

## How Are We Like Jesus?

03/18/18

I am comforted by Jesus' words today when He says, "I am troubled now." I'm comforted because even He, as the Son of God, was troubled in the face of His upcoming passion and death. You see, what we have today is John's version of the agony in the garden as presented by the other three evangelists. John says Jesus' hour was approaching, the hour He had been born for, the hour He had lived for.

The word Jesus used for being troubled was the one that described Him when He shared Martha's grief at the death of her brother Lazarus and the same word that depicted the churning of the waters of the pool of Siloam. Jesus was obviously deeply shaken and emotional.

There is a story told, and maybe you've heard it before, about a blind merchant selling his wares in the middle of a busy train station. All of a sudden a group of children bumped into his table and knocked much of his nicely stacked merchandise to the floor.

As the story goes, the merchant got down on his hands and knees in an attempt to retrieve his scattered goods. Another man, clearly in a hurry rounds the corner to see the sight-impaired merchant on the floor.

The man stops for a moment, looks at his watch, his expression indicating his dilemma: if he takes the time to help this young man, he will likely miss his train. With only a moment's hesitation, he drops his briefcase, gets down on the floor, and helps the merchant gather and re-stack his goods. When all is in order, and the man walks away, the merchant calls out after him: "Hey mister, are you Jesus?"

Karen Seaborn suggests this story is not actually true. But regardless, it could well be a modern-day parable. It comes to her mind each time she hears the Greeks say to Philip, as we just heard in the Gospel: "Sir, we would like to see Jesus."

What was it about the man that caused the merchant to ask him if he was Jesus? Was it the fact that he died to himself in order to help a man he did not know and who would never be able to repay him? Might it have been that this busy man loved the merchant more, in those few moments, than he loved his own life, sacrificing his travel plans for another?

Ms. Seaborn goes on to say that it was the Greeks who asked to see Jesus, Greeks who did not look or worship like the Jews. And then she wonders who the “Greeks” are who want to see Jesus today? The questions she asks are chilling.

Might they be living in the cellblock of a crowded prison? Perhaps they are a single-parent family receiving government aid or a drug addict living on the street? Might they be a family trying to find water and food on a dark night in San Juan? Are they refugees from a Muslim country, undocumented people from Mexico, or a couple in an unconventional marriage?

She concludes by wondering, that if we responded to these people today like the man responded to the blind merchant in the modern-day parable, if we, too, would come to see, like Jesus came to see in today’s Gospel, that “it was for this purpose that He came to this hour?”

In the reading from Jeremiah, God makes a covenant with the Israelites and He says it from a first-person perspective. I will make a new covenant. I will write it on their hearts. I will be their God. I will forgive their iniquity. I will no longer remember their sins. We are the new Israelites in the sense that God has made the same covenant with us.

Let me finish by asking you to consider how you would react to the merchant with the spilled merchandise. Would you stop like the man running to catch his train or would you simply pass him by?