

Crossing Over to Loving Kindness

*“Crossing Over... We are Christ’s
Passion!”*

Jeremiah 23:1-6; Luke 23:33-43

November 21, 2021

This is the time of year: an invitation to let
go, let go of fear.

As the leaves’ true colors appear, the
trees bare themselves with no regret. No
regret. And we come to understand
something marvelous of ourselves and life’s
eternal cycles. So much more life is
possible....*yet!*

So much more is possible, even in these
times in which we feel we are falling
apart, falling down, falling over, falling
for the wrong stuff. If we fall hard
enough, we may just get to that place
within where we have no choice but
to...

fall to our knees. Our truer selves laid
open, calling us to cross over...cross
over into kindness even though the
world invites us to withdraw, defend,
deny, react.

Calling us to cross over the great divide
between what “is” and what “is yet”
possible.

Crossing over into loving kindness...of
self, others, this gorgeous world of
ours...just as we are, they are, the world
is. Ripe with possibility!

We are to embody loving kindness and
trust in the “more”. And boldly! There
is nothing timid about autumn. Its
daring trusts that which is needed most
will come.

We let go of our fears...facing the world
with kindness instead of anger,
discouragement, hopelessness, or a
well-planned defense.
If not now, when?

What connotations...both positive and
negative...does the notion of Christ as king
have for you?

It wasn’t until I sang in a gospel choir about
a decade ago that I could even begin to
tolerate such a notion. It was through the
eyes of Negro spiritualists who use very
authoritarian, patriarchal, king laden/warrior
laden language that

**I began to see the power of that language
for those oppressed or depressed...and
truly, that...what I need most, too...is
what Christ has the power to do for
me/with me.**

We know through our Biblical studies that
Jesus intentionally uses the language of
empire and turns its meaning upside down.
A direct threat to empire in all its
forms...how threatening? We have Easter.

The notion of Christ’s reign is a radical
reassertion of Christ’s “right” kingship.
Yes...strong, mighty, redeeming, outlasting
this day’s circumstances.

Justice at last...thank God almighty! Free to live in the new kingdom where Christ's reign brings unexpected power to my life...and yours and justice to the world!

So, I ask you again, in a new way, what does the notion of Christ as king hold for you?

What can Christ's reign as King in your life do for you that no other king, no other person, no other "thing" could ever do?

...as John the Baptist is about to demonstrate for us, Christ can do with you what you cannot do for yourself!

And that's the good news! That's the real passion of Christ!

You are the passion of Christ!

Christ is passionate about YOU!

And together, you can do all things.

So, cross over! Step away from, and beyond, how you have restricted your own ways of thinking about yourself and God and life's possibilities

...restrictions which exist because you have (perhaps unknowingly) absorbed or misappropriated old language and concepts which deplete your energy and discourage you.

Restrictions in your thinking in which you use outdated versions of institutions, limiting possibilities for your future. Institutional thinking is always at least one generation behind current knowing, thinking.

And sometimes, it is you! You creating restrictions in your ways of thinking where you give in to your fear and doubt and use your own history, those old tapes, to hold you down and keep you in that old place from which you so long to be free!

We need to be sure we're not the ones doing the nailing!

It is time to cross over toward Advent! A time when something will be born in you that you never could have conceived of on your own!

If...only if...you have come to the place of deep trust and openness and able to lean into God's reign in your life.

For it is only from a safe place, a place within ourselves that we feel loved and supported, that we will be willing to look at ourselves again more deeply and find the courage to live in new ways...

albeit small new ways...little baby step ways...I wonder if that's why God chose to come amongst us to share his passion for us with us as a baby...baby steps are just fine!

Oh! Mel Gibson and so many movie makers got it wrong!
The point is not the suffering, it's the passion!

The point is not Christ's suffering but his passion for justice, righteousness, safety (the things Jeremiah foretells).

The point is not your suffering but your passion for your own life to be just, safe, and in right relationship!

At least one of those guys, one of the criminals hanging there with Jesus got it! **Life can be different if you see it differently!** ...if you are self-aware and own your own "stuff."

The only people who have answered prayers and happy lives
are the people who see they have answered prayers and happy lives.

The only ones set free from the circumstances and challenges of their lives are the ones who
take in the renewing power of passion
to see more clearly and live more fully...and cross over!

Will you see what that criminal hanging on the cross saw when he looked at himself and the three of them hanging there?

What he saw was what he had fallen for, how had fallen apart, fallen down, fallen over, fallen for the wrong stuff.

And so, he fell to his knees (figuratively speaking) before Jesus on that Cross. His truer self laid open, crossing over
when the world would have him
withdraw, defend, deny, react, manipulate.

What he saw in Jesus was someone who had devoted His life to seeing people as they could be and not giving in to despair, giving in to the "powers that be" that rob people of dignity and rights,

not giving in, giving up His integrity and passion for a just life.

Jesus didn't lose His life. He gained His integrity...true freedom.

Each one of us here knows what it feels like to get nailed for what we've done!

Do we have the courage, like that one, to see our part in that?

Do we have the courage to see it can be different for us?

Do we have the courage...to live in paradise?

Take a breath.

Jesus says, "God, forgive them. They know not what they do!" And God does...grace...do-overs for everyone...like the two beside Jesus.

And, in one sense that was so true, it was beyond their understanding and awareness...what they were really doing.

Yet, in a very real sense, they knew exactly what they were doing!

They knew better...we all know better than to crucify others for any reason, to cast lots to see who gets what at someone else's expense,

watching what is happening before our very eyes just standing there,
mocking those in need and daring them to save themselves.

Jesus wants us to know that you can't save yourself
and leave others hanging.

**As our focus encompasses what is integrous and just for all
vs. only for we. ourselves,
we move toward paradise...here and now.
Lord you hear our prayer!**

This is our story...it is still our story.
And God is still passionate about you!
And Jesus has been inviting us to live into that very passion.

In fact, you are a demonstration of Christ's passion!
...a living Christ presence!

You're here aren't you! Just being here shouts out into this secular world full of powerful, personal agendas that there is something more!

Your presence says, "I have belief enough in the reign of Christ in this world to let Christ begin to reign in my life..."

allowing me to get up out of my bed this Sunday morning, give of my time, give some real money,

**help some real people...and really be helped myself!
Christ's reign begins with me!**

The invitation is to take some of this passion and let it seep into new parts of who you are! The invitation is to let Advent happen in some new aspect of your life!

We have come full circle in the stories...full circle in our own story!

Next week...we live into the mystery.

We cross over into the living, mythological, archetypal stories of our faith...as the wondrous gift is given:

a way to resist and renew ourselves.
Our story is a story of healing and possibility.

If not now, when will you cross over?

Let us come on down and turn toward our God!