

“Still Bleeding”

This week, I have received email notifications throughout each day recounting the events of Holy Week. The purpose is to make the events of the Passion feel immediate. We can float through Holy Week preoccupied by work, problems, the news, tiny distractions, or monumental ones. Then, as if by surprise, it is Good Friday.

While we might not go to church to observe Good Friday, it is a marker that we had better get ready for Easter. We must head to the grocery store. We need to prep the food for Sunday dinner. We need to make the all-important bunny cake. Others make last-minute dinner reservations if there are any to be had. We must get the Easter baskets ready and make sure the new dress has the tags removed and the new dress shirt is pressed. Don't forget to wash the car. We don't want to show up at church in a dirty car on Easter. You know the drill. There are so many preparations, none of which have anything to do with the crucifixion or the resurrection. It is part of the celebration, but the celebration of what?

The little text reminders of the events of Holy Week may not seem like much, but they did keep me grounded in the events as they unfolded this week. The microwave might be broken, but Jesus' entry into Jerusalem is more important. I need to prepare service bulletins, but Jesus is cleansing the Temple. I'm wondering when will the flowers arrive, but the disciples must find the upper room for the Passover. Are my vestments cleaned and pressed, but Jesus is praying in Gethsemane. Could I have stayed awake with him for just one hour?

One of my favorite poems is by Marie Howe. It is an evocative poem with an engaging title. She focuses on how what is in the present is not particularly new. The title is “You Think This Happened Only Once and Long Ago.” The crucifixion of Jesus did not happen only once and long ago. If we read those text messages as current events, we can experience Holy Week in the present.

In the novel *Jayber Crow* by Wendell Berry, a character who is a Vietnam Vet wonders about Jesus. Specifically, he wonders why Jesus did not come down from the cross if he had the power to do so. He concludes:

“I thought, [Jesus] must forebear to reveal his power and glory by presenting himself as himself, and must be present only in the ordinary miracle of the existence of his creatures. Those who wish to see him must see him in the poor, the hungry, the hurt, the wordless creatures, the groaning and travailing beautiful world.”[\[1\]](#)

We think the events of Holy Week happened only once and long ago. However, Christ is crucified every day. He is crucified every time someone utters a racial slur. Christ is crucified when a girl is assaulted for going to school in Afghanistan. Christ is crucified when Muslims are attacked by Hindus in India. Christ is crucified when nations go to war, and children are slaughtered in Israel, Iran, Somalia, Ukraine, or any other place

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Good Friday, Year A
Noon
April 3, 2026

in the world. Christ was crucified when Christians were slaughtering Muslims during the crusades. Christ was crucified when Christians slaughtered Christians in Ireland, France and Switzerland over who owned Christ. Christ was crucified when millions of Jews and other “undesirables” were murdered by the Nazis.

The crucifixion is present in every hateful and fearful act, large and small. Which is “why God grieves, and Christ’s wounds are still bleeding.”^[2]

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^[1] Wendell Berry, *Jayber Crow* [Brooklyn: Counterpoint, 2001]

^[2] Ibid