

Complete Trust

Each one of the Gospels gives us the story of the Passion, yet each one has details that put into focus a certain emphasis, a specific message the writer is trying to convey to his readers. In order to appreciate the differences and messages the four Gospels proclaim, the Church schedules the synoptic Passion Gospels to be read in rotation on Palm / Passion Sunday. This year, we are in the cycle of readings from Luke, so we just heard Luke's Passion narrative; next year will be Matthew; and the following year, Mark.

On Good Friday, we always read John's Passion Gospel. John was at the Cross with Mary. John was the beloved disciple. John wrote after the synoptics. John wrote to the Church. And over the years of hearing these four accounts, I have come to give each a one word description. For John, "power". John's account shows us the power of Jesus, the Son of God.

Matthew placed first in the New Testament, is all about "hope", hope for Jewish-Christians who have come to believe Jesus is the Messiah. For Mark, "mystery." There seems to be a questioning, a silence in Mark's account. For Luke, "trust." The account we just heard shows us Jesus' complete trust in God the Father.

The details St. Luke gives us in his account of The Passion show us Jesus' complete trust in God. This is the basis of faith – trust in God. We see this trust from the very start of Luke's Gospel with the birth narratives of Jesus and John the Baptist. We see this trust at our Lord's baptism and the start up of his ministry. Trusting in God completely leads Jesus to Jerusalem for the Passover. Jesus' last hours from the Garden where he is arrested to the cross where he dies, are marked by a complete trust in God.

Luke emphasizes Jesus trust in God first by telling us about Jesus praying. The Passion according to Luke begins with Jesus praying in the Garden and it ends with Jesus praying on the Cross. Jesus encourages his disciples to pray that they may not come into the time of trial. Jesus praying "in his anguish" with "sweat like great drops of blood," is contrasted with the disciples' inability to pray. They were all sleeping.

Jesus prays that God's will be done. His trust in God empowers Jesus to go through his arrest, the hours of questioning by the Jewish authorities, by Pilate, and, also according to Luke, Herod.

Before going to the Garden, Jesus tells Peter that he is praying for him. Jesus tells Peter, "Satan demanded to have you, that he may sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail; and when you have turned again, strengthen your brethren..." Even after his denials, Peter remembered Jesus prayer and he found strength.

Jesus' last words from the cross Luke tells us come from Psalm 31 verse 5 "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit." Psalm 31 is a prayer of trust. Jesus recalled this prayer of trust in the moments before he died. "In you O Lord have I taken refuge ... make haste to deliver me. ... Be my strong rock, a castle to keep me safe ... for you are my tower of strength ..."

Luke also shows us Jesus complete trust in God by the way healing comes through Jesus' Passion. Again for Luke, this starts in the Garden. Only Luke tells us that after one of the

disciples struck the slave of the high priest and cut off his ear during the arrest, Jesus touched his ear and healed him.

Luke is also the only one to report that Jesus looked at Peter after Peter denied knowing him three times. Peter must have been heartbroken at that moment. Yet three days later, Peter finds the strength to run to Jesus' tomb after the women discovered the empty tomb. Even after his denials, Peter found hope in Jesus' healing love.

So, too, Jesus witnesses to God's healing love with his words of forgiveness, mercy, and hope spoken from the cross. "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing." Forgive the disciples who run away. Forgive the Jewish authorities who accuse him of blasphemy. Forgive Pilate who accuses Jesus of treason. Forgive the crowd for demanding the release of Barabbas. Forgive the soldiers who nail him to the cross.

Some hours later Luke tells us Jesus offers this healing love to one of the criminals hanging beside him. He knows he has been condemned justly. He knows that this punishment is deserved. But, he also knows Jesus is innocent; Jesus has done nothing wrong. He asks Jesus to remember him in the Kingdom to come. Jesus replies "... today you will be with me in Paradise ...". And, so, healing, faith, trust is extended as Jesus' last act before breathing "his last."

The Passion according to St. Luke is an account of Jesus' complete trust in God. Trust comes in prayer and healing. Trust comes in faith and hope. Trust comes in forgiveness and mercy. Jesus is the innocent savior extending trust to all those who seek to know God even in the midst of suffering and at the time of death.

What will we have in our time of suffering, in our time of death? I pray we will have Jesus' Cross, Jesus' Passion, Jesus' trust, Jesus' prayer, Jesus' healing.