

JESUS IS A COMPASSIONATE FRIEND
SIXTH WEDNESDAY IN LENT

2 COR 1:3-5
MAR 16, 2016

³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, ⁴ who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. ⁵ For as we share abundantly in Christ's sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too.

Each week in Lent worship we read part of passion history.

Word Passion means strong emotion.

Can be passionate about one we love or thing we enjoy.
or one can be passionately angry or upset.

But when we talk about Jesus' passion we are thinking
of his strong suffering and pain.

Understanding meaning of passion, a strong feeling,
helps us understand compassion: feeling with someone.

This is something good friends do.

Studies have found those who work with those who suffer,
including rescue workers, counselors, doctors,
tend to have to have feelings like those they talk to
even though they did not have the same experience

Because of something called mirror neurons.

This is how human beings are wired.

We will consider how this is even more true for Jesus,
who became a genuine human to be with us
but who can help us because he is also true God.

FRIENDS COMFORT BY SHARING SUFFERING
JESUS TAKES ON OUR SUFFERING FOR US
JESUS SHARES WITH US HIS COMFORT

FRIENDS COMFORT BY SHARING SUFFERING

we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the
comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.

As we have read through passion history,
we have taken note of various sets of friends, all men so far,
but tonight we notice a group of women.

They include women who had gathered around Jesus.

Mark tells us they traveled with Jesus and disciples
when he was in Galilee, ministering to him,

Which probably means making sure this bunch of men
ate and dressed decently.

It is not surprising it included the mothers of some of them,
the wife of Zebedee, mother of disciples James and John,
Mary, mother of the other James and of Joses.

Other Mary's too, Mary Magdalene, & Mary wife of Clopas.
Maybe they called themselves the Mary guild.

They helped Jesus and disciples, apparently helped with burial
and we find them there again at the empty tomb.

But we find them now gathered around yet another Mary,
the mother of Jesus.

Here is a picture of compassion.

We can joke about women always doing things together
but here we see what a good thing that is.

As Jesus dies on the cross, anyone can imagine,
how his mother, who is watching is suffering with him.

Roman Catholic church even teaches that this also
makes her our redeemer along with him.

This is going too far but compassion is suffering with.

So her friends in turn suffer along with her and this is a comfort.

The old saying is true, a joy shared is doubled
and a burden shared is cut in half.

As the mocking of those around Jesus surely
added to his suffering,

The caring presence of friends reduces it.

There are many ways friends can help each other,
but sometimes there is nothing you can do but just be there
even with nothing to say.

But this is not nothing. This is important comfort.

Paul writes in text we can comfort those in any affliction
with the comfort we have received
especially the comfort we have received from God.

JESUS TAKES ON OUR SUFFERING FOR US

⁵ For as we share abundantly in Christ's sufferings, so through Christ
we share abundantly in comfort too.

The sharing in Christ's sufferings Paul is talking about
is not just feeling with him
but actual sufferings of our own that may come from
being believers in him, taking up our cross & following.

But we must confess that the greater share of our sufferings
and difficulties in life do not come from how we follow him
but from how we fail to follow him, our faults and sins.

This is why Jesus came to share in our suffering.

There is no more compassionate friend than Jesus.

We have considered before how he is understanding.

Because of his life experiences as a man,
he knows exactly how we feel in every trouble.

Because of his great love for us, he feels with us.

When he wept at tomb of his friend Lazarus,
we know he felt miserable about what sin & death does.

More than simply feeling with us, Jesus experienced
actual suffering along with us: hunger, humiliation,
beatings, crucifixion, exhaustion and death.

But Jesus is able to help us in an even greater way
than only feeling and suffering with us.

Jesus suffered instead of us, in our place.

His cry about being forsaken on the cross shows us
he experienced the separation from the Father
that is caused by sin which cannot touch holiness,
like positive poles of two magnets that repel each other.

He took this in our place so that no human will ever
be totally alone in time of suffering but will have one
who is always with us whenever we suffer,
one with compassion to comfort us.

Jesus experienced this passion because he was able
to take on himself all of our sin, including its
shame and guilt and punishment,
and so take all of these away from us.

It is because of this taking our suffering on himself that...

JESUS SHARES WITH US HIS COMFORT

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affliction,

When Jesus cries "Why have you forsaken me?"

he is quoting the title line of Psalm 22, which goes on
to picture more that happened to him on the cross,
including his enemies surrounding & ridiculing him
and gambling for his clothing

but ends by affirming that God does hear
and come and help and rescue and restore.
Which means Jesus knew what was coming in the end,
which would have comforted him.
Jesus now comforts us in all our affliction
with the same comfort with which he was comforted.
This includes the confidence that God is merciful
not only to Jesus but to those who do not deserve it
because he is gracious for Jesus' sake.
God hears our prayers and cares for us,
even when it may feel to us he is nowhere to be found.
and is answering them before we realize it.
No matter what the devil and his friends manage to do,
he has already been defeated and cannot win
and his taunts & accusations, though they seem to sting,
are full of lies
and can never be made to stick on us
when we are repentant and forgiven.
God calls us his beloved children and makes it true
by giving us faith in Jesus through his word & baptism.
Letter to Hebrews says Jesus endured the cross & its shame
for the sake of the joy set before him in the resurrection,
not only the joy of being with his Father again
but the joy of having us there with him.
He comforts us with this same comfort in all our troubles,
not only being a compassionate friend beside us now
but also the hope of being with him as he celebrates
our being beside him in heaven.
Jesus is a friend who's great compassion, suffering with us,
gives us the greatest of comfort.

FRIENDS COMFORT BY SHARING SUFFERING

as we see the women with Mary doing at the cross.

JESUS TAKES ON OUR SUFFERING FOR US,

not just feeling and suffering with us but in our place.
to take away the suffering our sins deserve.

JESUS SHARES WITH US HIS COMFORT,

he shares his Father's love and constant presence now
and the joyful hope of the resurrection forever.