

St. Columba's Episcopal Church
Good Friday – April 7, 2023
John 18:1–19:42; The Book of Common Prayer, pages 276-282
The Rev. Dr. Susan Kraus

Today our scripture readings and our prayers speak fully and eloquently to the events and the meaning of Good Friday. It is a daunting task to find words to add to today's very profound service.

One thing I would share with you, something I have often thought about, not only on Good Friday. At the heart of our faith, in its central story, we find the cross of Christ. We know that there are branches of Christianity as well as many individual Christians in our own Anglican tradition, who prefer to skip over the cross on which Jesus died. No mocked and tortured body. No shameful execution. No utterly forsaken words, "It is finished." No last breath of the man born to be King of the Jews, the Messiah and savior of the world, dying in such misery.

I think we can understand wanting to pass by the cross of Christ and go straight to the empty tomb of Easter morning. It is painful to consider the crucifixion – the more we love our Lord, the more painful it can be. So, why dwell on the cross when we know the Lord will be raised from death? Don't we see ourselves as a "resurrection people"?

Yes, but I have often asked myself, what use is that approach to our faith when tragedy strikes? What help is it to pass by the cross if and when we feel crucified by life, by other people? The promise of the empty tomb can feel empty indeed when we or people we love or even strangers we hear about are struck down by evil or misfortune.

When the cross of Christ is left in its central place in our faith story, then we can find the comfort of knowing that God is with us in our darkest hours. Profound and unmerited suffering is not shunned by God. We can point to the cross when our faith wavers in the face of the profound and unmerited suffering in our world. When we ask ourselves, "where is God?" we can answer, "there on the cross and here with us all." The compassion of God encompasses all the pain of life.

Our faith doesn't offer us an easy road that bypasses The Place of the Skull. We don't find a comfortable set of answers to life's deepest questions. Instead, we find in the crucified Lord a vision of the depth of God's love for us and for all God's children, a vision with the power to comfort our souls in all our trials and pain, a vision that calls forth all the love in our hearts and souls.

Please take your service leaflets with you when you leave the church today. Slowly and prayerfully, moved by the Holy Spirit, review the words we speak this noon. Let your soul be touched and moved. Let your soul grow in love for God's Son, our Savior. In his most holy Name. Amen.