

Isaiah 25:6-9, Psalm 24, Revelation 21:1-6a, John 11:32-44

Jesus Cries with Us, Jesus Cries Out for Us

Last Sunday afternoon Jamie, Laurie, Phylis and I sitting at a large round table visited with Anna, Ashley, Alison (from Panama), Fatima (from Venezuela), three little people, and a faithful member of St. Christopher Episcopal Church.

St. Christopher is a sanctuary church in El Paso, Texas, a safe place for migrant people to live until they can travel on to a more permanent safe and caring community in which they could live and work and thrive. Many take dangerous and often illegal risks. Many are filled with great anxiety and uncertainty, exacerbated by antiquated immigration laws and processes that can mean months and even many years of waiting. Many are filled with fear both of countries they have fled and of our country because they know we are a deeply divided nation given to fear and even hatred of these aliens, these sojourners, these strangers.

But Sunday we all were in this safe and sacred place. Except for the little ones we introduced ourselves, shared little bits of our life stories, either in Spanish or English or both. All of us children of God, all of us on a journey, though for Alison and Fatima, a much more dangerous and harrowing one. We talked together, prayed together, sang a little together, ate a meal together, held babies (the best part!) and hugged one another...

A couple thousand years ago, Jesus too was on a dangerous journey. In John 11 we read of his crossing the Jordan River, going to Judea where he knowingly faced threats of stoning, persecution, and death. On the way there he received a message from beloved friends, Mary and Martha, that their brother Lazarus was ill. Jesus, the Son of God, knew that Lazarus' illness was terminal. In fact, Jesus knew, he had already died. Yet Jesus stayed where he was for two more days...

And then came the account from the Gospel of John for this All Saints Sunday. In it we learn what God is like when we suffer, when we die. We know what God, is like, revealed most fully to us in Jesus, when Bob and Joy and Walter and Dale and Chip and David, whom we remember this morning, died during this past year. Jesus, the Son of God, wept with and for their families and friends. Jesus cried with them.

Jamie and Laurie and Phylis and I spent five days with Border Servant Corps guides, mostly with Ashley, a young woman about to graduate from college and then after a gap year on to law school. With her we visited border patrol folk, spent time with “guests,” always these migrant people were called guests, in processing centers and shelters on both sides of the Rio Grande River, talked with criminal court Judge Ritter presiding over cases against those crossing the border between legal points of entry. Perhaps most moving for us was our visit with Amanda, a federal public defender. With all of them we could see Jesus. We could see Jesus “greatly disturbed” and crying with these guests and with those so committed to accompanying them on their journeys toward some semblance of mercy and justice.

We saw Jesus in Gracias, a feisty, self-proclaimed activist who is the shepherd of the shelter we visited in Juarez, Mexico. In, I think, more than a coincidence for us sojourners from Faith, Okemos, her call to this ministry came years ago when she mourned the killing of two LGBT people at the border. At times Gracias has provided a safe haven for as many as 370 guests in a clean but very dilapidated five-story building. Last Monday we prepared and served a meal for 60 men, women, and children currently living there. We saw Jesus in Gracias and in Cesi with us that day, who translated my mini-sermon proclaiming God’s watchful care for these his beloved children. Cesi walks step by step with guests when they are able to fly or take a bus from El Paso to a new home somewhere in our country. We saw Jesus in the guarded but gently smiling faces of these guests, perhaps especially in the faces of the children.

But the gospel for today is not only about people for whom and with whom Jesus wept, for Martha and Mary and their friends. It is that, Jesus, the Son of God, the incarnation of God, was also for them the resurrection and the life. Jesus was and is God making of death only a transitory experience. Jesus, the resurrection and the life, cried out, now not with tears, but with a loud voice, to a man dead for four stinky days, “Lazarus, come out!”

To Walter and Dale and Bob and Chip and Joy and David, Jesus said, perhaps more gently, “Come, dwell with me now in my Father’s house. There you be forever safe, forever free, forever whole, forever loved and in love with all the children of God from Michigan and Texas and Mexico and Panama and Venezuela, from

Sudan and Ghana and Mauritania, from Palestine and Lebanon and Israel, from Ukraine and Russia...”

On this All Saints Sunday remember. Remember that Jesus cries with you and Jesus cries out for you. Remember that Jesus cried with the family and friends of Joy, Chip, Dale, Walt, David, and Dale. Remember he wept for the LGBT people killed at the border. Remember he wept for those whose bodies were and are still to this day found in the deserts of Mexico, bodies of souls striving in desperate, vain attempts to find a better life in our country.

But remember too and above all that Jesus cried out for Lazarus to come out, to rise from death. Remember, as you come at his invitation to dine with him at the communion table this morning, that he suffered and died for you and that he rose again for you and for all whom we remember this day.

I think of these beautiful words from Romans 6: *Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Therefore, we have been buried with him by baptism into death so that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.*

Phylis and I, Laurie and Jamie, we did see Jesus at the border. With the eyes of faith, we see him here too, with our congregation in our worries, with us in our pain, with us in our losses. We see him here in the hearts of so many here who care deeply about each other and about strangers, about people on difficult journeys, people God has called us to walk with in love, to “walk in newness of life.” We see Jesus speaking through the work of the call committee, “crying out” to us to come out of any dark tombs of worry, of any paralyzing fears about the future well-being of our congregation. And, especially this week, may all of us see Jesus crying with us and crying out to us, “Come out of your dark tomb!”, no matter the outcome of the election on Tuesday.