

Emptied

“Rather, He (Jesus) emptied Himself, taking on the form of a slave....” In Philippians 2:7, Jesus seems to ready Himself for His Passion by allowing Himself to be stripped of His Godly-self and be made strictly human, at that time. He seems to have given up the power to save Himself from the cross, from backing out, especially at the garden of Gethsemane, when He says to His Father, “...but not as I will, but as Your will be done.”

This “giving up” represents Jesus’ willingness to let go—let go of His divinity to stand before His Father and allow the forces of evil to do what they will do. It is curious that the Father allows these evil forces to get the best of His Son. But don’t we feel this way when difficult challenges, and even evil, come our way? Have you ever wondered why God would allow evil to have its way in our lives or the lives of those around us?

This is one of the great mysteries of God and one that may never be explained. The odd thing is that we can pray and pray that this or that be a part (or not a part) of our lives, and sometimes the answer comes back as “yes,” and sometimes it comes back as “no.” The temptation is to feel that God is being unjust when we don’t get what we want.

Have you ever heard someone say “It was the will of God” when someone you know and love is killed in a car accident or dies from cancer? They are NOT saved from peril. But it is my belief that God did not foist death upon them, or will them to die. It just happened. And in a broken world we live in, “it just happened” happens a lot. It is not that God doesn’t care. Sometimes, people ARE miraculously healed or kept from danger. This is God’s Mystery at work. One never knows when God will pull out all the stops and simply heal someone, or prevent a deathly calamity. Either way, when the unfortunate happens, or when it does not happen, through a miracle, we may end up saying “WHY ME?”—either in disbelief of a misfortune, or of joy of a miracle.

This “WHY ME?” is probably one of the most “human” responses ever uttered, one of the most common, and one of the most expected. We may wonder if we were selected for a tragedy or even a miracle—it all seems so unbelievable, at the time. One “advantage” Jesus had was that He KNEW He was going to die a miserable death, yet he had the *peaceful patience* to go on living His life with Grace and persistence—even as He headed toward Jerusalem and His doom.

I wonder sometimes how Jesus “kept it together” at the Last Supper, when His end was near. I would probably not have been able to eat a thing or utter a single wise and blessed word such as He did (e.g., “This is my body, which will be given up for you.”). I guess this begs the question as to WHEN Jesus “emptied Himself” and potentially gave up His Godly powers. Was it after the Last Supper; was it in the garden of Gethsemane? We will never know.

Yet, we do know that we have a loving God who binds Himself to us, even when the unthinkable happens. He always will and always has loved us, as we are, right here, right now. So, no matter what happens to us in our lives, we can be assured that the love of God and the Grace of Jesus are within us—ever-present and ever-evident. We ARE God’s children. God is Mystery. We pray for good things to happen. And even though we live in a broken world, we also live in the Kingdom of Heaven; for, as Jesus said in His first proclamation of the Gospel after coming forth from the desert, “The Kingdom of God is at hand!”

It has been said that paradox is one of the most evident symbols of true spirituality. And I believe it!

by Rich Melcher