

**James H. Cone on *The Cross and the Lynching Tree***

- + The cross places God in the midst of people who are hung shot, burned and tortured.
- + In the mystery of God's revelation, black Christians believed that just knowing that Jesus went through an experience of suffering in a manner similar to theirs gave them faith that God was with them, even in suffering on lynching trees, just as God was present with Jesus in suffering on the cross.
- + The cross is a paradoxical religious symbol because it inverts the world's value system with the news that hope comes by way of defeat, that suffering and death do not have the last word, that the last shall be first and the first last.
- + If I have anything to say to the Christian community in America and around the world, it is rooted in the tragic and hopeful reality that sustains and empowers black people to resist the forces that seem designed to destroy every ounce of dignity in their soul and bodies.
- + The lynching tree is the most potent symbol of the trouble nobody knows that blacks have seen but do not talk about because the pain of remembering is almost too excruciating to recall.
- + Lynching was the white community's way of forcibly reminding blacks of their inferiority and powerlessness. To be black meant that white could do anything to you and your people.
- + Though both the cross and the lynching tree are symbols of death, one represents a message of hope and salvation, while the other signifies the negation of that message by white supremacy.
- + If the blues offered an affirmation of humanity, religion offered a way for black people to find hope. They found in the cross the spiritual power to resist the violence they so often suffered.