

Commentary on the Gospel for Fri, Jun 14th 2013

We are afflicted in every way, but not constrained;

Perplexed, but not driven to despair;

Persecuted, but not abandoned;

Struck down, but not destroyed;

Always carrying about in the Body the dying of Jesus,

so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our body.

Here is someone who understands suffering and still has hope. Here is someone who understands pain and remains optimistic. Here is Paul who has persecuted others and been persecuted himself and lives in the joy of the Risen Christ.

I am originally from Woburn, Massachusetts near Boston. I have celebrated Patriots' Day (a Massachusetts holiday commemorating the anniversary of the Battles of Lexington and Concord on April 19, 1775, the first battles of the Revolutionary War). I have been in Copley Square in Boston. And although I have not run the Boston Marathon, I know what it is like to train for months and have family and friends waiting to celebrate with me at the end of a grueling 26.2 mile run. The bombing at the end of the Boston Marathon on April 15 shook me. I could relate to so many aspects of the pain and suffering that I saw on television. Yet that tragic event is only one example of the pain and suffering that we can see every day in our world, from the shootings in Newtown, CT, to the tornado in Moore, OK, to the factory collapse in Bangladesh to drone strikes in Pakistan.

The pain and suffering can feel overwhelming. I am tempted to look away, to stay so busy that I do not have time to think about the sadness, to deny any connection or culpability, or responsibility, or power to make positive changes.

Paul offers me a way out. Paul shows me that I can admit to feeling afflicted, perplexed, persecuted, and struck down. AND, Paul shows me that I need not feel constrained, in despair, abandoned or destroyed. I can carry with me the terrible reality of Jesus's suffering and death AND know his glorious resurrection and love and joy.

The Reign of God is here and now and not yet. It may never be easy, but I need to face the suffering and pain and evil of our world while knowing Emmanuel, God is with us. I need to keep running toward a world of love, peace, and justice with confidence that God is simultaneously running right alongside me, pushing me from behind, and waiting to celebrate at the finish line.

Ken Reed-Bouley