

DEVOTIONAL THOUGHTS *Pastor Cory*

Do you ever wonder how you would have responded at Jesus' crucifixion? I once had an opportunity to confront that question head on at a retreat some time ago. What started as a moment of fun down-time was quickly interrupted when some of the leaders burst in through a side door in the room. One was carrying a cross, the others shouting taunts and commands at him. I assumed the man was meant to represent Jesus, but they never said anything. It all happened so fast. I was unsure of what to do. Before I knew it, they were gone. No explanation was offered.

That was strange enough, but then it happened a second time. Should I say something? This was obviously a drama, but it felt real... How would the leaders at this retreat even respond if I interrupted?

A little while later there was a lull in our time together and I noticed that there were similar cues to the last two times this drama had occurred. I scanned the side doors and saw one closed but with a light and moving shadows on the other side. This was my time to act.

They burst out once more - Jesus with his cross - the others yelling and mocking. I feebly attempted an intimidating response, "Hey, stop! What are you doing to him!?" They took no notice of me. I tried to break through to get close to Jesus and ask if he needed help. He simply stared forward, resolute. Before I knew it, we were all crowded in a tiny doorway, and the scene was obviously over. I sheepishly walked back to my group, and we moved on to the next event item.

I was unsure what to feel. I had done something, but it had not made any difference whatsoever. I don't really know what I was expecting. But I definitely wasn't expecting *that*. I felt helpless and hopeless. And in that I felt like I gained new insight to what all Jesus' disciples felt: ashamed, disillusioned, embarrassed...and simply powerless.

What does this mean for us?

In the midst of their failure - *our* failure - Jesus remained resolute. In the midst of mocking, he responded with grace and compassion to the criminal who displayed faith (Luke 23:43). In his final breaths, he surrendered his spirit with a quote from the Psalms, "Into your hands I commit my spirit" (Psalm 31:5). Psalm 31 is actually not a song of surrender, but a song of hope and trust for deliverance.

The hope of the Gospel reveals that Jesus is strong where we are weak. Jesus takes the tools meant for death and transforms them into our salvation. Still more, Jesus takes powerless, ashamed disciples like us and equips them for bold ministry through the power of the Holy Spirit.

The question is not how you would have responded then. That does not matter. The question is how you will respond now. When you feel powerless today, will you be paralyzed by despair, or place your trust in God and His deliverance no matter how dark the circumstances may seem?