

Lenten Devotional April 2, 2021

Scripture

John 19:38-42

38 After these things, Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple of Jesus, though a secret one because of his fear of the Jews, asked Pilate to let him take away the body of Jesus. Pilate gave him permission; so he came and removed his body. 39 Nicodemus, who had at first come to Jesus by night, also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, weighing about a hundred pounds. 40 They took the body of Jesus and wrapped it with the spices in linen cloths, according to the burial custom of the Jews. 41 Now there was a garden in the place where he was crucified, and in the garden there was a new tomb in which no one had ever been laid. 42 And so, because it was the Jewish day of Preparation, and the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there.

Devotional

The Rev. Dr. Cynthia L. Parker '10

My husband was diagnosed with non-Hodgkins lymphoma when he was 29 years old. We had two beautiful daughters who were 5 and 3 and we'd just found out we were expecting our third child when the surgeon delivered the news. I'm sure the shock was evident on both our faces. Who expects to receive a diagnosis of cancer in their twenties? I'm embarrassed to admit that the first thought that came into my mind was a selfish one, "How would I take care of three kids if he died?" I threw myself into caring for my daughters, afraid to get too close to my husband, afraid of what the chemo might do to our unborn child, afraid of being a single parent, afraid of losing him. Fear makes us do crazy things, doesn't it?

Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus were afraid too. They were afraid of losing their positions of power, they were afraid of what people would say, they were afraid of what happens to people who follow Jesus. Fear makes us do crazy things, doesn't it?

But they show up-in spite of their fear. They show up and they care for Jesus' body and prepare him for burial with an abundance of spices-75 pounds worth-enough to bury 75 bodies! And we are the witnesses of the extravagant love that always seems to accompany Jesus. Abundance that fear cannot overcome. Abundance that even death cannot diminish! Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea's actions remind us that as beloved children of God, we are loved abundantly, in spite of our fear- even because of our fear.

My husband survived eight months of chemo, took a break from his treatment to be by my side when our third daughter was born, and finished with two more months of radiation treatments. He is still cancer free.

When I look back at that challenging, demanding, exhausting period of our lives, I realize we not only survived, we thrived- because of the abundance of God's love that we experienced through the love of our family, our friends, our children-even in the midst of our fears.

Prayer

Abundant God, thank you for *all* the ways we experience your extravagant love. Help us to remember, in spite of our fears, or because of them, you love us with an everlasting love. And all God's beloved children said, AMEN!