

Lia Scholl  
04/14/2019

I wonder if I don't talk about grace enough...

It's a difficult day to talk about grace, because today's story is full of pain, full of grief, full of a certain fraught-ness. You know the story...Jesus enters Jerusalem with tears running down his face. He says, "If only they knew the things that make for peace." And we know where this is going.

Jesus enters the city, planning the Passover supper in the Upper Room. As he sits with his friends around a table, he talks about his impending death. He tells them that one of his best friends will betray him. He tells them that another will deny him.

And then it all comes true. Judas betrays Jesus for thirty pieces of silver. And Peter denies him three times in the crowd outside of the courts.

How is there any grace in this death of Jesus? How is there any grace in a story so full of betrayal, so full of treachery, destruction, and just plain violence? How is there any grace?

But y'all, it's our job, our responsibility, to look for grace.

And grace DOES show up.

Peter denies Jesus three times, and Jesus returns and asks Peter, three times, "Do you love me?" Each time, Peter affirms his love of Jesus, and Jesus responds, "Feed my sheep."

That's the grace: this grace is forgiveness for past mistakes and an opportunity to make things right.

But where's the grace for Judas. He betrayed Jesus for thirty pieces of silver, going to the religious rulers, to the temple police, offering to give up Jesus to

them. But Judas doesn't get another opportunity, another chance to make things right. Even after he returns the money, he dies by suicide.

Where was his grace?

And THAT is why I don't talk about grace much.

It's not that I don't believe in grace. It's not even that I don't believe that we all have access to that same grace. I believe that God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit extend grace to us equally.

But I think that we cannot always access it.

We can't always access it because our lives are really hard. And some people's lives are harder than others.

Why couldn't Judas access God's grace?

Maybe Judas was born into poverty. Maybe he was so afraid of poverty again that he couldn't see straight.

Maybe Judas was born into a family that couldn't accept him as he was, maybe his parents ignored him, or worse, abused him.

Maybe he couldn't believe in Jesus' love, or in, dare I say it, maybe Judas couldn't believe that ANYONE could love him, that there were no way that anyone could forgive him.

But I am really hoping that Jesus' grace doesn't only extend to those who think they deserve it. I hope that Judas received grace.

I hope that at the end of his long ordeal, Jesus met him, and welcomed him into his arms. Full of forgiveness. Full of love. Full of grace.

And I have to say—I really hope that God's grace extends to me, even when I don't believe I deserve it.

And you know who else I hope it extends to? I hope it extends to all people. Whether they are white supremacists who set fire to Black churches. Whether they are people who put immigrant children in cages. Whether They are vicious murderers of God's precious children.

There are so many terrible things in the world, so many terrible reasons why people do terrible things, and I hope that God's grace extends to them all.

Deep in my core, I believe that grace does extend to them all.

Because the Bible says it all in Romans 8:38-39. "For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."

So just in case you're wondering, in these two stories that seem so unequal in the grace that is extended, there's grace enough for you.

There IS grace enough for you.

And the people of God said, Amen. Amen.

You know, on that night Jesus took the bread and he passed it to his friends, and he said, "Every time you eat the bread, you should think of me."

Another time, he was with his friends, and he said, "I am the bread of life."

I wonder what he meant by that. Did he mean that he was, like bread in all of our lives, a staple? Did he mean that he was ubiquitous in every culture, as bread is found in every culture? Did he mean that he brings satisfaction, fullness, ever-what-you-need? Did he mean that he was the cure for spiritual hunger?

I figure Jesus is all of these things, in this singular piece of bread. Now today, we have a special kind of bread—it's hot cross buns. It's a spiced sweet bun made with currants, marked with a cross on the top, and traditionally eaten on Good Friday in the Western Countries.

English folklore has many superstitions surrounding hot cross buns. One of them says that buns baked and served on Good Friday will not spoil or grow moldy during the subsequent year. Another encourages keeping such a bun for medicinal purposes. A piece of it given to someone ill is said to help them recover. If taken on a sea voyage, hot cross buns are said to protect against shipwreck.

Let us enjoy together the hot cross buns.

Bread of Life, give us a taste of tender bread from your table. In our hunger for you we are bound together with all of your children who are hungry for bread, for compassion, for justice, and more. Move the deepest parts of our spirit to compassion for our siblings throughout this whole wide earth. Break our hearts as bread for the world.