

Good Friday Lenten Meditation

Hello Friends! We shift to a different author for this Good Friday meditation. His name is Vince Amlin, Co-Pastor of Bethany United Church of Christ in Chicago and co-planter of Gilead Church Chicago. Vince is a member of the Still Speaking Writers Group and a contributor to the Still Speaking Daily Devotionals from our denomination. I share his thoughts with you from the United Church of Christ special Lenten Devotional *The Long Haul*.

Focus Verse

When Jesus knew that all was now finished, he said (in order to fulfill the scripture), "I am thirsty."...When Jesus has received the wine, he said, "It is finished." Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit. -John 19:28-30 (NRSV)

Reflection

In a small museum in Assisi hangs a crucifix from 1236 by Giunta Pisano. My guide had told me to look for it, because it's famous for being the first in Western Christianity to show Christ Suffering on the cross.

In 1236!

Images of Jesus in agony were well-known in the East, but before Pisano (for 1200 years!) Roman Christians looked at the cross and found a triumphant savior staring back at them.

Usually, I downplay John's version of the crucifixion. If you've never noticed, it's the one where Jesus is in charge. He gets to declare when things are finished. No one takes his spirit; he gives it up. Sure, he drinks sour wine but only to fulfill scripture. It's all a little too inhuman for me. I miss the crying out, "My God, why have you forsaken me?"

Instead, John gives me the God of the Universe, in control even from the cross.

Usually, I want a Jesus I can relate to. But today, I'm taking comfort in a Christ who is above it all.

Who is invulnerable to empire and unimpressed by human power. Who won't give the violent, hateful ones the satisfaction of raising his voice. Who is already looking toward the gates of Hell, ready to destroy them.

This Good Friday, I am looking up into the eyes of the triumphant one.

Sing (or say or think) the first verse of "Beneath the Cross of Jesus."

Beneath the cross of Jesus I gladly take my stand
the shadow of a mighty rock within a weary land,
a home within the wilderness, a rest upon the way,
from the burning of the noontide heat, and the burden of the day.

Prayer

Christ be my strength. Amen.