

## Do You Believe the Impossible?

1. Welcome to the highest holy day in the Christian calendar. We have our story and our traditions and we celebrate this day for it is the day that has changed every other day. It is the hinge point of history, the day the universe changed.
2. Do we understand what we believe and what we are asking others to believe? I wonder. Let's look at a different story today than the one you might have thought we were going to tell.
3. **John 11:1-6**. This story will not end in death...and because he loved them, he didn't ride to the rescue. God loves us too much to save us from life – and death. That's a hard thing to say, much less to accept.
4. **John 11:7-16**. "For your sake, I am glad I was not there."
5. **John 11:17-26**. This has to be the hardest moment imaginable. How can Jesus ask this of Martha? Of us? But that's the point – our story is a hard one to believe but, as God so loved the world and as Jesus loves us, it must be good for us to believe it.
6. **John 11:27-37**. The question we ask is the same: couldn't God have stopped this? But He didn't. And we need to talk about why.
7. **John 11:38-44**. The story ends with joy...for a time. Lazarus will die again. God will not ride to the rescue when that happens. Why? Because God did not come to save us from life, pain, sickness and death. He came to give us life now – eternal life – that survives deaths.
8. In the Old Testament, there is the story of Abraham. He is ordered to take Isaac up the mountain and to sacrifice him there. It is a hard and bizarre story that seems completely out of place in scripture. At the last moment, God stops Abraham and supplies another sacrifice. When we look back at this, we see something Abraham could not have known: God would one day have a city on that mountain. And His Son would be sacrificed there. No one would stop it. No one would ride to the rescue.

9. And then we come to our story, the story that brings us together this Sunday. Jesus is subjected to every injustice man could cook up: false arrest, mob mistreatment, beatings, the scourge, the crown of thorns, illegal trials in the middle of the night, no food or water, no advocate.
10. We will not go into the gory details here. You know them and we have small children in the room. But let me say this: can you come up with a more systematic mistreatment of a human being, treating him as less than an animal with no rights, no appeal, no right to defend himself?
11. And that is the point. God didn't ride to His Son's rescue except in the same way He rides to our rescue. When Jesus rose from the grave on the third day, he walked with us, talked with us, and showed us his scars – yes, he got scars; God did not keep him from getting scars – but he lived and would always live. And so will we.

[At this point, I would like to have different readers come up to read each of these]

John 11:25-26

1<sup>st</sup> John 5:11-12

John 14:1-6

Romans 6:22-23

John 3:16

[Patrick calls people to the Table and to place their flowers in the crosses]