

When living in Calgary while going to school, I had a roommate who loved mountain climbing. He encouraged me to go to the climbing wall at the university and learn. So I did. It was good exercise, and I soon learned that I had ZERO fear of heights. More on that in a minute. So month by month, I got better at rope climbing and then free climbing – that is, climbing without ropes – and soon I was ready to head into the Rocky Mountains.

After several successful climbs, I decided to climb mount Baker, along the continental divide. This was going to be my best climb ever. Well, after I was $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way up the mountain, over 2.5km above the ground, one of my cams (these little gears that attach my rope to the mountain) came out. As it did, I started to fall. As I fell, several more cams were jerked loose and came out because the rock was unstable, and I fell further. Finally, a cam did it's job and held, and I stopped falling. I then smacked into the face of the mountain quite hard and was knocked unconscious.

I woke up hanging on the side of a mountain. Over 2000 metres off the ground. And realized that I had several broken ribs along with who knows what else. However, this was a solo climb. Nobody even knew I was out here except the ranger that I reported in with when I approached the divide. Either I climbed down myself, or I was going to die stuck here like a fly on a piece of flypaper.

Eventually I got down, however I passed out three or four more times on the way down from the pain. It took hours. Once down, I lay on the ground for more than 45 minutes or so, laughing in my head as I cried on the outside, asking God to take me home. He didn't answer in the way I wanted (he left me there) so I pulled myself up and very slowly hiked back to my Monte Carlo so that I could drive out of the park. It was pitch black by the time I got to the car. I made

it to Banff, and when I was checked out at their hospital, they shipped me to Calgary. Here’s another sad or funny part of the story, depending how you look at it. Once I got to the Emergency Room, the doctor actually started laughing. I’ve got cuts on my head and face, busted ribs, and I’m pretty sure I’ve done some damage to my back, and my doctor starts laughing—which doesn’t do a whole lot for your ego. It turns out that the doctor was someone I knew – the father of one of my friends, and he told me months before that climbing was reckless and dangerous. Obviously, he was right. This was the last time I climbed.

Then the kicker, and the one thing I remember ever so clearly was that he wanted to examine my head. I’ve got broken bones, and this doctor wants to examine my head. I’m not quite certain if he was worried about the distance I fell, or worried about why in the world I would do what I just did. Anyway, on that particular day, I had to have my entire head examined. Yes, a long story about a silly event. But isn’t that the truth about all of us? Don’t we in the midst of our brokenness sometimes need to have our heads examined?

After all, think for a moment about today. We started this morning with a song singing “All glory, laud and honor to your redeemer king, to whom the lips of children made sweet hosannas ring.” Then, then if we step back and read what happens over the next few days we find betrayal, denial, abandonment, and crucifixion.

Yes, we come to church. Maybe even study the Bible a little. For the most part claim to believe that Jesus is the Savior. We shout over and over again “Save us, Save us,” And God does—through this holy of holiest weeks—we call it the Passion of Jesus Christ! God’s passionate love for me—for you!

If people only had the slightest idea what happened some two thousand years ago during this week the churches would be packed today, jammed to gills on Maundy Thursday, overflowing on Good Friday, and standing room only at the Easter Vigil. Next Sunday you would have to leave for service one hour early simply because of the traffic, and finding a place to park would be nightmare.

However, we all know good and well that will not be the case. Why? Is it because we just don't know the story? Or is it simply because we need our heads examined?

Well I can't do anything about your heads, but I can do something about the story part.

Jesus has just spent the better part of 3 years teaching through words and action what the Kingdom of God should look like—where the sick are healed, bones are mended, demons are driven out, hungry crowds are fed, forgiveness is offered to the unforgivable, love is shown to the unlovable and the dead are raised. And now today this king on a donkey rides into Jerusalem knowingly riding to his death.

This coming Thursday, we celebrate this Lamb of God giving us a new commandment—that what Maundy means in Latin—a new command. To love God and love one another, sharing with us his body, his blood, washing his disciple's feet, so you and I may be willing and able to continue the work of Jesus in the world, sharing what the Kingdom of God should look like, now through our words and action.

Yet on this very same night, Jesus is betrayed by his own disciple for 30 pieces of silver. Denied by his closest friend. Abandoned by every one of his followers. He is dragged away as a

criminal for committing no crime. This silent innocent king stands in front of earthly powers where he is beaten, spat upon, and found guilty.

Then on Good Friday the Son of God will have a crown of thrones placed on his head, nails driven into his hands and feet and crucified—executed for me—for you!

You see, if we truly owned this passionate story in our hearts and minds it would not only have to make a huge difference in our lives, but in the world.

So one must conclude that either we don't know, don't believe the story, or by golly we simply need our heads examined.

A few months ago, I had a young woman come and see me out of blue. This poor person was having the life beat out of her. Both her and her husband worked at the same place and lost their jobs. They were fighting like crazy. The banks were threatening to take away the cars and home. Her son was in an automobile accident and in danger of losing a leg. The poor thing was at her wits end.

We went into the sanctuary and prayed. I told her about the hope God gives in hopeless situations. I gave her some information about churches in the area including ours. I went and visited her son. Every Sunday she came faithfully to worship in Listowel. One particular day, I saw her in Walmart. The pastor in Listowel mentioned that he had not seen her at church for a few weeks, so I asked her how things were going. She claimed everything thing was all better now. Both her and her husband were rehired at the company, her relationship with her husband had improved, and her son was doing just fine on his two legs.

Then she said something that no longer shocks me. She said, “You probably won’t be seeing me a church anymore. I don’t know what I was thinking. Maybe I was just worrying too much. After all things just have a way of working themselves out. Right pastor?”

We shout Save us, Save us and God does in this one Holy Week. What then do we do? Do we continually betray Jesus like Judas for 30 pieces of silver—seeking things instead of peace and understanding? Do we abandon him like the disciples, going about our daily lives as if Jesus never did ride into town? Some of us like Peter deny even knowing Jesus. Some of us may spit on his name by our thoughts. In effect even though Jesus is trying to save us, we yell, “Crucify him, Crucify him,” and over and over, week after week, we once again nail the Son of God to the cross with our daily lives, just like the crowds and the Romans. Ouch uh?

Yet, here’s the amazing part of the story. Even, even through our betrayal, fear, denial, abandonment. Even through the spitting on his name, nailing the one who saves us on a cross. This conquering Christ, Jesus riding on a donkey is still, let me repeat, is still willing to suffer and climb up that tree and die for you, so that you may experience the abundance of life here and now and eternal life in the world yet to come.

Now that’s what I call the Gospel—Good news that the world cannot offer in any shape or form. Not through our wealth, or career, not even through family or friends. It is only offered through the Passion of Jesus Christ. This week not only make it a priority to attend all the Holy Week services—Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, Easter, think long and carefully how you respond to the only one who can heal our brokenness and save our sorry souls. Think long and

carefully how you have a God willing to overlook your tremendous shortcomings and give you life, through his death.

And folks if The Passion Story, does not change the way you think and live, if the Cross, the life, death, and resurrection of Christ Jesus does not make you realize the Love of God, then maybe, just maybe you really do need to have your head examined. Hosanna! Save Us! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Amen.