

**The way of powerlessness**  
**Gospel Text: Luke 22:14-23:56**  
**Epistle: Philippians 2:5-11**  
*Rev. Sharon Smith*

**Objective:** To reflect on the way of Jesus to the cross. A way that embraces the complexity of being human. A way where there is power in powerlessness and transformation in surrender.

Friends, we are on our way.  
On our way once again, walking with Jesus the Christ toward Jerusalem.

We follow Jesus on this way each year to learn what it means to be fully human, fully alive. Jesus is the prototype of a life lived in all complexity and weakness, a life where human experience is the path of transformation. (Richard Rohr, Universal Christ)

We are on our way.

We follow Jesus into complexity.  
A way that seemed to be the way of Royalty. And yet it leads to a relinquishment of power.

This complexity Jesus faces resonates with us - our lives and our relationships:

- A local struggle, where the disciples were collecting their swords to arm themselves against the threat of betrayal.
  - Oh how I construct my defensive words against those who I perceive as a threat. A neighbour who refuses to make space for my parked car, a friend who doesn't invite me to a function, a family member who doesn't phone.
- A religious struggle, where the institutional rules no longer seem to give life.
  - Oh how I find a growing separation between my inner spiritual life and the bureaucracy of the church.
- A national political tension, where Herod (supposedly looking after the Jewish Nation) and Pilate (Roman Governor) become friends...
  - Who can we support politically, who will really care for the human without a family, without a job, without a home?

---

As Jesus encounters these complexities:

He prays: "Abba, if you are willing, remove this cup from me; yet, not my will but yours be done." It is an act of weakness. Of powerlessness. Of giving up. Of surrender.

Rob Des Cotes - A Vancouver Contemplative Environmentalist writes:

Jesus acknowledges his wish that the occasion for his suffering would be removed. Tension was in the air. And like any of us confronted by unwanted circumstances he prays that it go away.

And then there is an inner move. Jesus tables his preference. He defers his right to a good life. "Yet not as I will, but as you will." As disagreeable as it is to his human nature, he surrenders.

Jesus' prayer evolves from one that expresses his natural and understandable aversion of suffering to one that now prepares him to face what is before him. It is a prayer that now seeks the grace to endure what cannot be changed.

The life of Jesus is interwoven with defeat and death, and not simply death, but a humiliating public execution reserved for the worst criminals.

John Caputo writes that the core of our faith lies in it being a seeming weak force. The weak force of God embodied in the broken body on the cross, in a mysterious power that exists in powerlessness.

By surrendering to this way, Jesus offers:

- a power that rises up from innocent suffering and calls out against it,
- a power that says no to unjust suffering, and
- a power to suffer with others.

(John Caputo, *The Weakness of God: A theology of the event*).

As Richard Rohr says in his latest book: When God loves things, God becomes them.

(Richard Rohr, *The Universal Christ*)

---

The way of Jesus - puts us in a place where we can see a mirror of ourselves and each other.

For when we find ourselves in a corner. And we have tried everything and hit our heads against the proverbial wall or 2 by 4 or both.

There comes a time to surrender and walk the way that bids to us.

- For me it's saying yes to life in North Vancouver when my family lives on the other side of the world
- For you it might be the daunting next thing at work
- Or a family conversation that needs to happen so that things will change
- Or facing the consequences of aging or the progression of a disease.

With each act of surrender to the life that is before us to live, we walk not alone but in solidarity with each other. We are the broken body of Christ.

And together we pray to seek the grace to endure what cannot be changed.

"Abba, Mother, Creator God, if you are willing, remove this cup from me; yet, not my will but yours be done."

Amen