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Recently, I heard an honest and vulnerable interview with Justin Welby, the Archbishop of Canterbury. He spoke about the suffering he had known in his own life - about his confused childhood marked by parents who struggled with addiction and mental illness. He talked about the devastation he experienced when his infant was killed in a car accident and then the fear he knew when his next child had to have brain surgery. And then he spoke about the suffering he had seen in his role as Archbishop. He described feeling that he had no words when he was asked to pray over a mass grave in South Sudan after the civil war had left thousands dead, including many of his own clergy.

As I reflected on this interview, I thought about the tragedies that we all are witnessing right now - the senseless war in Ukraine, the recent shootings in a grocery store in Buffalo and a church in California - both motivated by incomprehensible hate. Closer to home, there were eight shootings in Hampton Roads last week. I don't know about you, but sometimes it feels to me like the world is on fire. And so perhaps our hearts are heavy as we hear today's reading from the gospel of John. Jesus was preparing his disciples for his impending death; he knew that they were not ready to face the heartbreak that was to come without him. He says, "*Do not let your hearts be troubled, do not be afraid.*" I have to be honest and say that my first response to this is "*Really? Really, Lord??*" 'Cause it seems like there is a whole lot of troubling stuff happening right now." Isn't it our call as Christians to be concerned about the suffering of others?

Of course, as always, Jesus' message is more nuanced than this. He wasn't telling his disciples not to be troubled because there was nothing troubling happening. And he certainly wasn't suggesting that we turn a blind eye; so much of his teaching centers around being concerned about the plight of our neighbors. What Jesus is addressing is how we understand the suffering we see in the world in the context of our faith. I think that when he says, "do not let your hearts be troubled," he is really saying "trust me, I am here. I've got you, and I've got this."

Admittedly, this can feel theologically inadequate when faced with the enormity of the world's grief. It does not mean that suffering is part of God's plan, and it certainly doesn't mean that suffering will cease to exist. Wars will still happen, bullets will still fly, racism and poverty continue. But Jesus' promise in this moment is that none of this is the end of the story. We and all of humanity are held in a story that transcends the heartbreak of this earthly life and transcends our imagination. It is the heart of the cross, where the brokenness of the world

intersects with the resurrecting power of God. We are never alone, and death does not have the final word.

I'll return again to that interview with the Archbishop. He describes going with a priest friend in the Congo to a camp for severely disabled children who had been left behind when their families were forced to flee the country in the midst of war. After sitting with some of these children, the Archbishop asked his friend how he dealt with the weight of the suffering in that place. And his friend replied, "I do what I can with the resources God has given me, and the rest I leave to God."

This is our challenge as people of faith - to care about the concerns of our neighbors, to let our hearts break as we see the suffering in the world, and then to do what we can and give the rest to God. This is what Jesus means when he says, "do not let your hearts be troubled." He reminds us to trust that the sorrows of this world are not ours alone to bear. And when we give them to God, we can rest in a deeper peace. Remember this part of today's gospel: he says, "I do not give to you as the world gives... Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you." When the world feels like it is on fire, this is the peace that we hold on to. We remember that even in the midst of bad news, our truth is the good news of God in Christ and the promise of the peace that passes all understanding. Amen.