



Monday Musing: April 14, 2025.
Death...

From time to time when Karen and I hike on Fridays, we come across tent villages where people live in the forest because they have no homes. We try to offer respect and privacy by taking another path. From time to time, we also come across places where people have taken it upon themselves to make a fire, and sometimes even, as you can see in this picture, make a shelter by stripping the trees of their bark, leaving the trees to stand naked and dying as the people sit below enjoying their fast food and beer.

It is so very sad. So very greedy. And so wrong.

Taking the life of the beautiful trees that offer shelter and comfort by the side of the river is wrong. It is against the commandment, isn't it? Thou shalt not kill. Or was it thou shalt not murder? Still, it is to take a life needlessly, recklessly, selfishly. Isn't it?

Last Friday we came across a lovely spot by the river where someone (s) had made a bench of branches and tied them together to make a sturdy seat. There were the remnants and ashes of a fire and garbage left behind in the middle of nowhere. But the shelter of stripped bark really bothered me. To take the life of something so beautiful, the trees, stripping them of their clothing, their warmth, their life, for the sake of a temporary time of selfish shelter!?! On public land. In a natural forest.

How often is this what humans do? Take. Build. Disregard boundaries. Needlessly. Selfishly. Kill. To take the life or take the spirit from another, either way, there is death. An unnatural death. What harm were the trees doing? In what way were the trees taking from those who walked this path?

We're now entering Holy Week. This is Jesus' last week. And his life will end like that of the trees as the bark of his body and his mind and his soul are stripped from him. What harm was he doing? In what way was he taking from those who walked in his time? He will hang exposed on a cross as the bare trees stand exposed to the elements, to the world. For what purpose but to satisfy greed, power, authority, and what? Jealousy? Envy?

Jesus wasn't the only one crucified by the Romans. Some historians estimate the Romans crucified over 100,000 people for various reasons against the empire - insurrectionists and thieves. Jesus' crucifixion was calculated, facilitated by the Jewish Sanhedrin, not all the Jews, no. Many of the Jews were his followers. Jesus was Jewish. But like the others the Romans crucified, those crucified were hung to die as the trees

stripped of their bark are left to die suspended amidst the intertwined branches of the trees surrounding them.

This week we enter the last days of Jesus' life, told differently in the four gospels. It is useful to compare them. Ultimately, Jesus dies. Thursday night this week, we will gather for a Maundy Thursday service to remember Jesus' last meal with his friends. And we'll remember Jesus' saying, "Love one another as I have loved you."

On Friday morning, we will gather again for our Good Friday service. We will remember Jesus' death on the cross, and how and why it happened. We will also remember how we continue to harm and take the life of one another – and the trees. We are not more violent than those in the first century. We're just better at it.

Through our faith story of Jesus' death, the aching in our own souls for the harm we humans caused to Jesus, cause to each other and to the planet, the forest and the trees, we will pray for healing from our ugliness, that there will be an Easter morn.

And there will be. It will be our chance to begin again. As Easter morning is broken, our hearts have the chance to break open with love and pour God's grace upon the world.

May we know peace behind our faith story this week. May we know peace Easter morn.
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Prayer

Holy God of the Lenten journey, and of Easter arrival,
Walk with us this week, as you walked with Jesus in his week.
May our eyes see the wrongs then, and now.
May our ears hear the suffering then, and now.
May our hearts know the hope then, and now.
By your Spirit's presence, then and now, fill us with love. Amen.

Scripture this Week

John 18:1 – 20:18 Jesus' arrest through to the empty tomb.

TR Question (theological reflection)

Where was God through Jesus' last week? What does the empty tomb reveal? For you, why was Jesus killed? And what about the trees?