

The Stations of the Cross and the Beatitudes, Week 5 2021ⁱ
Monday Mar 15th - Sunday Mar 21st

Beatitude Five: “Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.”

Jesus was merciful but didn’t receive mercy. He forgave the people who were about to kill him, but they killed him anyway. Yet we are still haunted by his assertion of the possibility of a world in which mercy works both ways.

Indeed, how can there be any hope of mercy at all, if we don’t take the risk of offering it even in seemingly hopeless situations? **Compassion (arohanui) is not sentiment but is making justice and doing works of MERCY (Atawhai).** – Matthew Fox, *A Spirituality Named Compassion*

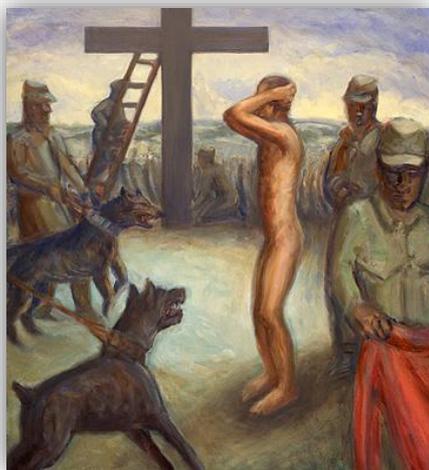
The people of Israel in Jesus’ time were seething with anger at what had become of their country. Insults were added to their injuries every day as the Romans and their Jewish collaborators rode roughshod on their traditions. No wonder, then, that the Zealots and other terrorist groups sought to end the occupation by force.



In this milieu, Jesus preached mercy and peace and humility. Two millennia later, in a world that for many people is no less brutalizing, this Beatitude still calls us to an alternative way of being.

Station Nine: Jesus falls a third time.

Jesus kept falling on his way to Golgotha, in total contradiction to the triumph that greeted him when he came into Jerusalem on the day we celebrate as Palm Sunday. Some of the same people who cheered his rise into fame were now howling at him in derision as he dropped to the ground. The same person who looked like the “king of the Jews” a week before now looked like a common criminal.



Station Ten: The soldiers strip Jesus of his garments and draw lots to determine which one gets his clothing.

The Roman soldiers who executed Jesus played a game of chance to decide which of them would get his garments. They left him naked on the cross. Nakedness is shameful today, but it was much more shameful in that culture at that time.

Questions:

- i) If you substitute the word compassion (Arohanui) for mercy (Atawhai), how does this beatitude change for you?
- ii) How have others shown mercy – forgiveness and patience – to you?
- iii) How have you shown mercy to others?
- iv) Who needs your mercy, and can you offer it to them?
- v) Has your self-concept ever changed due to a loss or change of roles?
- vi) Who are you, apart from your appearance, status, etc?
- vii) What is most basic about who you are?
- viii) If everything external fell away, who would you be?
- ix) When have you felt “naked”, figuratively speaking?
- x) When have you felt far too exposed to others? What was it like?
- xi) What do you have to hide from yourself, from others, and from God? What would it be like for those hidden things within you to be exposed completely?

Meditation on your Lenten Action:

Where do you find resonance, meaning, and inspiration in these Stations, and in this Beatitude, in the course of your work of service or advocacy so far?

Artistic expression:

Turn a box into a “die”, with “dots” for the numbers one through six on each side. Make the “dots” out of drawings or magazine cut-out images representing people or things that need mercy – forgiveness, reconciliation, and care.

Peace to you and yours

Colin

ⁱ Recommended books to accompany this Lent study: adapted from [James Burklo](#)

Jesus: Uncovering the Life, Teachings, and Relevance of a Religious Revolutionary (Paperback)

by Marcus J. Borg (Harper One, 2008)

Campaign Boot Camp: Basic Training for Future Leaders (Paperback)

by Christine Pelosi (Polipoint Press, 2007)

The Last Week: A Day-by-Day Account of Jesus's Final Week in Jerusalem (Hardcover)

by Marcus J. Borg, John Dominic Crossan (Harper One, 2006)

Jesus: A New Vision by Marcus Borg (Harper One, 1991)

The Five Gospels: The search for the authentic words of Jesus, by the Jesus Seminar (Polebridge Press, 1993)