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Good Friday Reflection

I am excited to share about our Cohort DC trip, our Sabbath retreat, and the way God is moving through young leaders in Detroit. But today, as we commemorate the day Christ died, these are the thoughts on my mind:



Many of us raised in white Christian traditions go to great lengths--from Passion plays to Tenebrae services to silent meditation--to feel the weight of Christ's crucifixion on Good Friday.

Particularly within our churches, the Good Friday service is the heaviest of the year. And I love that weighty feeling: the gravitas, the candles, the darkness.

But in these services, we rarely talk about Christ crucified *today*, and we need to. Golgotha is the underfunded high school 17 minutes away designed by a prison architect. That centurion's sword is wielded with the dexterity of the second amendment. The lots thrown for Jesus' garments are 26.7% predatory loans.

The familiar Black spiritual, "Were You There," guides us as we consider Christ's crucifixion today:

Were you there when they crucified my Lord?

Oh, were you there when they crucified my Lord?

Oh, sometimes it causes me to tremble. Tremble

If the trembling of Mahalia Jackson's rendition of "[Were you There](#)" sounds a lot like Billie Holliday's "strange fruit swinging from the poplar trees," it's because they were both written about lynching.

As recent as the 1950s, white mobs took photos, souvenirs, and their own children to watch the hanging of mostly African-American men, while the State and the white church looked on. “The South is crucifying Christ again,” Countee Cullen prophesies in 1921: “Calvary in Palestine, extending down to me and mine, was but the first leaf in line, of trees on which a man would swing.”

As we pastors evoke the weight of Christ crucified 2,000 years ago at Golgotha, we also remember that we crucify Christ every day.

Christ is crucified when police dogs—first introduced to catch runaway slaves—help grow our ‘America First’ policy on incarceration rates. (We lead the world in incarceration, as did the Roman Empire)

Christ is crucified when the Florida board of education rejects Good Friday by making lynching, slavery, and theft of indigenous land mere footnotes in our textbooks (We echo this instruction when we keep our kids away from the ‘bad part of town’)

Christ is crucified when we watch guards stroll casually away from a US-funded detention center as it catches fire and kills 39 of the “least of these.” (We shrug, echoing the high priests at Christ’s execution: ‘We have a law, and according to that law they must not cross’ - John 19:7, adapted).

Christ is crucified today. If we knew the weight of each life extinguished on this Good Friday, Tenebrae would live in our hearts. If we remembered and if we preached and if we sang about Christ crucified today—resurrection morning might not just bring an Easter egg hunt, trumpets, and a finely-crafted sermon, but true liberation: Christ raised, captives set free, good news for the poor.

In lament and hope,

Pastor Nathan



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