

Holy Saturday with Amy

Our faith is not here to teach us how to live contentedly in a sick world. That is religion that is cheap and death-dealing. Our faith calls us to liminal spaces, the in-between. We see, as disciples of Jesus, to find vistas previously unseen, both internally and externally. Holy Saturday is such an in-between time where we can hold such tensions as those which exist between death and resurrection. For this long Saturday was the day that the Christ lay in a darkened tomb, suspended between heaven and earth...

There are versions of Christianity that hold fast to a belief in a gladly crucified Christ who rises right on out of his tomb, lilies in hand, perfectly on time for church on Sunday morning. Church, I submit to you that that is not the kind of faith, this Sunday morning faith, that can meet the world we live in presently. Perhaps, it never was.

The present reality of our world demands of us a faith that reckons and wrestles faithfully and powerfully with the dark, still, Saturday of despair and longing. That long day of vigil when it seemed that hope had been lost for good and those evil intentions of a system of power-over would triumph over the healing and life-giving ministry of love and power-with. We must, friends, be willing to experience the pain of what Cornel West calls "the full-fledged death of God". This is the desolation that comes when we experience spiritual abandonment by any positive power in the universe. And that was the experience of those who loved and witnessed the Divine-Human One.

If we stand at the edge of Holy Saturday unwilling to enter into its solemn stillness and silence, reluctant to dive into the uncertainty and the pain, we cannot and will not have hearts prepared for the radical loving grace and joy of Easter. Joy unanchored is frivolous. Joy that springs from quiet and unexpected places of rupture without any entitlement, however, is a miracle. The foundations of what we believe impact how we interact with the world and what we experience and create. The depth of our faith, its texture and its tenacity are built up by becoming Holy Saturday kinda folks. Always looking toward Sunday, but never forgetting Friday's devastation. For those who have received all that our culture can offer in terms of safety, security, wealth, and social mobility---this may be hard to fathom. That is why this faith asks for our lives to be in solidarity with those who are meek and marginalised. Those who have been touched and changed by trauma. That is why we cannot look away from our saviour's body, dead in a tomb. We must fix our eyes upon it. That is what it means to seek justice and resist evil. It means we must not look away from the aches of our world. We must align our intentions and actions with the folks who have never been privy to an Easter Sunday kind of reality, those who have been, and who continue to be locked into Holy Saturday just waiting for the promise of resurrection to be fulfilled.

And for those who hear my voice now, those like me, who have felt trauma that mars one's humanity before ever allowing it to be deepened, know this: it is okay to look elsewhere, to avert your eyes from the tomb. Because for you, the tomb is as a gaping maw, an unhinged jaw within. It's darkness, ever so still and cold, cannot be forgotten when its chill lingers in your flesh.

For all of us, the hope of Easter is a blessing that we await each year. The resurrection assures us that love will always, always have the last word, no matter how dire things appear. And that if we find ourselves in the midst of strife and we haven't yet heard Joy's irrepressible song, well, it just isn't over yet. Love sings the final note. Even if small and fragile like the first birdsong notes of spring and not the orchestral overtures of a Sunday morning service. Love speaks last. Always.

That is the promise of Jesus. That is the significance of the resurrection. We enact resurrection here and now, not only by our willingness to ourselves be transformed but by our willingness to accept the spaces in-between hope and despair. We enact our Holy Saturday discipleship by entering into the paradox

where death has the quality of awakening fierce aliveness, freedom, sacredness, and awareness of Divine presence. We enact resurrection by having eyes to see it and the moral courage and deep faithfulness to never look away from what comes that long day and night before the dawn of the Light of the World.

May it be so. Amen.