

He Was One of Us

The Easter season provided quite a journey, starting with a 46-day time of preparation, Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, the Last Supper, the crucifixion on Good Friday and the jubilant Easter Sunday proclamation "He is Risen." Each part of the season was rich with its teachings about Jesus' impact on our lives.

At our church the Good Friday tradition is for each member of the congregation to hammer a nail into a large wooden cross. It was painful to me to hear the echoing sound of the nails being driven into that cross, because I understood both the symbolism and reality that one of those nails was mine.

One verse I often had difficulty understanding is when Jesus said from the cross, "*My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?*" (Matthew 27:46).

At first glance I wondered if Jesus had second thoughts of His mission to die on the cross. At the time he was in great pain, nailed to the cross while people below mocked Him. Even though the time was 3 PM it was totally dark and eerie. Jesus says this as He experienced torture in a fully human condition. Bible scholars tell us it was not a cry for help but a prayer for all peoples.



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Just before He died Jesus said he was thirsty – another human reaction to the torture and dehydration He was enduring. During the time of his trial and beatings he refused all drink. Until he said He was thirsty he had nothing to drink since the Last Supper in the Upper Room, when He said: *For I tell you I will not drink again from the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes* (Luke 22:18). So, like any human, He was thirsty. But now His kingdom had come.

Why is His humanness important? All his earthly life Jesus was subjected to the temptations and emotions of this world, yet He never gave in. He wept as He grieved along with Lazarus' sisters, Martha and Mary, because He suffers when we suffer (John 11:35). He was hungry in the wilderness (Matthew 4:2). He was angry in the temple (John 2:15). He was sleepy in the boat on the Sea of Galilee (Mark 4:38). God certainly knows the enormity of human pain. His son endured 39 lashes, a piercing crown of thorns, iron spikes driven through his hands and feet and the torture of hanging on the cross for three hours. Because of this, we can trust He understands us and what we are going through during the trials of our life.

In short, Jesus has been where you are and can relate to how you feel. Yet, He does not look down on our problems and shortcomings. Listen to this verse from Hebrews 4:15-16: *For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin. Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.*

Fast forward to today. When we need help we consult with people who have experienced and conquered the issues we face. For example, some of the most effective drug counselors are former addicts who have overcome their addiction. If you have never experienced something how can you truly see things from someone else's perspective? Perhaps you have overcome challenges and can help others deal with similar issues. Parenting is another great example because you understand what your children are going through. Rely on your faith for strength and guidance. Eleanor Roosevelt said, "Caring comes from being able to put yourself in the position of the other person." Jesus can do that because He has walked in our shoes.

Jesus is the best confidant because of his understanding, forgiveness and guidance. Jesus has been there for you and always will be. He has the perfect answer to whatever you face. *If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you* (James 1:5). Did you catch the phrase, "without finding fault?" Jesus starts with forgiveness so that we are free to move on with our lives, without remorse. And then, He shows us the direction we should go for the future. You can trust Him with your life because He gave His life for you and experienced what you are going through. He can do this because He was one of us.

Question: How often do you go to God to help you sort through an issue in your life?

Prayer: Most gracious, Heavenly Father. You sent your son, Jesus, to live among us, to experience the pain and temptations we face every day. You understand what issues we face, and forgive us for the mistakes we make. And then, You help us to make better decisions and lead a better life. We know we can trust You for the right guidance. Amen.