

**KILLING JESUS**  
**August 7, 2016 –I Corinthians 15: 12-26 –Communion**  
**The Church of the Covenant**

“Killing Jesus” is of course the title of a popular book by the news commentator and author, Bill O’Reilly. It was an interesting read and also of course I have some comments and perspective on it. I begin in a very different place, however. I have a very dear friend and his wife from a former church of mine. The couple were youth group advisors for the Junior High Youth Group –this always confers sainthood status on any couple willing to take on the exuberant nature of middle-schoolers. Clark and Mary were inseparable. Clarky, as I called him, was just a kid himself in a way. Jovial, funny, a little outrageous, a magnificent punster of the first magnitude, a practical joker. He was irrepressible. You could never “one up” Clarky. Never got the last laugh on him. He would always have a better comeback line. The better pun. The semi-annoying practical joke. So I am having dinner with Clark and Mary in a restaurant where my parents and I had previously eaten many months before. My Mother has a trait of quizzing the wait-person. Where do you live? Do you go to school? Do you have plans for your future? So we always find out way more than anyone cares to share about the wait-person. So coincidentally I am having dinner in the same restaurant and we get the same waiter my parents and I had several months before. And a scheme pops into my head. So I say to Clarky, “You know, Clarky, I have developed the innate ability to tell where someone is from simply by hearing them speak; from their accent I can tell you where they’re from.” Of course Clark took the bait and remonstrated at length about how I could never do it. So I called over the waiter and I said that I had a bet with my friend that I could tell where he was from simply by hearing him speak. So the waiter spoke and I looked very thoughtful, reeling Clarky in, and said: “You are from the Midwest.” The waiter said, “Yes, I am.” Nothing too amazing about that. I said: “You’re from Indiana.” Now I have the waiter AND Clarky’s attention when the waiter, with a perfect look of amazement on his face, says, “Yes, I am.” Of course, the waiter had long ago forgotten me and my inquisitive Mother. That’s what made this so perfect. So I said, “In point of fact you are from central Indiana, I believe you are from Indianapolis.” And now the waiter has a look of total incredulity and says, “Wow, that’s amazing; yes, I am.” And the waiter begins to call other wait-staff over to hear this amazing feat. And then to the growing crowd I said, “In point of fact, you are from Southeastern Indianapolis.” And now the guy is completely blown away and says: “Yeah, I am.” And then I said, “And not too far from the brickworks is where you grew up.” Now he and the wait-staff are applauding. And Clark is just wagging his head in defeat and disbelief. It was the ONLY TIME I ever got one over on my dear friend, Clarky...

Back to O’Reilly’s book, “Killing Jesus”. It does a pretty good job of laying out all the sinister forces that conspired to unjustly try and murder an innocent man. Like a newsman, he lays out the story of how the politicians and the religious leaders all conspired to be about “Killing Jesus”. God sent Jesus into the world as the purest expression of His love; “For God so loved the world that He GAVE Jesus...”; but the powers and the principalities hated the love God sent; they hated the embodiment of the creative love in the heart of the Almighty; the very people who should have recognized Jesus first as Messiah and Lord were the very people who clamored the loudest that Jesus must die. The powers and the principalities hate the love of God; the powers and the principalities hate Jesus; the powers and the principalities think that by killing Jesus they can kill the love of God. Always have, always will. See, my first problem is this –this isn’t newsworthy. This is in the category of “Dog bites man”. This is just “if it bleeds, it leads” and the newscasters say. No, no, no, the newsworthy part of this is that the powers and principalities, the religious and political leaders all did their worst and TRIED to KILL the Love of God; but they could NOT kill the love of God. Mr. O’Reilly, that’s news. My other quibbling with the book is how it ends. Basically, it ends with Jesus on the cross and Jesus dead and buried and Jesus’ body not

discovered at the empty tomb on Easter. The story ends, according to the book "Killing Jesus" with this line: "And to this day, the body of Jesus of Nazareth has never been found." ("Killing Jesus", O'Reilly and Dugard, p. 259) No, no, no, you missed 60% of the story of God's love. Our scripture says, "*If Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain.*" (1 Corinthians 15: 14) If it ends simply with a missing body of a dead Jesus, then what are we doing here? We ought to fold our tents and go home. I ought to shut up about Jesus and never preach again. And if the story ends with the dead body of Jesus and the powers and the principalities have won by "Killing Jesus", then, then, then, as our scripture says, "*Then those also who have fallen asleep with Christ have perished.*" (1 Corinthians 15: 18) If the story ends by Killing Jesus then our loved ones do not have eternal life and we are "*of all men most to be pitied.*" A good reporter gets the story right. A good reporter follows up until they get the whole story. We, living in the presence of a Living Jesus Christ, today, tomorrow and forever, are the end of the story. Jesus raised from the dead and spiritually present right here, right now, today, is the rest of the story. Eternal life in a Savior who could not be killed is the end of the story. Love conquering death itself is the end of the story. Not, "and they couldn't find the body"; not the story ends at the cross with a dead Savior; the end of the story is not just "Killing Jesus".

Back to my friend, Clarky. Clark, many years ago, developed Celiac Disease, a condition where the organs of the body cannot process gluten. And this was so long ago that for a too long period of time they did not diagnose what was wrong with Clark, until it was too late, until it had killed most of his liver. And my dear friend, the irrepressible Clarky, finally didn't come back from this, and died far too young at age 44, leaving behind his wonderful wife, Mary, and their two little girls, Lauren and Morgan. They asked me to do his funeral service and I preached on the text I shared with you from 1 Corinthians, it is a text in the stained glass windows of that church up in Michigan, "*In Christ shall all be made alive.*" (1 Corinthians 15: 22) And I remember standing at his graveside, with his two little girls at either side of their "Uncle Stu". And I remember stating there by the open grave of my dear friend: "*Death is swallowed up in victory.*" "*O death where is thy victory? O death where is thy sting?*" No! "*Thanks be unto God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!*" IN CHRIST SHALL ALL BE MADE ALIVE. WHEN CHRIST IS ALIVE IN US THEN WE SHALL BE MADE ALIVE IN HIM. WHEN JESUS LIVES IN US THEN WE SHALL LIVE FOREVER!

So, do you believe death has the final say, or do you believe Jesus has the final say? Do you believe the powers and the principalities killed the love God, or do you believe that love lives forever? Is this about "Killing Jesus" or is this about a "Living Jesus"? Did death win? Or did love win? Could they really ever KILL JESUS? Could they keep Him in the grave? They could not. Could death claim victory over the love of God? It could not. Is the cross the end of the story? Is Killing Jesus the end of the story? No, never! IN CHRIST SHALL ALL BE MADE ALIVE! IN CHRIST SHALL ALL BE MADE ALIVE! IN CHRIST SHALL ALL BE MADE ALIVE! Well, my dear friend, Clarky, I guess you have the last laugh, after all...Amen and Amen.

*By: The Reverend Dr. Stuart D. Broberg, The Church of the Covenant, Washington, Pennsylvania  
IF THIS HAS BLESSED YOU, PLEASE PASS IT ALONG TO A FRIEND!*