

Why did Jesus have to die?

Have you ever asked yourself that question?

I know you didn't know you signed up for a theology lesson this early in the morning.

If there ever was a time to be asking that question, holy week seems to be the right time.

Palm Sunday starts with palm branches and hosannas and ends with the cross, sometimes its good to ask, why?

You may. Have heard the simple answer "Jesus died for our sins."

But what does that mean? And if that is true it seems to me that sin is very much still existing in our world today.

The problem with the answer "Jesus died for our sins" is that it perpetuates a transactional way of being. There was sin in the world, so someone had to die. If someone wrongs you, you wrong them back. This continues today in our criminal justice system, if someone is in prison it means they had done something to deserve it. If someone is unhoused they must have brought it upon themselves. If someone doesn't have a job they must be lazy. Right? This sense that people deserve what's coming to them. This thinking perpetuates violence, judgement, and division.

Jesus... disrupts our sense of justice because here we have someone who accepts the death penalty for promoting compassion and peace.

That does not make for a fair transaction.

Jesus who enters the city not on a warhorse but on a donkey  
Jesus who welcomes the little children, the disabled, the outcasts and the lonely  
Jesus who invites us into a *very different* kingdom

Why did Jesus die? Jesus died because Jesus stayed faithful to the mission of God to the very end And this was offensive to those in power

What Jesus taught and modeled was too challenging, it easier to just do away with it then imagine how Jesus might disrupt our lives

Theologian dorothee solee says that "love does not require the cross, but it ends up on the cross."

God is not transactional. There wasn't a debt that had to be paid. Jesus died because he was proclaiming and making present the kingdom of god.... Speaking truth to power and introducing an alternative way, where violence does not have to beget violence, all of gods children can live in peace without fear of the future, this was not welcomed in the roman empire that was all about control and transaction.

Christ going through the dehumanizing experience of the cross means that god knows what it is like to suffer. To be dehumanized. To experience violence. This is why God can relate to us in our own suffering.

When I was in seminary I lived with some of my classmates. In particular I lived with a married couple, Salmoon and Mari. Salmoon is from Pakistan and Mari is from the republic of Georgia, so they were learning new things about American culture. Whenever they cooked dinner they always made extra food and would offer their food to myself and our other two housemates. My housemates and I would always say no, I felt bad accepting their food because I rarely offered them my food and felt like somehow I'd end up owing them. After yet, another time of offering food and all of us saying no, my housemate, Salmoon stopped what he was doing and said, you know when we offer food we actually mean it!"

I was so caught up on who owes who that I was missing out on sharing a meal. I ended up saying yes to having dinner with them and continued to do so throughout the year and they became some of my closest friends.

It's important to remember that this transactional way of being is embedded in the culture here in the United States. And that can get in the way of true community. Of kinship. Remembering the life, death and resurrection of Jesus liberates us from this transactional way of being into a communal one. Which is much more meaningful. A lot like sharing a meal with dear friends.

**Life is not about transaction. It's about being *with* God and being *with* each other.**

So this week, if you find yourself asking, why did Jesus *have* to die? Perhaps reframe the question to "why did Jesus die? Or *why was Jesus killed?*", Jesus didn't have to die, but Jesus dying shows us **the depths** that God would go to liberate us into a better way of life.

Jesus's death on the cross is not about transaction, it's about transformation

*And that makes all the difference,*

*Amen.*