

In the name of God, Creator, Redeemer, and Renewing Spirit. Amen.

The story of this day told in Mark's Gospel is so compelling that it needs little commentary. We're seeing the collapse of a movement; we're seeing the extinguishing of hope. We're seeing the violent, fearful response of earthly power when it was faced with heavenly justice.

Those threatened by the life and teaching of Jesus have found the means to silence him; to stop him from teaching the people about the kind of community God has envisioned for God's children; a community not defined by power structures that make religion an arm of the state, or that build wealth on the backs of many for the benefit of a few. Love God and love your neighbor, Jesus has taught; drive out those unclean spirits that diminish your own humanity and harm your community; heal those who are broken; feed those who are hungry; understand that God brings into God's loving embrace all humanity, Jew and Gentile, male and female, slave and free. Live a different Way; a Way that promises true and eternal life, not a false life based on possessions and power. Love God; love your neighbor; do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly before your God.

Those threatened by the life and teaching of Jesus believe that death will silence him; that death will scatter his followers and end his movement; that death is their weapon to wield against this man who would take their power away. But they have left love, God's love, out of their calculations.

Jesus has shown us God's love; Jesus is not self-serving; Jesus does not demand his own way over and above any concern for others; Jesus is open to seeing the other, the outcast, the stranger, as his own family; all who did the will of God were his brothers, sisters, father and mother. Jesus embodied God's vision of what it means to be a human family, a communion saints, a communion of forgiven and redeemed sinners. Jesus showed us God's vision of a love that reached beyond all barriers to make us whole; and with Jesus' crucifixion, it looks as if that vision has gone into darkness.

Let's take some time this evening, and tomorrow and really think about how much we believe in the strength and the reach of God's love. Let's take time to really think how much we embody the strength and reach of God's love. Jesus went to the ultimate length, to death itself, to make manifest God's invitation into a renewed relationship with God; not one based on

keeping the law, but on the basis of doing the hard work of loving one another. God became human and walked among us in Jesus; God became human and submitted to torture and death on the cross because God saw in us the image in which we were created, and the unfulfilled glory of what we could be, if we turned away from our own fears and greed and returned to God in humility to receive mercy and forgiveness.

The sun went dark; the curtain of the Temple was torn in two; Jesus was laid in a tomb; the possibility of a new kingdom seemed to have ended. The authorities could return to their constant, anxious, and loveless vigil over the power and influence they possessed; Jesus' followers could return to their place in the structure of Roman occupation, hoping and working for their daily bread. Everything, they thought, had gone back to normal. And there were probably many who were relieved that everything had gone back to normal. But *normal* wasn't *right*. The sky, the earth, the women watching all knew that normal wasn't *right*. And tonight, and tomorrow we can wait with the disciples, thinking about normal and right; the power of death and the power of love; and the undefeatable, undeniable, unexpected and shocking will of God. Amen.