Exodus 17:1-7

Philippians 2:1-14

Matthew 21:

Have you ever felt angry at God? You come here to church as a faithful Christian, a good Episcopalian. You sing the hymns, pray the prayers, hear the readings and sermons – all of which tell you that God is love and God is for you, not against you, and then something happens in your life that is horrible. Horrific. A catastrophe. You are mowed down and betrayed by all that you have ever believed. God has failed you even while you have been good to God: coming to church, singing the hymns; saying the prayers.

Here at Church of the Nativity we continue to mourn the tragic, accidental shooting death of Micah Dancy on the 21st of September. His parents, deese and David Dancy, have been with Nativity almost since its founding forty years ago. They are exemplars of what it means to be good Christians. They have both been leaders of this congregation; have served food to the homeless; have visited the sick and comforted the dying. When they come into a bit of extra money they think of Nativity, which is why we have these beautiful weavings on either side of the altar. The Dancy’s commissioned them for that space. David hands out McDonald’s gift cards to the homeless people he encounters in his work as a traveling sales rep. Deese was asked to play the piano for the church back when there was no money for a musician. She said she would do it temporarily because she didn’t really feel qualified and it was stressful. But she did it anyway. She did it temporarily: for 30 years.

If anyone should be spared from tragedy, they get my vote. It’s difficult to even think about what these last ten days have been like for them and their two remaining sons. Even if you haven’t experienced their level of tragedy – and I hope you haven’t – chances are good that at some point in your life you have felt abandoned by God. Even betrayed.

Without wanting to minimize the magnitude of human suffering, I want to say that whatever you feel: It is OK. Have you been angry at God? It is OK. Have you felt belittled and betrayed by your own cherished convictions? Have you even felt like doing violence to God, if only you could? That is alright. You are entitled. You are entitled to your own honesty.

As I pray for the Dancy’s,