of those who serve God. Only because God provides the tongue - is the prophet able to function as a teacher.

The teaching that servants offer is not just education, but demonstrates a path of action that gives life and energy. A servant's teaching is an empowering act.

Good teaching allows others to persist in the face of life's struggles, because a good teacher understands that it is precisely those struggles that serve as an invitation to make ourselves available to be God's response to a broken world. Faithful living is essentially responsive living.

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The Christ mind refuses glory. As Jesus stood before the angry crowd, the envious ruling elders, and the Roman governor – He stood alone. His disciples had already dispersed, the crowd had turned against Him, and still – He could have turned things around and emerged triumphant, but He said and did nothing. That profound inaction caused Pilate to marvel.

The servant's role is perseverance and persistence in the face of opposition. Jesus serves you and me because that is who He is. It is in this steadfast offering of love that the Lord God abides in us.

Christ was not a victim. No one emptied Him; He emptied Himself. No one made Him a slave or humbled Him. Jesus took the form of a slave and humbled Himself.

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Christianity is a religion of resistance and hope. Evil cannot be conquered in the world, only resisted in the self. And where there is love, there is hope. There is a love stronger than death, which can hold suffering even as it struggles to alleviate it.

The good news is that the point of the cross is not suffering and death, but that a relationship holds. The love of the Father for the Son, and the Son for the entire world will always and forever – hold. Amen.