

Mondays in Lent: A Journey that Follows Jesus, the Peaceful One

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The cross is an ugly and grotesque symbol of death, and yet as followers of Jesus, the Peaceful One, we are invited to “stand firm in the Lord” while utterly powerless as members of the community of Christ who profess peace and cry for justice.

The New Testament reading for the Second Sunday of Lent has invited us into imitation of Christ’s example:

Philippians 3:17-4:1 (NRSV)

Brothers and sisters, join in imitating me, and observe those who live according to the example you have in us. For many live as enemies of the cross of Christ; I have often told you of them, and now I tell you even with tears. Their end is destruction; their god is the belly; and their glory is in their shame; their minds are set on earthly things. But our citizenship is in heaven, and it is from there that we are expecting a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. He will transform the body of our humiliation so that it may be conformed to the body of his glory, by the power that also enables him to make all things subject to himself. Therefore, my brothers and sisters, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord in this way, my beloved.

Paul calls the readers of this letter, the Philippians, to join in imitating him and the example of others in Paul’s circle. He contrasts their way of living with those who live destructively, carnally, self-centeredly, and materialistically—the “enemies of the cross of Christ”. Many commentators on this passage call this a call to *cruciform living*, that is living a life shaped by the cross.

This cruciform living is focused on living life both in community with others and yet in the kin-dom of the divine. For Paul and the Philippians this is a life lived in expectation of the return of the Christ as Savior. A hoped-for transformation of our bodies and souls by heavenly power.

Paul’s call to “stand firm in the Lord in this way” reminds us that the way of the peaceful one is a way that is both peaceful and powerful. By choosing to live a life without violence, gluttony, egotism, and greed we instead choose a life of peace, satisfaction, community, and generosity. Our Lenten journey thus becomes defined by “this way.”

Community of Christ President Steve Veazey shared divine counsel with the church in 2007 that extends the same Lenten invitation:

Jesus Christ, the embodiment of God's shalom, invites all people to come and receive divine peace in the midst of the difficult questions and struggles of life. Follow Christ in the way that leads to God's peace and discover the blessings of all of the dimensions of salvation.

Thus called, we enter into a journey shaped by the cross that invites us to follow Jesus, the peaceful One.

(Glenn Johnson)