



Leaning into the Heart of the Holy

2016 Lenten Devotions

Good Friday

March 25, 2016

Leaning into the Holy or Holding on for Dear Life?

By Carol Boseman Taylor

At the recent Lakeside Ladies' Retreat, I shared a story with the participants: Chuck and I once lived in a home that had a lovely tree in the backyard. I do not know what kind of tree it was (I called it a "stringwood" tree), but it taught me a spiritual lesson which has remained with me.

Every fall, as all the other trees were losing their leaves, not a leaf fell from this tree. The other trees were doing what God intended—dropping their leaves around their roots so those leaves would keep the roots warm during the cold winter and later turn into mulch which would nourish the tree.

Not my "stringwood" tree. No way. That tree hung onto those leaves for dear life. The old leaves would endure the winter snow, ice, winds, and rains without even the first thought of dropping to the ground. Not until spring was in the air and the new leaves began to push out of the branches would that "stringwood" tree let go of the old dead leaves in order to welcome the new growth.

The lesson to me was one of my life: What did I choose? Did I choose to hold on to what was familiar and comfortable—only to what I knew and could control? Or, could I trust God with my future and let go of control and comfort and security and wait to see what new wonderful thing might be waiting in the wings? I confess that I often want to hold onto what is familiar in my life. It is hard to step out in faith, unable to see what is ahead, but trusting that God has good for me and a plan for my future that just might be better than my past.

What about you? Do you hold on to what you know or are you willing to let go and let God? Do you lean into the holy or do you hold on for dear life? It's worth considering during this season of Lent.

Man's maker was made man . . .
that the Bread might hunger,
the Fountain thirst,
the Light sleep,
the Way be tired on its journey,
that Truth might be accused of false witness,
the Teacher be beaten with whips,
the Foundation be suspended on wood;
that Strength might grow weak;
that the Healer might be wounded;
that Life might die. –St. Augustine

Prayer:

Giver of good gifts, we give you hearty thanks...that it is Friday. We say, without guilt, “Thank God It’s Friday!”

Partly, as we come to Friday, along with our culture, we are into weekends of self-indulgence. We have worked hard and are ready to take a break and rest from our labors. We wait for a moment when we need not pay attention to the steady demands with which we live, caring not at all for the world, or for our neighbor, or our duty.

Give us the mercy to move Friday beyond “the week-end.” Partly as we move to Friday we are ready for Sabbath rest, when we rest as we imagine you to rest. It is clear to us in our best pondering that our lives are made for rest and not for work. So give us the simplicity to put ourselves down in your rest, whereby we may receive back our true selves by drawing close to you.

But mainly, as we come to Friday, we know in our deepest places that Friday is your day of entry into the hurt and hate of the world, your day of bottomless weakness where we have seen you allied with the world in its deepest disorder. We know you to be a Friday God without the honors of omnipotence. And so we pray that you will “Friday us” into the very weakness where we may receive our new life from you.

We pray in the name of your Friday Child. Amen.

–Walter Brueggemann,
from *Awed to Heaven, Rooted in Earth* (2003)

Luke 22:54-71; 23:26-49

Then they seized him and led him away, bringing him into the high priest’s house. But Peter was following at a distance. When they had kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard and sat down together, Peter sat among them. Then a servant-girl, seeing him in the firelight, stared at him and said, “This man also was with him.” But he denied it, saying, “Woman, I do not know him.” A little later someone else, on seeing him, said, “You also are one of them.” But Peter said, “Man, I am not!” Then about an hour later yet another kept insisting, “Surely this man also was with him; for he is a Galilean.” But Peter said, “Man, I do not know what you are talking about!” At that moment, while he was still speaking, the cock

crowded. The Lord turned and looked at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said to him, "Before the cock crows today, you will deny me three times." And he went out and wept bitterly.

Now the men who were holding Jesus began to mock him and beat him; they also blindfolded him and kept asking him, "Prophecy! Who is it that struck you?" They kept heaping many other insults on him.

When day came, the assembly of the elders of the people, both chief priests and scribes, gathered together, and they brought him to their council. They said, "If you are the Messiah, tell us." He replied, "If I tell you, you will not believe; and if I question you, you will not answer. But from now on the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the power of God." All of them asked, "Are you, then, the Son of God?" He said to them, "You say that I am." Then they said, "What further testimony do we need? We have heard it ourselves from his own lips!"

As they led him away, they seized a man, Simon of Cyrene, who was coming from the country, and they laid the cross on him, and made him carry it behind Jesus. A great number of the people followed him, and among them were women who were beating their breasts and wailing for him. But Jesus turned to them and said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For the days are surely coming when they will say, 'Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bore, and the breasts that never nursed.' Then they will begin to say to the mountains, 'Fall on us,' and to the hills, 'Cover us.' For if they do this when the wood is green, what will happen when it is dry?"

Two others also, who were criminals, were led away to be put to death with him. When they came to the place that is called The Skull, they crucified Jesus there with the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. Then Jesus said, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing." And they cast lots to divide his clothing. And the people stood by, watching; but the leaders scoffed at him, saying, "He saved others; let him save himself if he is the Messiah of God, his chosen one!" The soldiers also mocked him, coming up and offering him sour wine, and saying, "If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!" There was also an inscription over him, "This is the King of the Jews."

One of the criminals who were hanged there kept deriding him and saying, "Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us!" But the other rebuked him, saying, "Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed have been condemned justly, for we are getting what we deserve for our deeds, but this man has done nothing wrong." Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." He replied, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise."

It was now about noon, and darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon, while the sun's light failed; and the curtain of the temple was torn in two. Then Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said, "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit." Having said this, he breathed his last. When the centurion saw what had taken place, he praised God and said, "Certainly this man was innocent." And when all the crowds who had gathered there for this spectacle saw what had taken place, they returned home, beating their breasts. But all his acquaintances, including the women who had followed him from Galilee, stood at a distance, watching these things.