

*Emily Axe (12/31/10)*

*What does it mean to be the body of Christ for the world? Part II*

This past week I drove to Dayton, I borrowed my roommate's car, asked for a day off work and drove to see my friend Sarah. Her beautiful mother passed away, another casualty of cancer. What pain, what loss. This scared me, this hit home. If this could happen to Sarah's mom this could surely happen to mine. I at first didn't know how to react, I felt numb. I only met Sarah's mom a few times over our four year friendship but I remember her telling Sarah that she thought I was funny. That did it, that one remark did it for me. I made Sarah's mom laugh; therefore I liked her. This seems so ridiculous but it is true, since that comment four or five years ago I was hooked.

Since I have known Sarah, I have known her mom with cancer. But surely other people have cancer and they live, they don't die when their children are in their mid-twenties, they don't die before they are grandparents, right? I tell myself these ideas to keep the hurt, the pain, the memories aside.

I thought of the body of Christ.

Sarah's mom is now free; she is in heaven without cancer, without continuous medical treatments, and she no longer has to eat grass to stay 'healthy.' This beautiful woman can dance and be free and my concerns should feel comforted. Grieving is still the present. A life is missing in this world, a soul set free to a buried body.

Driving to Dayton I did not know what to say to my friend. I did not know how to comfort. Saying 'Sorry for your loss' is not what I wanted to come from my lips.

Although I was truly sorry, I felt this response would not make it into my friend's heart. I wanted to be the body of Christ for my friend in her time of mourning, in her time of transition and loss. So I went, I saw her, and offered a hug. She began to cry and I just held her more, she wept in my arms and I said nothing, another friend came and hugged us both and we just stood in the funeral home hugging, crying and holding up the line of family and friends.

This felt like love to me, this felt right. I felt a part of the body of Christ within this embrace. What does it mean to be the body of Christ for the world (or at least for what I consider my world)? My life, as a follower of Jesus Christ the Messiah and as a member of the body of Christ, needs to look like love. I think this is important, I think love is where we begin to be the body of Christ for our world. Love has to be the reason for our service to our friends and neighbors, love has to be the reason for our friendships, and love has to be the reason we are *for* the world.

I think to be the body of Christ for this world also means to look upon this earth, this earth man has destroyed from the inside out, and not want to give up loving in the midst of death, of destruction, of damaged souls. Again, to be the body of Christ is to be more like Jesus. What did He do while He was upon this same soil for His world? And with death, what did he ask us to become?

Sometimes I crave heaven. I daydream of what it must be like. I think about it most when I hear of someone I know who has just passed away, or when I pass a graveyard; souls gone, forever. Where are they now? Are they really dancing with Christ, are they watching out for us? I thought of this too when I went to visit Sarah. I thought about this a lot driving back to Athens. I wanted to imagine Sarah's mom, as

beautiful as ever, playing in heaven. Laughing, running, no longer in anticipation, no longer sick, just Home.

To be the body of Christ in this world, in my world, is overwhelming when I think about it deeply on my own. This world is hurtful, this world is in pain, there are bullies and terrorists, child soldiers, and gangs, murder, hatred, and the list continues. Thinking of this even now just makes me want to sit in the corner of my room and turn on worship music to drown out the reality of these thoughts. But I remember that to be the body of Christ for this world also means I am not on my own. The body helps my thoughts to recall the beauty left. And I think about neighbors helping one another, true love, hope when a resident moves to a clean safe stable home, the innocence and togetherness a new born brings, hugging friends and weeping with them, and the list goes on.

To be the body of Christ for this world is just that-*to be a body*. To be a community who is there for each other, to weep, to sing, to dance, to laugh-*together*.