

LENT: A PILGRIMAGE WITH JESUS TO THE CROSS

Today is the 3rd Sunday of Lent. On our Lenten pilgrimage, we will encounter several of the moments of Jesus on his way to the Cross, and in these moments we will be challenged by our Lord and those he interacted with in ways that will search our hearts and focus our minds on life with the Savior.

Today we encounter the incredible love and grace of Jesus, even in the harshest moments of his life, as he finds himself betrayed by his friend and disciple, Judas. We put ourselves into the heart and mind of Malchus, servant of the High Priest – the one who lost his ear to Peter’s sword, and gained it back through the touch of the Savior.

THE THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT: Luke 22:39-53 – Jesus arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane.

³⁹*Accompanied by the disciples, Jesus left the upstairs room and went as usual to the Mount of Olives. ⁴⁰There he told them, “Pray that you will not give in to temptation.”*

⁴¹*He walked away, about a stone’s throw, and knelt down and prayed, ⁴²“Father, if you are willing, please take this cup of suffering away from me. Yet I want your will to be done, not mine.” ⁴³Then an angel from heaven appeared and strengthened him. ⁴⁴He prayed more fervently, and he was in such agony of spirit that his sweat fell to the ground like great drops of blood.*

⁴⁵*At last he stood up again and returned to the disciples, only to find them asleep, exhausted from grief. ⁴⁶“Why are you sleeping?” he asked them. “Get up and pray so that you will not give in to temptation.”*

⁴⁷*But even as Jesus said this, a crowd approached, led by Judas, one of the twelve disciples. Judas walked over to Jesus to greet him with a kiss. ⁴⁸“But Jesus said, “Judas, would you betray the Son of Man with a kiss?”*

⁴⁹*When the other disciples saw what was about to happen, they exclaimed, “Lord, should we fight?” ⁵⁰And one of them (Peter) struck at the high priest’s slave, slashing off his right ear.*

⁵¹*But Jesus said, “No more of this.” And he touched the man’s ear and healed him.*

⁵²*Then Jesus spoke to the leading priests, the captains of the Temple guard, and the elders who had come for him. “Am I some dangerous revolutionary,” he asked, “that you come with swords and clubs to arrest me? ⁵³Why didn’t you arrest me in the Temple? I was there every day. But this is your moment, the time when the power of darkness reigns.”*

⁵⁴*So they arrested him and led him to the high priest’s home.*

Meditation by Sharolyn Newington –, Vancouver.

In Leviticus 14:14 instructions are given for the cleansing of those suffering leprosy; they are to be anointed on their right ear lobe (and right hand and foot), with the blood of a spotless lamb. Earlier in Leviticus, Moses also anoints Aaron for priestly ministry with the blood of a ram on his right ear.

The right ear appears again, in Luke 22:47-53. Malchus, a servant of the High Priest, is sent with a band of others to arrest Jesus. He is employed (or perhaps even cajoled) to do the dirty work of the Jewish leaders.

When Judas betrays Jesus with a kiss, Malchus and the band of men move forward to grab and bind Jesus. One of the disciples asks, "Lord, should we strike with the sword?" Before Jesus has

time to answer, Simon-Peter, loyal but impetuous, strikes out, cutting off the right ear of the man closest—Malchus.

Jesus rebukes the use of violence against the very people who are about to send him to a violent death. As a powerful sign he picks up the severed, bloody ear and brings healing to Malchus with a gentle touch to his right lobe.

Healing comes through the spotless lamb.

I imagine Malchus stepping back from the commotion. Touching his re-created ear. Taking in the scene with a new perspective. Looking across at the man who healed and anointed him.

Listening intently.

Questions inviting response:

1. When did you first look across at Jesus and recognize him as Messiah, your Healer?
 - What have been the wounds that he has bound for you, covering them with his healing touch?
2. When have you been like Peter, the loyal but impetuous follower? What has happened on your journey with Jesus to temper your impulsiveness?
3. Why have the sword and the Church never been able to co-exist?

Prayer

Jesus, Lord of Peace,

Teach me today the way of gentleness. May I be reminded that I follow the Gentle Shepherd, who reigns as the King of kings and Lord of lords. Fill me with your Spirit, who provides me the strength to walk in your ways. As I journey to your Cross, may I, too, carry the cross of worldly power to the place of execution, and nail myself to it in order to follow you with my life.

Amen.