



The Gift of Emptiness (2/25/18)

Right after my son had gone, people asked me difficult questions: Are you still able to trust your God who took him away from you? Where is your God who promised to keep you safe from any danger, fear and even death? In a word, is your faith in God still valid?

Strange things happen. It is quite paradoxical that at the end of a tunnel of bottomless suffering and pain, I experienced love more vividly and the presence of God more deeply. Psalms 8:3-4: "When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, what is mankind that you are mindful of them, human beings that you care for them?" "Grace fills empty spaces but it can only enter where there is a void to receive it, and it is grace itself which make this void." (S. Weil)

Today's text displayed a tone of suffering and the affliction of Jesus: They brought Jesus to the place called Golgotha, Skull Place, and crucified two outlaws with him, right and left. People walking by insulted him, and said, "Ha! Save yourself and come down from that cross!" The chief priests and the legal experts were making fun of him together, "He saved others, but he can't save himself." At three, Jesus cried out with a loud shout, "My God, my God, why have you left me?" And He died.

Our dark wood in life can lead us into the living God and can be our greatest gift. That's why when we look at the Cross, the very worst thing that happened to Jesus becomes the power to be the very best thing for us. "There is a crack, a crack in everything. That's how the light gets in." (Song, Anthem) Our spiritual journey is about what we do with our pain and suffering. If we do not transform our pain and handle the pain well, then the pain will handle us and put us into endless anger, blame, projection, hatred, or scapegoating.

There are two ways of spiritual transformation: Prayer and suffering. When we consciously and slowly empty our ego, our self-righteousness, our specialness, and our sense of being important, only then can we sink into the love of God. The path of suffering is the quicker path to transformation, but it is very difficult for us to allow events, circumstances and people to touch our deep soul because sometimes it hurts deeply. For some people like me bankruptcy, moral failure, loss of job, health issues of ourselves and our family, and death of the beloved one force us to give up control.

Discussion Questions:

- 1. The path from fear to flow happens when we stop worrying about simple survival and take the risks to use our gifts. How do you think the gift of emptiness is related to an emptying of one's ego? What are some of your own best excuses for denying the invitations of the Spirit? What would you do if you were not afraid?*
- 2. Have you ever become aware of a power at work within yourself that is greater than you are?*
- 3. How did you endure many sleepless nights, jittering moment by moment, being in helplessness as you observe those painful moments? What kinds of changes did you have before and after experiencing your pain and suffering? What are those changes?*



United Methodist Church of Westford

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