

The Rev. Erin Hensley

April 14, 2017

Good Friday: Anthem 1 in the GF liturgy (The 1979 Book of Common Prayer p.281)

More Than a Moment

*We glory in your cross, O Lord, and praise and glorify your holy resurrection
for by virtue of your cross joy has come to the whole world.*

“This is the Jesus Movement, and we are The Episcopal Church, the Episcopal branch of Jesus’ movement in this world,” Presiding Bishop Michael B. Curry says in his first address as Presiding Bishop and Primate of The Episcopal Church.¹

For some who hear the phrase “Jesus movement,” a fundamentalist approach to Christianity often comes to mind. This is not what our Presiding Bishop intended and in years since this first address in November of 2015, he’s preached often on what he means. Earlier this year, our Presiding Bishop said this “[the Jesus movement is] a community of people committed to living the way of Jesus, loving, liberating, and life-giving, and committed to going into the world to help this world become one that is loving, liberating, and life-giving.” The Jesus movement is a community of people following the movement of Jesus.

During a community meeting in Austin, a woman of color shared an important from her grandmother. She remembers her grandmother saying that the difference between a movement and moment is sacrifice. The difference between a movement and a moment is sacrifice.

Jesus loving, liberating, and life-giving ministry involved risk and today more than sacrifice. Day by day he blessed God by blessing others. Day by day he loved God by loving the neighbor. Day by day he walked the talk. Day by day he placed himself where humanity was at risk. He refused to be like the reigning powers that ruled by coercion and brutality. Instead, he talked to who you’re not supposed to talk, when and where you’re not supposed to talk to them. He offered compassion for at the wrong time, at the wrong place, for the wrong people.

And so we sent him away on a hill, to take all the anger we have at one another and ourselves and God, and to suffer. In suppers with friends, in solitude with his heavenly father, in conversations at local watering holes in the heat of the day, in public life meant to bully him and keep him in his place, Jesus did not give in to ego or revenge or fear. He held nothing back and would rather be killed as a common criminal than participate in the ways of empire then and now.

¹ <http://www.episcopalchurch.org/posts/publicaffairs/presiding-bishop-michael-curry-jesus-movement-and-we-are-episcopal-church>

Do you remember the book *The Giving Tree* by Shel Silverstein? The one that goes “there was a giving tree who loved a little boy. And everyday the boy would come to play ...Swinging from the branches, sleeping in the shade...Laughing all the summer's hours away...the tree was happy. The tree was glad.” The boy grew older and wanted money to buy something he'd found. The tree gave her apples so he could sell them. Later he wanted a house. The tree gave him branches so he could build a home. Later he longed for sunny days. The tree gave him her trunk so he could build a boat and sail away. Years later, he needed a quiet place to rest and the tree offered her stump for him to rest. She gave everything.

I used to think that to be a faithful Christian I had to be the Giving Tree, I had to hold nothing back. And now I see that being a faithful Christian is not about me being the giving tree. Because that role has been taken and is not mine or yours. Jesus the Christ, God incarnate, is the giving tree. The great give away has been done. He has inaugurated a kingdom, the very kingdom of God, that does not depend on the privilege of the few at the brutal expense of the most vulnerable. Jesus' kingdom is not of this world in this way. His kingdom is a movement, a movement in which you and I get to participate.

Together, because of Jesus on the cross, because of God incarnate, the giving tree, we each have something but not the saving thing-an apple to share, a branch to offer, a refuge to give-in the Jesus' larger work. This night, when we look to our crucified Lord, what do we need to sacrifice so that this will be more than a moment? What within us needs to die?

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