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Lent: The Suffering Centurion

Shirley Folkerts

Dordt College, shirley.folkerts@dordt.edu

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Lent: The Suffering Centurion

Abstract

"Most of us will do anything to avoid suffering. We take medication to ward off even the slightest bit of pain. We arrange our lives around ease and comfort, as if these are the hallmarks of a faithful life."

Posting about the centurion's encounter with Jesus from *In All Things* - an online hub committed to the claim that the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ has implications for the entire world.

<http://inallthings.org/lent-the-suffering-centurion/>

Keywords

In All Things, Lent, life, Holy Cross, suffering

Disciplines

Christianity

Comments

In All Things is a publication of the [Andreas Center for Reformed Scholarship and Service at Dordt College](#).

Lent: The Suffering Centurion

 [all in allthings.org/lent-the-suffering-centurion/](https://allthings.org/lent-the-suffering-centurion/)

Shirley Folkerts

This is post #8 of 8 in the series “*Lenten Reflections*”

And when the centurion, who stood there in front of Jesus, saw how he died, he said, “Surely this man was the Son of God.” Mark 15:39

In the last 24 hours of Jesus’ life, one of his disciples betrayed him. Another one disowned him in the courtyard. Most of his followers, who had lauded him just a few days earlier, are nowhere to be found as Jesus hangs on the cross. Everyone had deserted him except for a small band of women watching the terrible scene from a distance.

The centurion carrying out the execution stands face to face with Jesus and when he looks suffering in the face, he sees divinity.¹ He was with Jesus as he suffered. I imagine that at some point following this “day at the office”, the centurion, too, found himself suffering. I imagine that he remembered Jesus and this memory somehow gave him strength and hope.

Most of us will do anything to avoid suffering. We take medication to ward off even the slightest bit of pain. We arrange our lives around ease and comfort, as if these are the hallmarks of a faithful life.

But maybe suffering is the very place where we get a deeper glimpse of God. I am not suggesting we avoid needed medications and treatments. I am reminding us that when it comes, suffering unites us with Christ. If we are united with him in his suffering, we will, one day, be united with him in his rising (Philippians 3:10-11).

A friend asked me once, “Where have you seen God lately?” Without a second thought, I heard myself answer, “In the room where my brother-in-law is dying from brain cancer.”

I attended a recent meeting where various people talked about things going on in their churches. Some of the reports told of growth and new programs, but one man stood up and reported with sad honesty that there were only elderly people left in his church to celebrate their one hundredth anniversary. The rustling papers in the room grew silent and in that moment, to me, God’s presence was more recognizable than at any other time that evening.

As we stand with the centurion at the cross today, may we see Jesus in our own suffering and recognize him as the living, loving, resurrected Son of God.

Footnotes

1. There is some debate around the meaning of the centurion’s statement. If we step into the Roman

world of the man who uttered these words, we learn that Caesar Augustus preferred himself to be known as “son of god.” The NIV First-Century Study Bible notes that the translation of his statement from Greek to English could rightly be read either “the Son of God,” or “a son of god.” With his statement, the Roman soldier may have been putting Jesus on the same level as Caesar, which in itself is a dangerous move since anyone who challenged Caesar’s rule was in deep trouble. Alternately, the soldier may have been acknowledging Jesus as the Son of God in the same way Christians do today. Either way the centurion may have been at risk of losing his life because of his statement. ↩