

Mountain Sky Outlook  
Holy Week 2014

Sunday a man in Kansas kept an evil tradition alive. He attacked Jews for killing Jesus. Christians have blamed Jews for killing Jesus (known as Jewish “deicide”) since New Testament times. Throughout Christian history waves of anti-Semitism have erupted, especially during Holy Week. Two thousand died in France and Germany in 1096. Jews were expelled from Spain in 1492. Jews who wouldn’t convert to Christianity were drowned in Belarus in 1563. Pogroms in Greece, Poland, Russia, Germany during the last 200 years. And last Sunday, a shooting at a Jewish Community Center in Kansas.

There is a cruel irony that, though Frazier Glenn Cross was targeting Jews, the three who died were Christians. Fourteen-year-old Reat Underwood and his grandfather, William Corporon, members of United Methodist Church of the Resurrection, were two of the victims (<http://www.umc.org/news-and-media/united-methodists-killed-in-shooting-spree-at-jewish-centers>).

When Christians blame Jews for killing Jesus, it’s a way of avoiding facing our own fallen nature. It’s almost as if, at the end of 40 days of Lenten self-examination and repentance, we just can’t take it any longer and just have to lash out at *someone* to relieve us from the knowledge that we have “sinned and fallen short;” “erred and strayed like lost sheep. . . and there is no health in us.”

*Who was the guilty? Who brought this upon thee? Alas, my treason, Jesus, hath undone thee!  
‘Twas I, Lord Jesus, I it was denied thee; I crucified thee. UMH 289*



How can a Christian take judgment into his own hands?

How can a Christian look into the eyes of Jesus and fail to see the sufferings of the whole world – persecution of Jews; massacre of Indians; abuse of children; bullying kids that don’t fit in; stigmatizing of LGBTQ people; shootings in schools, theaters, army bases, homes? That Jesus doesn’t ask us to avenge his death, but to receive abundant life and to help others live fully?

How does a Christian miss the message that God’s love knows no bounds; that Jesus pursued outcasts to extend God’s grace?

How does a Christian turn love into hate? Mercy into punishment? Life into death?

We are both infinitely capable of evil and we can “be made perfect in love in this life.” We live somewhere between utter depravity and holiness. We all choose blessing or curse; life or death every day. And our choices are frighteningly powerful to heal or hurt. An occasional lost sheep who opens fire on unsuspecting innocents reminds us how powerful evil can be if we allow it to overtake us. Our choices either establish the Kingdom of God on earth, or they undermine it.

The reason we read our bibles, pray, worship, and sing the songs of faith, is *so that* we will grow in the knowledge and love of God in Jesus Christ, *so that* we can help God change the world to be a little more like heaven – for everybody.

The resurrection of Jesus reminds us that no matter how many people choose death over life, ALMIGHTY, EVERLASTING GOD won’t let the power of evil overcome the power of life. In the household of God’s grace, *LOVE WINS*. We live in this hope, cultivating in one another the virtues, sensitivities, and habits of the heart that will bless the people around us and the whole creation.

Thank you, Jesus, for your gift of love so strong it never holds back.

Thank you, church, for providing an environment where life-affirming love can grow.

Thank you, disciples of Christ, for putting yourselves in the path of the Holy Spirit to be washed and smoothed and shaped and sent by grace.

Christ will rise again and anew this Easter Sunday. And his glory will shine on those lives taken by hate this week, as God’s grace embraces all who struggle and die in vain.

Alleluia.



The Native American mask was a gift made by United Methodist artist, author and storyteller, Ray Buckley, whose heritage is Lakota/Tlingit/Scot. It is a depiction of Jesus as a Native American, wearing a crown of thorns. Soil from Wounded Knee and Sand Creek are worked into the clay. Photo by EJWStanovsky.