

In his letter to the Hebrews, the apostle Paul asserts that “we have one who in every respect has been tested as we are”.<sup>1</sup> He reminds us that Jesus has had to live through the trials and tribulations of this world, just as we have. This past Sunday, I invited us to walk alongside Jesus in his grief and sorrow. What I realized as I meditated on our gospel for today is that this story doesn’t just hold the grief of death (which is an immense grief on its own), but holds many other types of human grief. Grief that we also experience in our day-to-day lives.

We begin with the grief of betrayal. Judas, who was one of the chosen twelve, hands Jesus over to the authorities. Judas had walked with Jesus, eaten with Jesus, prayed with Jesus, laughed with Jesus. To be betrayed by a friend is a deep grief. And woven in this betrayal is another hidden grief. The grief of disappointed expectations. Why did Judas betray Jesus? Perhaps it was because Jesus wasn’t living up to the expectation of the Messiah that Judas had imagined. Judas’ grief controls his actions in ways that lead to other and deeper griefs.

Jesus is betrayed and the police come to take him away. In that moment, Peter turns his fear into aggression, and cuts off the ear of the high priest’s slave. Here we see the grief of physical violence – which will be perpetuated on Jesus’

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<sup>1</sup> (Hebrews 4:14-16)

own body. And it is a grief that doesn't just effect those physically hurt, but everyone around. It traumatizes those who witness it, even Jesus.

The grief continues. As Jesus is being questioned by the high priest and Pontius Pilate, he is met with the grief of denial. Because not one of his disciples come forward to defend him. Not Peter, who verbally denies Jesus three times. And not any of the disciples who deny him in their inaction.

And then comes the grief of being misunderstood, of not being seen. The high priest and Pilate stand before Jesus, they question him, they try to provoke him. But they never truly see him. They see him as a threat, or a subject, but not as a human being. Jesus answers their questions deep truth, but they still do not understand.

And then the grief of lost hope. There were several times when things could have played out differently and they didn't. Pilate, as a state official, could have released Jesus. And when he doesn't do so with his authority, Pilate offers to the crowd the opportunity to release Jesus. But the fervor of the mob releases the bandit Barabbas instead of Jesus. That door was closed. Death kept every closer.

And then, in his final moments, wrought with physical pain, Jesus is presented with yet another deep grief – the knowledge that his actions have caused pain to his mother, who watches him from the foot of the cross

Jesus tries to relieve this pain – he names another disciple as her son, and she as his mother. But, as any parent knows, this would have been small consolation to Mary. Jesus had to watch his loved ones experience his death. Their grief was one that would remain.

The grief of betrayal. The grief of disappointment. The grief of physical violence. The grief of denial. The grief of misunderstanding. The grief of lost hope. The grief of physical pain. The grief of causing pain to another. The grief of death.

We know these griefs, because they are not just a part of Jesus' story, but of our own. We know the griefs: betrayals of our trust; when we don't get that job we wanted; when our point of view hasn't been heard; when our bodies ache with illness or age; when we see the ways in which our actions have hurt the ones we love; when violence against the innocent erupts daily in our country and our communities; when our beloved friend or family member dies; when we acknowledge the reality of our own death. Betrayal, disappointment, violence, denial, misunderstanding, lost hope, pain caused and pain received, death. We know these griefs.

Our lives are full of them.

But we can have hope in the reminder that God knows our griefs intimately, because God has experienced them all in Jesus. And while this doesn't mean that

they will be alleviated, it does mean that we are never alone in them. We don't have to suffer on our own because Jesus too has suffered in this world. And so, as we come up upon our own griefs in the coming days, and months, and years, let us always remember that we can hold them before God, making an offering of even these most painful parts of our lives.