

They stood at a distance and watched these things. All his acquaintances, Luke tells us, stood at a distance and watched: Jesus' robes stripped from him – the soldiers gambling for each piece. The nailing and the lifting of the cross. Were they close enough to hear the plea for forgiveness from Jesus' lips? The mocking? The cry from the other cross – “Jesus remember me when you come into your kingdom”? Jesus' promise, “Today you will be with me in Paradise”? The darkness engulfed them as well, could they hear Jesus cry, “Father, into your hands I commit my Spirit”?

They stood at a distance and watched these things.

A flash of light – a booming concussion – in an instant a marketplace littered with flesh and blood - with death. A fanatic has offered his sacrifice to God – a sacrifice of killing. We watch these things from distance.

An elderly man's home is invaded by teenagers intent on stealing. As they mock him, beat him they steal his life as well. We watch these things from a distance.

Cancer invades – mocking life as it spreads seeking to claim a precious life. A friend, a son, a wife, a father – we watch from nearby yet distant as we really cannot know what it is like for her, for him. We watch.

Today we join those who watch Jesus dying from a distance. We are just like them – live the sorrows they lived that day with one difference: We know about Easter. We know that soon we will be hearing that the tomb is empty – that Jesus lives. We know that Jesus is not just some unlucky one in the wrong place at the wrong time but is the Son of God alive now forevermore.

Could it be that God knows the unlucky ones in that marketplace as God's sons and daughters with Jesus? And the elderly man? And those cancer claims? Could Jesus' prayer, “Father forgive them for they know not what they do” be stretched so far that a suicide bomber and teenage hooligans might be sheltered under its mercy as well? Jesus hopes so – sends you out to tell of Jesus so that every son and daughter of God and forgiven one might be gathered. And me. And you. All gathered into the dying and rising of Jesus. Forever. Amen.