

The Son of Man must be killed and rise on the third.

Peter's reaction to Jesus prophecy is also our own.

Why, Jesus?

Why is it necessary for you to die?

For in one single Greek word in our Gospel reading this morning we have encapsulated the truth of the Gospel.

The Greek word is dei-

Delta epsilon iota

It's translated and most English Bibles as it is necessary –

And here's the mystery.

Jesus death on the cross and his rising again was not a human necessity.

Peter recoils from the thought of Jesus death, and we do also.

But that event after all is a divine necessity.

It was necessary for God, that Jesus be sacrificed.

Here we tried on holy ground but also dangerous ground.

Because, for many Christians making this statement means that it was our sin that nailed Jesus to the cross.

With that violent image, comes a horrifying image of a father sacrificing his own son.

I don't know about yours, but my mind recoils from that image.

But let's take this prophecy, and set it in a new tone.

If indeed the sacrifice is the divine necessity,  
could it not be that the prime mover in this sacrifice,  
is not our sin.

Instead, it is that God is always offering Godself in sacrificial love – indeed

Offering Godself to everyone  
at all times  
and in all places.

It does change the picture a bit.

Then it does change our life also.

For a week, like the Roman Christians like Paul in our second reading,  
are called to demonstrate that divine love even to our enemies.

For the Romans,

Not love meant responding with compassion and understanding even to those who persecuted them,  
To Emperor Nero, who used Christians as tiki torches, by setting them up on poles and burning them  
at the garden parties  
in his palatial gardens.

This statement of the divine necessity for love, even unto death. Challenges us also.

In this time of intense rivalry, hatred, challenge,  
We are called to love the marginalized, those in need, and those who my society is beginning or continuing to leave behind.

But there is a further challenge here,  
for us today.

We are called to love those against whom we stand in opposition –  
you know who I mean.

Dare I say it aloud?

As followers of Jesus way, we are required to treat even those whose actions we impose, with  
compassion.

Once we do that,  
and it is our greatest challenge,  
Then we will truly have for filled the divine Necessity,  
universal compassion,

We will truly have taken up our cross,

And borne it to a place of triumph.

We will bear the cross through fields of universal healthcare  
Across the strife torn terrain  
Of the Korean Peninsula,

Past the astonished gaze of senators and president and Klansmen.

And after we are carried that cross  
Our epitaphs will read

See how they loved one another-

that is why, my friends, it was necessary for the Son of Man to be killed and to rise on the third day.

Amen.

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