

Everything was going wrong for Jesus. In Matthew's story of the passion, something awful was happening everywhere the master turned.

He turned to his disciples, his closest companions. But Peter denied him, Judas betrayed him, and the one disciple who tried to help cut off a slave's ear. Then they all ran away. When it mattered most, none of Jesus' disciples could get the gospel right.

Jesus turned to the law. But his own Jewish leaders, the Sanhedrin, recruited false witnesses, declared him guilty, and beat him themselves. The civil authority, Pontius Pilate, washed his hands of the whole affair. Both the religious court and the civil court failed him.

Jesus turned to the crowd. But they could not accept a suffering Messiah. They preferred the saucy political leadership of Barabbas over the helpless hack they saw in Jesus. In Matthew's Gospel, the crowd does not shout, "Crucify him," but "Let him be crucified." In other words, they don't make it Pilate's job, "Crucify him;" *they* render the judgment, "Let him be crucified."

Jesus also turned to the Father. In that painful prayer in the garden Jesus asked the Father to take away the cup. But just as the sleeping disciples failed to listen to Jesus, so the Father never answered his prayer.

Everything was going wrong. The only force which stayed with Jesus was nature. The sky grew dark and the earth quaked, splitting the temple curtain and opening the graves of the dead. The earth knew that one age was passing and a new one was being born.

Sometimes everything goes wrong in our lives. We think we can handle whatever comes our way--the temptations of drugs, infidelity, or injury; the tragedy and challenges of family life. We think we can handle it. Like Christ's, our life can become a story of passion and sorrow. When everything goes wrong no matter where we turn, we cannot always see the point of our suffering, but it doesn't mean that God isn't there. It may mean the death of one age and the birth of another.