

Jesus' Passion in the Unknown by Peter Covington

We read that Jesus knew, and told his friends, as he went to Jerusalem at the Passover that he would die and rise again.

Theologians have argued for ages over the exact amount of humanity and divinity Jesus contained. In my view, how much Jesus knew of what was to come depends on if he possessed divine omnipotence; some say they know, I am less certain. I choose to relate to Jesus from my human perspective, namely that he, like we, moved into the unknown, doing his duty as best he knew how.

That would be very much as I, and probably most people, experience life. We are called to do good and to follow Jesus but often we do not know what that means. We come across opportunities to help others and wonder if this was organized by and is in fact a call from God, or our life takes an unexpected turn and we wonder if God is trying to teach us or turn us in another direction, or if the set back or advancement is simply unrelated.



In the last two years I have experienced a bewildering flood of unexpected changes. Twice now, I have been sent back to DC for medical care, and in the coming and going between locations I have met

and lost more boyfriends than my heart can bear. Does this all have some purpose? I would like to think so, but life and my part in it is often unknown.

So I wonder about as Jesus contemplated his coming death. I imagine he could surmise how it would happen. The Pharisees inciting a crowd to stone him would have been a possible guess, and, in my opinion, far more likely than collaboration with the hated Romans to kill him in the gruesomeness of crucifixion. What purpose could that much pain have? Jesus may have wondered why, perhaps it shook his faith as it began to happen. Did Jesus see

ahead to the flogging or the humiliating and painful crown of thorns?

The unknown and the surprise of each must have shaken him deeply as negative events can rattle us. But these painful set backs did not stop Jesus from his purpose. When he fell while carrying the cross, then to be relieved by Simon of Cyrene, I imagine my sarcastic side would have called out, “Why God? Wasn’t I going to my death fast enough for You?” But Jesus said nothing of the kind and humbly continued to follow towards what he knew by then would be his death.

Not seeing the large picture and still walking as we have been called can be experienced as pain. Or passion. God does not explain to us—that is not God’s job—but we continue walking. Sometimes we continue because we see no alternative. Other times are simply acts of obedience, focusing on the love of God to give us strength to continue.

Knowledge is not always to our benefit, but the lack of it can be unsettling. For myself, I cannot see the end of the journey, but I feel the call to go toward the goal, as I receive strength from the one now risen and sitting at the right hand of God.