

## Responding to God's Wonderful Love

When I read about the passion of Christ, I experience an overwhelming sense of discomfort, unworthiness, and sorrow. I am reminded that Jesus experienced human pain, suffering, desolation, brokenness, and loss throughout his lifetime on earth. At the end, he was despised, humiliated, and rejected, even by some he had trusted. Although others were present at his crucifixion, I wonder about the depth of isolation that he experienced on the cross.

When I read about the arrest, betrayal, and crucifixion of Christ, I remember a hymn that we sang on Good Friday in a church that I attended in California:

*When Jesus wept, the falling tear  
In mercy flowed beyond all bound.  
When Jesus groaned, a trembling fear  
Seized all the guilty world around.* (William Billings, 1770)

I am part of the guilty world, and I am uneasy. As a flawed human being, I waste time on things that aren't truly important. I worry, I judge, and I am critical of myself and others. I am decidedly unworthy of the gift of salvation for which Christ paid the ultimate price.

However, as others despised, rejected, and tortured him, Jesus was steadfast in the purpose for which he came into this world. When I read his words, "My kingdom is not of this world (John 18:36)," I am reminded that the kingdom of God is the truth. Despite my unworthiness, the kingdom of God is for me. God's kingdom is for everyone that I encounter throughout life's journey, whether our relationships are joyful, troubled, or difficult. The story of Christ's betrayal, arrest, and crucifixion leads me to ask questions about how we live and work together at our university.

- How do we live out the passion story as we engage with one another on the UIW campus?
- How do we fulfill our responsibility to foster academic excellence and serve the community within the finite realities of time, resources, patience, and human ability?

- How do we achieve optimal balance between high expectations and a sense of understanding, mercy, and grace?

As I struggle with the questions above, it helps me to remember that I am responsible to do the best job that I can do - for our students and for our community. It is not my responsibility to fix everything or to judge. My contributions, as well as the gifts of others, ultimately come from God. Despite my unease and discomfort, I am reminded of another hymn:

*What wondrous love is this,  
That caused the Lord of bliss,  
To bear the dreadful curse,  
For my soul, for my soul,  
To bear the dreadful curse for my soul.*  
(lyrics attributed to Alexander Means)

God's wondrous love is for me - and for all people. Although God's wondrous love surpasses our human understanding, we are freed through Christ to accept it.

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