

Reflection "A Time to Die"
Good Friday, March 30, 2018
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The title of the Meditation: "A Time to Die"

Let us pray: Good and Gracious God, for the meaning and mystery of this sad Friday, we give thanks and pray for understanding. May the words of my mouth and the meditations and thoughts of each of our hearts and minds be acceptable to you, our Strength and Redeemer. Amen.

The ancient preacher in Ecclesiastics proclaims, *"For everything there is a season and a time for every matter under the heavens...a time to be born and a time to die."*

Today, Christians around the world commemorate the death of the One whom we called *"Emmanuel"* at his birth which means *"God with us."* At the heart of our Christian faith is the affirmation that the One who created us joined us in our humanity...entering into the times and seasons of the life we know...participating in *"a time to be born"* and *"a time to die."* The Holy and Loving God who is limitless and boundless and whose ways are beyond our understanding chose to enter into our experience of a beginning and an end, of being a part of a community and being alone.

Five short days ago we gathered in worship to commemorate the symbolic entrance of Jesus into Jerusalem during the Passover festival. It was a joyous occasion, a celebration...*"a time to laugh and a time to dance"*. Those who welcomed him, who were weary from the demands of their lives and the injustices in their world saw a glimmer of hope in the compassion and fairness of this wise teacher.

Jesus listened to them, understood and loved them. Jesus communed with his friends in the Passover meal. They sang hymns and prayed together. It was *a time to embrace and a time to keep*. And then Jesus began his journey home alone... praying in the Garden of Gethsemane "for this cup to pass from him." ...it was *a time to refrain from embracing, a time to lose."*

One cannot help but be amazed at the self-confidence with which Jesus walks this way. It is not a smugness or self-assuredness, which often hints at arrogance or self-righteousness. No, Jesus of Nazareth had an inner peace and a humble conviction of who he was and who God called him to be. Jesus prays to God in the Garden and accepts this season in his life...it is for him *"a time to die."*

During this Holy Week we commemorate Jesus accepting his death, even embracing a cruel and unjust death. Jesus of Nazareth, Suffering Servant embraced and endured a sorrow and iniquity that was not his own. And somehow, by the grace of God, in Christ's suffering embrace, humanity is transformed, healed, restored and forgiven.

Then Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said, "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit." Having said this, he breathed his last. When the Roman officer overseeing the execution saw what had happened, he worshiped God and said, "Surely this man was innocent."

For each of us, there is *a time to be born and a time to die*, because of God's wondrous love in Christ Jesus, we can live with meaning and die with hope.
Amen.