

A Sermon Preached

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I want Judas Iscariot to stay at that table. I want him to receive the bread as Jesus hands it to him, and to have another piece. I want him to drink the wine as Jesus offers it. And I want him to stay, and to forget about his plan for those shiny pieces of silver, money he really can't afford to earn.

Later, in the garden, I want the disciples to stay awake. I want the disciples to stay awake, and to pray as Jesus asks them – even just one of them. Just for an hour.

In the early morning, before the rooster crows, I want Simon Peter to say it, three times: "Yes. Yes, I know the man. Yes, he is my friend. Yes. He is the Messiah, God come among us; he is our salvation."

If Jesus *has* to go before Pilate, I want Pilate to know **exactly** who it is that he is talking to. I want him to show some respect to this man he's so uneasy to convict. I want him to stand up to the crowd.

When Pilate gives them the option, I want the people to choose *Jesus* to be released, instead of the murderer.

I want the story to be different. Because the truth of it is too heavy to bear.

The good news is, the story is *not* the version that I want it to be. The unbearable truth is the good news. Because what it says is this: that there is no hurt, no loss, no betrayal, no humiliation, no abandonment, that we can suffer...or *inflict*...that God has not already taken into himself in the person of Jesus Christ – and redeemed.

So we live this story in these next days, with its unbearable truth. We live it in our bodies, as a body – as the Body of Christ, the Church. We hold palms in our hands and welcome a savior. We wash one another's feet before the sacred meal, just as Jesus did before dinner began. We do our best to stay awake, if only for an hour. We sing, and pray. We live as the church, as Christ's own body in this world, and look with a steady eye on the truth that is too much to bear.

In these next days, we will see our God betrayed. We will watch that unbearable truth unfold itself once again: as Jesus commends his Spirit, as the darkness falls in the middle of the day, as the garment of the Temple tears.

As the Church, we witness it all. And we look beyond the cross and into the darkness and through the veil, toward a deeper reality: ***because that stone will be rolled away from the tomb, and that grave will be empty.*** And so the unbearable truth, instead, becomes a truth that bears each one of us.