



## Peters Green News Sheet Issue No: 55

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PASSION SUNDAY

‘Passion Sunday’. It’s an odd name, isn’t it!

We tend to use the word ‘passionate’ as referring to a lover. ‘He was very passionate’. How, then, can it apply to Jesus’ last days of life, his arrest, his trial, his torture and his execution?

OK. This is where I show off my schoolboy Latin. The word ‘passion’ comes from the Latin word ‘patio, patire, passi, passum’, which means ‘to suffer’. And the word ‘to suffer’ has two meanings, both of them important for this. Obviously, we use the word ‘to suffer’ to refer to pain, or anguish. In the hymn ‘There is a green hill far away’, it says

‘We may not know, we cannot tell  
What pain he had to bear,  
But we believe it was for us  
He hung and suffered there.’

Jesus was in agony; huge pain and grief, so suffering is a good description. But the word ‘suffer’ means something else as well. Do you remember when people brought children to Jesus and the disciples tried to stop them? In the King James version of the Bible, what does Jesus say? ‘Suffer the little children to come unto me, for of such are the Kingdom of Heaven’ ‘Suffer the little children’.

When I were a lad, I used to think that word very odd – I used to think that, somehow, Jesus was saying that the children should be punished, that they should suffer! But it’s simply an old-fashioned way of saying ‘Allow the little children to come to me.’

So our word ‘passion’, as well as meaning in anguish and pain, also means ‘allowing’ something to happen. Jesus **allowed** everything to happen that we remember over the next fortnight, all the indignity, the betrayal, the agony, the humiliation, the loneliness, the fear, the despair, the death. It was part of – it was a keystone – of his Father’s plan, and it was something that Jesus had to endure, had to suffer, had to allow.

Do you remember when Jesus was praying in the Garden of Gethsemane, he prayed ‘that the cup of suffering might pass him by’. He was afraid. He didn’t want to go through with it. And at that moment, he could have avoided it. He could have slipped away into the night, run away, escaped from all that was to come over the next day. But he didn’t. He allowed it to happen. He suffered it.

Why? Why did he do that? Why did God suffer his Son to die? Why did he allow his Son to be humiliated and exposed to a criminal's death?

'We believe it was for us  
He hung and suffered there.'

Another use of the word 'passion' that I have been musing on particularly over the past few days is the word 'Compassion'. A bit more showing off in Latin – the word 'Com', or 'Cum' means 'with', as in 'Company' which means 'bread with' – if you are in company, you are sharing bread with the other person. 'Comfort' means 'strength with', 'combine' means 'joining with' and so on. So 'compassion' means 'suffering (or allowing) with'. Jesus suffers with us. It's why we can say with confidence (there's another 'cum' word – confidence 'faith with') – that's why we can say with confidence that Jesus is with us in all our problems, our pain, our anguish. God, through Jesus has compassion on us. Whatever we are going through is nothing compared with what he has endured, and he did it for us, because of his compassion.

And so, where do we go with all that? If Jesus was and is compassionate towards us, we must follow him. We, too, must show compassion.

Compassion is something you can develop with practice. It involves two things: intention and action. Intention is simply opening your heart to others, and action is what you do about it. If Mark had simply had sympathy, that's good, but not enough. It was only when he did something about it that he made a difference.

You remember the story of the Good Samaritan. That stranger had compassion for the man who had been assaulted. He didn't pass by on the other side. He did something about it.

So practice acts of kindness each day and you will dramatically change your life. You'll remove the hurt and pain you feel on bad days. These kind acts don't need to be expensive. Even simple gestures can make a difference. Focus on being kind to others to help take the focus off of your own pain and suffering. You won't believe how helping other people can improve your own daily struggles.

As we work our way out of the pandemic, we have a great opportunity to do acts of random kindness – helping each other, simply by talking and listening, encouraging, praying. There are so many simple and wonderful little things that can make someone's day and the difference between despair and hope. Simply smiling and greeting, giving a compliment or a word of encouragement. There are lots of ideas on-line. Simply google 'Random acts of kindness' and you'll find hundreds of great, little ideas that will transform someone's day from despair to hope, from sadness to joy. It's called compassion.

Amen

Andy Morton

There is a green hill far away,  
Without a city wall,  
Where the dear Lord was crucified,  
Who died to save us all.

We may not know, we cannot tell,  
What pains he had to bear;  
But we believe it was for us  
He hung and suffered there.

He died that we might be forgiven,  
He died to make us good,  
That we might go at last to heaven,  
Saved by his precious blood.

