

## How did the Cowards of Gethsemane become the Heroes of Pentecost?

Rev Diane Gilliam-Weeks

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What could be so **compelling**, to **change** a quivering terrified **defeated** depressed band of mourners, some scared **stiff** just to be **associated** with Jesus

What could be so **convincing**, to turn these frightened and hopeless **men and women** into courageous **travelers** prepared to go **any** distance, and face **any** danger to carry the **message** given them by their teacher?

**What** could be so persuasive?

Well, I might as well tell you right up front what I believe

Nothing but a face to **face** to touch **encounter** with the **risen** Christ, nothing **else will** or could **explain** the transformation of the **cowards** of Gethsemane into the **heroes** of Pentecost.

They **ran** that night before Jesus died. They ran and they hid. Or they lurked and denied any **link** with Jesus.

So I believe **nothing** but meeting the risen **Christ** could **revolutionize** that cringing; nothing **else** could **change** them into **willing** martyrs of a new and **enduring** movement willing to face **imprisonment**, execution, and every other **conceivable** method to stop them from **talking**.

It **certainly** wasn't the case that Jesus hadn't really **died**. That **somehow**, he'd **lapsed** into a **coma** and then **revived**.

**No one** would believe Jesus could have survived the **flagellation** and loss of **blood**, the **spikes**, the spear, the **tight** binding of the **grave** clothes

**No one** would believe this shattered pierced exhausted body could have pushed away a one tonne **stone** and **then** overcome the guards **outside** the tomb

**No one** would believe he could then walk or **crawl** for **miles** with impaled **feet** in **desperate** need of medical attention

And **no one** could believe that people **encountering** this nearly dead **wreckage** of an individual. would turn around and proclaim **him** to be their Lord and their God.

And yet they **did**

They taught throughout the Roman Empire that in Jesus of Nazareth the anointed one of God the Christ

teaching that in his very **person** the Creator of the **Universe** had been revealed to personally **deliver** the depth and costliness of God's love and proclaim God's saving message of love, of Shalom, for all creation.

In fact, because of the strength they gained from their encounter with the Risen Christ they took his message of peace and justice and mercy to the ends of the earth

even here beside this harbour and these hills and they carried the message of love in the face of marginalization, derision, and persecution.

Certainly, God's long chain of **prophets** carrying the **same** message had tried and **failed**

to have **that** kind of lasting impact on the ancient **Hebrew** people.

For **centuries** they'd **called** on Israel to be a light to **all** nations

Throughout Israel's **history** the **prophet's** message of Shalom was all but **ignored**.

Ignoring the prophets, the Jewish religious establishment **became** a power **itself** and their fear of **pollution** from foreign cultures and **religions** lead to an **obsession** with ethnic **purity**

eclipsing the **prophets** call to justice, compassion and mercy for the voiceless and the powerless the widow, the orphan and the stranger

Yet following encounters with the risen Christ t he **Jesus** movement **grew** and spread around the **world**

And Jesus never **aspired** to be a **power** in fact his **teaching exposed** the powers of **pride** and arrogance and greed that controlled humanity.

But sadly many in the movement could not resist the seduction of power and within three hundred **years** the church **itself** became took on the trappings of empire

**And like** the royal Jewish Temple establishment had done earlier the **church** began to stress **tradition** and institutional **purity** over Jesus' urgent **call** to peace with justice, mercy and compassion.

There were inquisitions and crusades people were burned at the stake

anyone who questioned the world view of the religious authorities was excommunicated

And **then** ironically, the enlightenment **arrived** and in the name of **liberty** and **equality** worship the human **mind** and the cult of the **individual** over **threw**. the power of the church

Human **history** has a way of **repeating** itself doesn't it? and **soon** rationalism **too** became a **power**

and anyone or any institution who questioned **that** world view was ridiculed or guillotined or shot.

Still today the selfishness created by the cult of the individual keeps the nations of the West wealthy as the rest of the world remains poor.

We live in an in **between** time. A **time** when the modern **worldview** wants to resist the news of Jesus resurrection every bit as much as the chief **priests** did when Matthew wrote his gospel.

**Today's** powers of me me me and buy buy buy want to preserve their status quo **intact** against the radical **disruption** what would otherwise **occur** were the world to embrace the significance of Jesus teaching and the meaning of the resurrection.

What **meaning**?

That in Jesus Christ a part of God tore apart the very fabric of time and space to live as one of **us**, **To** suffer as we suffer, and to die **our** death.

And all **this** to communicate a saving **message** Intended not just for the chosen few and the powerful

but for **all** people  
do justice, love mercy live peacefully with those who hate you,  
love your enemy **expose** discrimination and hypocrisy

and yes, when you **do** this expect to be **crucified**.

This is what love **means**.

What gives us the strength to do it

It's the knowledge that this love we proclaim is stronger than  
death

Resurrection.

What else could be more powerful and enduring than mere  
ideas or moral values what **else** could be so **convincing as** to  
**transform** us from frightened hopeless **men and women**  
into courageous **cultural explorers** crossing boundaries  
prepared to go **any** distance, and face **any** danger to carry  
God's message  
taught us by the one we call Jesus?

All heaven declares the glory of the risen Lord