

## Who Are You?



*"and every tongue should confess  
that Jesus Christ is Lord,  
to the glory of God the Father" (Philippians 2:11)*

By these words, we declare who Jesus is. He is the Lord God. Who emptied himself, became human, humble, obedient. Even unto death on the cross. Therefore, God highly exalted him so that at his name every knee should bend. And so we wave palms and sing: *"All glory, laud and honor to thee, Redeemer, King."*

Yes. We declare in word and song who Jesus is. The question is, who are we?

The Passion is not just about Jesus. It's also about how the passions of many others intersect with his. There are the volatile crowds swelling Jerusalem for the festival. The chief priests. The scribes. Simon the leper. The woman pouring costly ointment over Jesus' head. Those who scolded her for such reckless extravagance. The poor, always with us. The proclaimers of the good news across the whole world. Those who hear it. And Judas. In ten verses Mark names ten actors representing countless thousands. Each with their own stories. Their passions. All connected to Jesus' Passion.

Do you find yourself among these characters? Where is your passion? I'm here today, so I'm certainly a hearer of the good news. I'm even a proclaimer of it. But is my passion, what really matters to me, tied up with the Jesus we sing about? Sometimes, I wonder if I'm just one of the crowd, immersed in my own daily concerns and passions, reacting to Jesus like he's part of the news cycle.

There are many more actors caught up in the Passion. There's the disciples, especially Peter. The man with the jar of water. The owner of the house. The slave who lost an ear. What was going on for him that night? A certain young man, who some postulate was actually St. Mark. The lying witnesses. Pilate. Barabbas. The accusing servant girl. Simon of Cyrene, and his children Alexander and Rufus. The bandits. The taunter with the sponge of sour wine. Guards and soldiers. The centurion. Mary Magdalene and Mary and her children. Joseph of Arimathea. What are their parts in the Passion story? How do their passions connect with his?

Maybe you see yourself among these actors. I've always been drawn to that young man. There I am, on the edge of the action, strangely attracted to Jesus. Yet so frightened at getting called out by the crowd that when challenged, I drop everything and flee shivering into the cold of night. If that really was Mark, then I am indeed hopeful for my own salvation.

Even the props play parts in the Passion. The expensive nard. A furnished upstairs room. The rough texture of bread and complex sweetness of wine. Gnarled olive trees in the shadows. Swords and clubs. A smoky courtyard fire. Torn clothes. A blindfold. A cock crowing. The crack of a whip and sharp thorns tearing flesh. The rough hewn cross. The cast lots. Drugged wine. Soured wine. A torn curtain. The silent, cold tomb hewn from rock. The stuff of Jesus' Passion provokes our senses, awakens our passion, pulling us more deeply into his.

Every actor in this story intersects with the Passion of Jesus. Intentionally or unwittingly, all play a role in Christ's agony and death. Even we listeners two thousand years on. Especially we listeners. Jesus is crucified on a cross that is the sum of all our stories, our passions, our foibles, our hopes and our dreams.

We can declare who Jesus is. We can sing about him. And we should. But if we really want to know Jesus, we need to join our story to his story. Bring our passions to his Passion. There is no better way to find yourself than to lose yourself in Jesus' own story. As Christ emptied himself to become like us, so must we empty ourselves to become like Christ.

This Holy Week, set aside some time to enter the Passion again. Each Gospel writer has their own twist to the story. Read your favorite, or perhaps one you're less familiar with. Enter the Passion in artistic interpretations of music, painting, poetry and film. Let the characters, their stories and passions, awaken your own. With grace, allow all you to join with all Christ is. Lose yourself in the great story of Christ's agony and death. Bring your heart to the cross. And find yourself in his resurrection.

May Christ's name be praised! Amen.