

2025 Good Friday

Last night I shared with those of you here that for months I have been meditating on an image—another person might call it a vision—that came to me, of Mary, Jesus’ mother, standing at the foot of the cross, and all she could see was his feet. Those mangled, bloody feet, violated by a big iron Roman nail. Feet that could no longer have held him up, even if he had somehow miraculously come down from the cross alive.

She was his mother, she had loved and tended those feet from the time he was an infant and she counted his tiny toes and tickled them, through childhood, when she scolded him for not washing them before he came in, or held one firmly as he squirmed so that she could dig a splinter out.

Now she stands at the cross and watches as the very life drains out of him. Can she still catch a whiff of the costly nard from just a few days ago? Or has it been overwhelmed by all the ugliness? Is she crying, or is she still numb from the shock and horror of what has happened to her sweet little Jesus boy?

There is no mention of her “pondering in her heart” about this one. She is there, standing witness to the agony and feeling completely powerless to do anything about it.

I take some comfort that she's not standing there alone.

Oh, not the disciples, no....They skedaddled as soon as things went bad. The text today tells us that it was the other women who stood with her: his mother's sister: Mary the wife of Clopas; Mary Magdalene. They didn't turn away or pretend it wasn't happening, pretend it would all go back to normal soon. What else could they do? They had nothing to lose—nothing worse than they were losing in that moment.

They stood and bore witness with her. They may not have been able to stop Empire's violent march over everything and everyone they loved. But they could bear witness to another way of being in this world. A way that is driven by love, not fear.

I suspect this image came to me, and has stayed with me, because every day feels like Good Friday right now. We watch in horror as hatred and violence and injustice flood our world like a tsunami wave. I know many of you feel as helpless as Mary must have felt that day, watching everything fall apart and wondering how could we let it get this far?

And what are we going to do about it?

I think we start by being like those women who stood there that day, rather than the disciples who went into hiding. We are called to bear witness to the truth.

I am so grateful for the ways in which many of you are doing just that—whether it's by standing on the side of the road holding up signs of resistance, or making phone calls to your representatives, or quietly developing and supporting systems that will provide help or safety to those who are most in danger.

Today calls us to bear witness, both by telling the truth about all the ways that evil seems to be winning, but also by standing firm in the assurance that love is stronger than death, and love will win.

Mary is standing at the foot of the cross. All she can see are his broken feet.

Will you stand with her?

Or will you run away?

Amen.