

I love stories where ordinary people  
are thrust into extraordinary circumstances  
And persecuted by powerful people  
Who stop at nothing to obliterate them

Their only hope of survival  
is through observation, and intelligence, and friends  
but the best of these stories  
are the ones where everything is hopeless  
Observation, intelligence and friends no longer work.  
And in desperation... they turn to God for help.  
And victory comes through surrender... not success...

Ordinary people... now cast as heroes,  
not only survive their trials and tribulations  
But the evil ones are exposed and punished  
Justice and fairness prevail  
And goodness falls over them and the people they love.

We love to see the good guys wins  
We love to see the bad guys lose  
We are thrilled when suffering ends, and righteousness triumphs.

But today, Good Friday, we do not see the victory  
Today is the darkest moment... with the greatest suffering...  
And I don't want to look at it...  
When I go to movies or watch TV  
I avoid torture  
I avoid the ultraviolent  
I find it much too disturbing

But here we are... Good Friday...

With the most violent scenes of torture and violence imaginable  
And all heaped upon a man who did nothing wrong

There are movies about Good Friday  
And as society lowers the bar on acceptable levels of violence  
Religious films become brutally realistic  
Closer to the truth  
More accurate accounts of the ruthlessness in the Roman empire

There is a magnificent ending to this story  
But we are not there yet  
Right now, today, we are mired in stupidity and selfishness and hatred  
For the **only** person who did nothing wrong  
The only perfect human being, ever.

And in his perfection  
Jesus did not fight back  
He did not rally forces  
He did not manipulate his circumstances  
He just took it  
He just took it

I hate Good Friday  
I hate seeing what human beings are capable of  
I hate the ferocity, and the deceit, and the enjoyment of His pain

And then I hear myself... ***I hate!***  
I see I'm not that different than the Lord's accusers and punishers  
I want to cut an ear of that soldier myself!

And I don't want to be that person... and so I turn to God and surrender

There is such purity...

in the selfless way Jesus surrendered to the will of the Father

Completely unafraid

Completely accepting

Completely at peace

In the midst of torture

Jesus is at peace

How can we model that?

How can any of us?

We can't...

Sure Jesus had extraordinary power

But look what he did with it!

He healed people... he fed people... he encouraged people

He didn't crush the bad guys

He confronted them, sure

But he never harmed a single enemy...

He loved them all!

With his unlimited power and might

He **chose** not to fight, not to hate, not to seek revenge

Instead he loved them all!

That's what makes this story so different from all the others

The hero had all the power

And he refused to use it against his enemies

He chose instead... **To love them**

And because of that ultimate sacrifice  
Because of his willingness to take on... everything...  
Because of **our** sins and wickedness  
We are forgiven, **because** he was abused.

How can we ever repay him?  
We can't  
How can we ever live up to him?  
We can't

It is by his willingness  
To suffer for us  
That we are saved from the horrors of hell

It is because he freely chose a bloody piece of wood  
Over a comfortable life  
That we are granted adoption into his family

And so as bad as this day is  
As violent and unjust as this day is  
It is a Good Friday

In **s spite** of our sinful nature  
We are forgiven...  
Amen.