

Christ Church, Georgetown  
Sermon, Good Friday, April 14, 2017  
The Rev. Kristen Hawley

### Our Hope Begins in the Dark

***My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from helping me, from the words of my groaning? O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer; and by night, but find no rest.***

The cries of the psalmist, echoed in the telling of the Passion according to both Matthew and Mark, echoed in the cry from the cross, in the despair of all twelve disciples, in the grief of the mother, echoed throughout every age since... The cry of one abandoned. The cry of one lost, alone, anguished, and despairing.

***Do not be far from me, for trouble is near and there is no one to help. Many bulls encircle me, strong bulls of Bashan surround me; they open wide their mouths at me, like a ravening and roaring lion.***

The cries of the psalmist, giving meat and substance to that shared experience of feeling like prey being hunted by something large, something dark and sinister, something far more powerful than we. The cry of illness, of addiction, of hunger, of fear. The cry of the hunted.

***I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax; it is melted within my breast; my mouth is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to my jaws; you lay me in the dust of death.***

The cries of the psalmist, the embodiment of pain. Disconsolation, grief, despair... forces that liquefy our bones, our hearts, suck from us every drop of moisture, of sweetness and leave our bodies quenched, dying of thirst. Is there any verse written that speaks to the heart and truth of such pain as it is felt and experienced in our mortal flesh?

***For dogs are all around me; a company of evildoers encircles me. My hands and feet have shriveled; I can count all my bones. They stare and gloat over me; they divide my clothes among themselves, and for my clothing they cast lots.***

The cries of the psalmist, knowing intimately the sting of one mocked, hated and unworthy of even the smallest of kindnesses. The unloved, the despised, the pariah – whose life is worth less than the clothes on their back. Knowing, like Christ, the sting of a slow death in front of those who see you as inhuman – an inconvenience to their own superior life and needs.

***But you, O Lord, do not be far away! O my help, come quickly to my aid! Deliver my soul from the sword, my life from the power of the dog! Save me from the mouth of the lion! From the horns of the wild oxen you have rescued me. I will tell of your name to my brothers and sisters; in the midst of the congregation I will praise you: You who fear the Lord, praise him!***

The cries of the psalmist, friends, are the cries of the faithful. The cries echoed by Jesus Christ. The cries of each of us from time to time, in a world created as good but beset by sin and suffering. On this most solemn day of our shared Christian year, the psalmist cries out to us to remember our own suffering, to see clearly the suffering of those around us, to cry out to God in fear, in anger – to give ourselves to the truth that, on this side of the cross, this side of the veil, this side of death and our eternal life, we will suffer, just as the psalmist did, just as Jesus did. There can be no whitewashing of our suffering, just as there can be no dilution of the terror of our Lord being executed on a cross. Each year on this day, we hear again Psalm 22 read alongside the Passion. The suffering of Christ, the suffering of humanity – bound together, through our cries, through our desolation, our hunger and thirst for one another – for justice and love.

***For dominion belongs to the Lord, and he rules over the nations.***

***To him, indeed, shall all who sleep in the earth bow down; before him shall bow all who go down to the dust, and I shall live for him. Posterity will serve him; future generations will be told about the Lord, and proclaim his deliverance to a people yet unborn, saying that he has done it.***

He has done it. He has taken upon himself every suffering, every sting, every humiliation. He has met and experienced the darkness with which we all wrestle. We know, friends, that our hope begins in such darkness (Anne Lammott). Not because light always comes, when we call for it or need it, but because, even in our darkest days, when our heart melts like wax within us, when the dogs and bulls circle, our bones separate and our bodies shrivel up along with our spirit, we cry out to our God. My God, My God, Why have you forsaken me?! When we give ourselves to the fullness of this day, without skipping ahead to the hope and light of the resurrection, we can claim for ourselves the faithfulness of that cry and the truth that our faith begins here, in the dark. **Amen.**