

Friends of the Center

A Journey of Surrender and Obedience

“Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me; yet, not my will but yours be done.” Luke 22:42 (NRSV)

Holy Week is the climax of Jesus’ journey toward the cross and our remembrance of Easter. I have always looked forward to Holy Week. In Haiti, the academic calendar followed the church calendar; therefore, Holy Week was a break period from school, and I know very few kids who don’t enjoy holidays! Growing up in a Christian household, the importance of these holy days was not lost on us. Every Maundy Thursday, our local church hosted a half-day prayer and fasting service. Good Friday service was a three-hour long solemn worship time, from noon until 3:00pm, with seven homilies highlighting the seven statements uttered by Jesus while he was on the cross. Easter Sunday began with a sunrise service on the beach with baptism and a procession through town back to the church building where the faithful gather in worship to celebrate the risen Christ. All these habits and liturgies created a sense of awe and reverence around the event of Christ’s passion and resurrection. As I grew older, I also grew in my understanding of the deeper meaning of Holy Week for our lives as Christians.

Holy Week marks the culmination of a journey of surrender and obedience. In the incarnation, Jesus surrendered all and journeyed among us in complete obedience to the Father. In Paul’s letter to the Philippians, the Apostle paints a perfect picture of this reality. Philippians 2:6-8 reads,

*...[T]hough he was in the form of God,
did not regard equality with God
as something to be exploited,
but emptied himself,
taking the form of a slave,
being born in human likeness.
And being found in human form,
he humbled himself
and became obedient to the point of death—
even death on a cross.*

It was a journey fraught with challenges. The Gospel of Luke provides a window into the struggle that Jesus faced. *“In his anguish he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down on the ground”* (Luke 22:44, NRSV). The story also uses language that is reminiscent of Jesus’ temptation in the wilderness, following his baptism. At the end of Jesus’ temptation in the wilderness, Luke tells us, *“When the*



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devil had finished every test, he departed from him until an opportune time” (Luke 4:13, NRSV). The Gospel of Matthew adds another important detail, “*Then the devil left him, and suddenly angels came and waited on him*” (Matthew 4:11, NRSV). The presence of the angels in the garden to strengthen and care for him as he struggles with the implications of his journey toward the cross suggests that Jesus may have just overcome another instance of temptation. There in the garden, he may have wrestled with the temptation to not experience the humiliation and shame associated with the cross, the temptation to find a solution of his own design, and the temptation to use the power and authority available to him to care for himself. Instead, he demonstrated his complete trust in and reliance on God and his will.

Not my will, but yours be done is a constant reminder that in the face of the greatest challenges, the most disorienting uncertainties, and the most humiliating circumstances, we serve a God who stands ready to care for us and deliver us, when we surrender to his plan and live in obedience to his will, his good and perfect will. I look forward to Holy week, because Jesus’ example gives me the resolve to be obedient in the face of life’s toughest tests.

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