



A Corona of Thorns

LWF Good Friday Message

2020 by Antje Jackelén

He himself bore our sins in his body on the cross, so that, free from sins, we might live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed. For you were going astray like sheep, but now you have returned to the shepherd and guardian of your souls. 1 Peter 2:24-25



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Thank you, Peter, for this Christ hymn inspired by words from the prophet Isaiah! “By his wounds you have been healed.” Christ suffered for us!

Suffering is a reality in this world. Wherever there is life and creativity going on, there is also pain, struggle, suffering and death. That is the way it has been for millions of years. And God is right in it.

You know, Peter, today so many of us are affected by the suffering that the new corona virus is causing around the globe. Like the serpent-bitten people in the desert who lifted their eyes to the serpent of bronze that Moses had raised for their healing (Numbers 21), we are looking to Christ crucified and his corona, his crown of thorns, for the healing of the corona-stricken nations.

Sometimes, in retrospect, we can see meaning in our own suffering. At the same time, it remains notoriously difficult, and pastorally unwise, to define the meaning of someone else's suffering. Instead of telling other people what God's meaning with their suffering may be, we need to walk with them. Be their company, claim the healing that emanates from the wounds of Christ. So that we may live for righteousness and justice.

Also, Peter, in our days we keep learning more and more about the suffering of the earth. I know, the earth is not Jesus. Yet, the earth has wounds; many of those are caused by our sins. One could say that the earth bears our sins in its body like Jesus bore our sins in his body. Often, like Jesus, the earth does not return abuse, and does not threaten. Other times the earth strikes back and hits both users and abusers.

There is a difference, though: we believe that Jesus' wounds mean healing. The earth's wounds cannot heal us. They remind us of our own vulnerability and of the wounds that we inflict on others. The earth's wounds are wounds that cry out for our help to heal.

Our participation in healing wounds of the earth may, after all, prove to be participation in the healing God wants to share with us in Christ. If Jesus is our shepherd, we better do as much as we can to keep the pastures healthy, because without pastures there is not going to be any shepherding!

You know, Peter, for far too long have we ignored the connection between the pasture and the shepherd, between nature and salvation. But finally, we seem to be getting it!

Today, when we bow down before the cross and rise to look at our Savior and his corona of thorns, we realize that trusting Christ is to care for the ground that bears our steps. It is to care for the body we are, for the directions we take on life's walks, for our communities. To care for those who suffer and care for the ability to suffer in solidarity with them.

Peter, dare we claim that the cross is at the center of the universe, as God's embrace of the struggles of all there is? That God in Christ means healing not just for your and my personal sins, not just for the sufferings of humans, not just for the wounds of planet earth, but for all there is? The cross as the credibility of God's love!

God, who did not allow the injustice of the cross to persist, is certainly not pleased with suffering for suffering's sake. Rather God wants to be known by the outpouring of the Spirit of comfort and strength – to heal and celebrate life in abundance. Thanks, Peter, for a conversation that widens my views!

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