

Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church



Weekly Sermon Series

Destruction and Death

We were preparing the church sanctuary for the season of Lent. A man from our congregation volunteered to create a rough-hewn cross to be placed in the sanctuary. It would be the symbol of Christ's crucifixion as part of our Lenten reflections. That was our intent.

But let's be honest. The cross is really a gory thing to contemplate. It took three centuries before Christians could embrace the cross as a symbol of faith. The memory of the brutality of Roman crucifixions had to fade before such an instrument of torture could become the symbol it is today. Through centuries of religious rituals and art portraying the crucifixion of Christ, we have become desensitized to the



horror of crucifixion. It has become, for most of us, a religious story that we compartmentalize. Our daily lives are separate from the reality of crucifixion. That is why the day we chose to bring this rough-hewn cross into the sanctuary became an unforgettable experience. As we carried the cross into the church that early afternoon, the sun grew strangely dim. It was shaded by the moon in a solar eclipse, which we hadn't anticipated. The strange, dim light from the partial eclipse filled the sanctuary as we lifted that cross. It was in that moment that the connection of crucifixion to the whole of creation became real for me. Luke says that, at the crucifixion of Jesus, darkness covered the land. Sunlight failed. Even the veil in the temple was torn. Grief and sorrow were felt throughout creation.

The sun grew dark as we carried the cross in the middle of that day. It was a startling, unusual experience. I will never be able to think of Christ's crucifixion without I will never be able to think of Christ's crucifixion without also remembering the day the sun darkened while we carried that cross into church. What memories or experiences have made Jesus' death on the cross real for you? What have you felt while contemplating Jesus' death?

According to Luke 23:48, "when all the crowds who had gathered there for this spectacle saw what had taken place, they returned home, beating their breasts." Have you experienced something in your life that left you "beating your breast" in grief and despair? Tell your story. You are not alone.

In the hour of suffering and death, we cry out. All your children cry out! Creation groans in sorrow. Destruction and death are all around. Lord, have mercy. Christ, have Mercy. Lord, have mercy. Amen.

-- Week of March 28, 2010