

FRIDAY, MAY 1
ACTS 9.1-20 | JOHN 6.52-59

“and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.” (John 6.51)

I want to forget about the way that he died.

Hanging on a cross. Feeling pain not his to feel. Looking like the victim of an old fashioned lynching. Searching for some other savior to stop it all.

It's brutal. It's crude. It's unseemly.

I want to let go of the cross.

Aren't the parables adequate? Revealing stories of mustard seeds, rediscovered coins and valuable pearls.

Aren't the love stories enough? Inspiring examples of prodigal fathers, self-aware mothers and good Samaritans.

I want Easter to be more like Christmas. More beauty and less blood. More wonder and less death. It's what Christ wanted. It's how he lived.

I want an inspiring story that I can tell children. I don't want to worry about what kinds of questions they might ask.

And, I want to stop talking about sacrifice. It sounds empty. Maybe even evil. Eating flesh. Drinking blood. It's not an altar. It's a table. God desires mercy, not sacrifice. Jesus said so.

But, sometimes I hear voices.

I hear the voices of the angry, vengeful psalmists, and I too fear the crowd.

I hear the voices of Abel, Isaac and Joseph, and I jump to my feet to defend their innocence.

I hear the voice of Job, and I shake my fist at the heavens to demand some proof.

I hear the voice of Martin Luther King, and I too have a dream.

I hear the voice of Jesus, and I know at once that I can never forget about the way that he died. It's what gives me life.

He wasn't the only one. There were others. There still are. They're all different in the same way. They can be taken with impunity. The law won't save them. Their guilt doesn't need any proof.

It's the cross that opens my ears. It carries those voices above the noise that those people always make.

And, it's the cross that won't let me forget what I heard. Even when there's a reason. There's always a reason, it seems. Always a cover story good enough.

No, I can never forget about the way that he died. It's what keeps me from turning the story of Jesus into just another fairy tale.

I can't forget about the way that he died. It's the only way that I can remember the way that he lived.

—The Rev. Canon George Maxwell