

A NOTE TO PARENTS

"Messiah," in the Hebrew Scriptures, signifies a mighty king who is chosen by God to set his people free. This idea was taken literally in Jesus' time: the Messiah was awaited as someone descended from David, who would assume political power and establish once more the dignity and independence of Israel, free of foreign domination and ready to worship God in purity and peace. This freedom, purity and peace had, without question, a crucial religious dimension. But the Messiah's reign was not merely "spiritual;" it was political. And it was triumphalist. The Messiah would preside over the utter defeat of his enemies.

A different strand in Jewish prophetic tradition, one that was not mentioned by any of the disciples when Jesus asked, "Who am I?" is that of the Servant of the Lord, often known as the Suffering Servant—the one who cries out in Psalm 22 and appears in Isaiah 53 as "despised and rejected, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief;" who was "wounded for our transgressions, ... bruised for our iniquities ... and with his stripes we are healed." Christians are so accustomed to thinking of the Messiah as Sufferer (and of Jesus as the Crucified One) that we forget it was Jesus himself who brought these two strands together and identified the Servant's suffering with the saving work of the Messiah. The combination was so new and strange to his disciples that they were completely unable to accept it until well after Jesus had risen from the dead.

The merging of these two themes is no easier to accept in our own lives than it was for Jesus' followers to accept it in his life. But Jesus tells us again and again that only through renunciation and death can we come to new life. *Through*, not *after*. God does not give us eternal life as a compensation for all the trouble we must go to to win it. Nor does he merely erase our sorrows, any more than he erased the wounds in Jesus' hands and feet. Look at your child's drawings on the reverse of this page. Talk about them together. Do they reflect wishful hopes that God will simply "fix" things ... or the hint that life may arise out of pain or defeat? How about you? What would you draw in those spaces?

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Year A
PROPER 17
TRACKS 1 and 2

Jesus said to his friends,
"You need to understand
what God wants me to do."

MATTHEW 16:21



JESUS SAID TO HIS FRIENDS, "I AM THE MESSIAH."

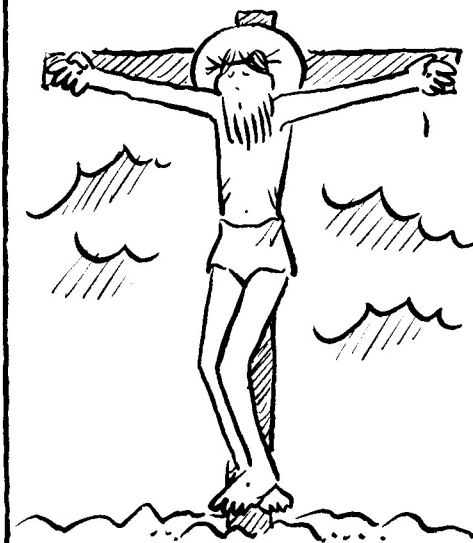
"God wants me to save his people. I will have to go to Jerusalem..."



...be arrested by the leaders there...



"...and be hung on a cross and killed."



"And then I will rise again."



Jesus's friends were very upset when he said these things. Peter shouted, "No! It can't happen!" But Jesus said, "God's ways are sometimes hard and sad. But out of that hardness and sadness comes new life."



Under the cross, draw a hard or sad thing in your life. Talk about it with God. Then, under the rising sun, draw a way that God might help new life to come from the hardness and sadness.