

## The Garden

Today's story of the betrayal, arrest, torture and grisly death of our Lord begins not on a hot city sidewalk or in a cramped police cell block, but of all places, in a garden....

How odd is that?

Our story doesn't just begin in a garden, it ends in a garden too.

The secret followers of Jesus, those well connected religious leaders, Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea, who tenderly care for Our Lord's lifeless corpse, wrapping him in linen, anointing him with spice and oil, they put him to rest in a new tomb, in a garden.

Given the horrors of this day, the trumped up charges by the best legal and religious minds, all conspiring to murder the Son of God, the brutal whipping, the horror of crucifixion, the agonizing death, in the face of these tragedies, this image of a garden, weaving its way through today's events, is strange indeed.

This morning on the radio, a bishop of the Coptic Church in Egypt was talking about his concern that ISIS seeks not only to terrorize Christians in Egypt, but to actually wipe them out of existence.

This is the same church that suffered two horrific explosions this past Palm Sunday, where scores were killed and many more injured by suicide bombers in the middle of the mass.

The bishop was asked his reaction to these atrocities, and he replied that while the acts were indeed evil, those who carried them out are fellow human beings, broken like us all by the sin of this world, and of course he forgives them, prays for them, loves them...

...and with those words, one could almost see a garden blooming out of the bloodied pews and broken hearts of our sisters and brothers in that place.

It's reminiscent of the stories we shared last Sunday, about Charlie Roberts who shot so many young Amish girls in their classroom, and 22 year old Dylan Roof who, hoping to start a race war, killed 9 members of Emmanuel AME Church during a Bible Study.

These acts of hate and violence were not met in kind, but rather with Amish women visiting Charlie's widow, offering compassion, and Dylan Roof being met with words of forgiveness.

Out of senseless carnage, gardens begins to grow.

When St. John speaks of the glory of God, he's not talking about swooping down from the clouds and knocking out his enemies.

For St. John, the glory of God is Jesus hanging from the cross; giving his last, his all, so that we might at long last come to know that this is the only pathway to God; that self-interest and ego take us only to oblivion, but that somehow, for reasons we may never comprehend this side of the resurrection, it is self-giving, it is surrender, it is forgiveness, that allows us entry into the peace that is the kingdom of God.

In three days time, we shall find ourselves in another garden; a garden that holds a newly carved tomb, one which was once occupied but now is empty; and lo and behold, we shall meet the gardener, his name is Jesus.

Every human life brings pain or carnage or loss or confusion...every human life discovers its share of feeling utterly alone.

When those times come around in your life, remember this night ... remember the garden.

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