

**By: Reverend Anne Emry**

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Matthew 27:25

“His blood be on us and on our children!” “Crucify him!” For hundreds of years, Holy Week has been a dangerous time to be a Jew. The language of the Passion narrative is shocking. This text has had the disastrous result of inspiring anti-Jewish prejudice and violence when the words were read at face value, and not as 1st century rhetoric. We continue to stand under the shadow of the Holocaust—better named the Shoah (calamity)—which was the institutionalized murder of six million Jews during World War II. And Jesus wept. We cannot allow this toxic misreading to continue.

Know this: Jesus was a Jew. His followers were mostly Jews. The people he preached to, taught and healed, were mostly Jews. He taught in the Jewish Synagogues from the Jewish Scriptures. He was executed by the Romans. As Christianity formed, and separated from the Jewish community, there were struggles and persecutions which influenced the tone and language of the Gospels, and allowed anachronistic transfer of blame from the Romans to the Jews. The fact is that only the Roman government could execute a person, and those crucified were considered enemies of the state. The Gospels tell the Passion story in grief and anger. We hear disturbing words this week from our Holy Scriptures; we hear the awful cost of Jesus’ sacrifice. It is a hard journey. We must not make it easier on ourselves by feeding the hostility that continues to exist against our Jewish brothers and sisters. Anti-Jewish violence and prejudice is intolerable.

When we reach the Sunday of the Resurrection, Christians rejoice in Jesus Christ’s triumph over the power of evil and death. Remember who we follow and what he taught. It is clear that Christians are never to be agents of evil and death in his name, and we must take care not to be casually or silently complicit in perpetuating prejudice against Jews in our churches and among our children. Remember his answer to the question about which was the greatest commandment:

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets. Matthew 22:37-40

We are called to love our neighbor, and our closest neighbors are members of the Jewish faith. We must not force the Jews to lock their doors for fear of the Christians.

Blessings.