

# The Cross, African(ness)<sup>1</sup>, and Identity in Mark's Passion Narrative

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## Abstract

*In this article, the Markan Passion Narrative has been juxtaposed with Africanness, shedding light on vital aspects of Jesus' identity and the significance of his sacrifice within an African context. While existing scholarship has explored African characters in the New Testament, little attention has been paid to how the Markan Passion Narrative engages with African(ness), especially concerning Jesus' crucifixion, death, and resurrection. This article aims to delve into this relationship by conducting a literary analysis of symbols, themes, and narrative techniques employed in the Passion Narrative, considering the historical and cultural backdrop of its composition. The study seeks to uncover how these elements resonate with Mark's account and African(ness), contributing to discussions on social identity and ethical issues confronting contemporary African societies.*

**Keywords:** Mark's Passion Narrative; Cross; Africa(ness); Identity; Empathy; Forgiveness; Long-suffering; Selflessness

## Introduction

While there has been some scholarly attention given to exploring the themes and symbols in the Markan Passion Narrative, such as the Cross and the cup of suffering, there is a significant research gap concerning the intersection between African identity and the narrative. Specifically, there has been a lack of in-depth analysis on how the Markan Passion Narrative engages with Africanness, particularly to the crucifixion, death and resurrection of Jesus. How might the themes of the Mark's passion narrative relate to African conceptions of human identity? African conceptions of human identity are often grounded in the principle of ubuntu<sup>2</sup>, which emphasises the importance of compassion,

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<sup>1</sup> This article by no means underestimates the complexities of the concept "African(ess). In support of this claim, Dick (2014:282) notes that the lack of a "pure and essential African identity" is one of the main issues with the process of Africanisation. It is challenging to discuss what is fundamentally African because Africa has been influenced by other cultural, religious, and political components.

<sup>2</sup> Ramose (1999:80) contends that the Ubuntu worldview has three interconnected dimensions, which collectively they create the whole in striving for cosmic congruence. In traditional African societies, the universe is both physical and metaphysical. The first element is the living, and this is where the virtue of being human is played out in speech and knowledge. The second involves the "living-dead", also called ancestors. Since they continue to exist in an unknown spiritual world to those they left behind, they affect the living, and therefore, people need to keep a good relationship with them. Ancestors are remembered, not "worshipped" as assumed by some Westerners (Mbiti 1990:9). The third element of Ubuntu's worldview is the "yet-to-be-born." They live in a current sense even if they have not yet been born. Philosophies and actions collectively call the entire community into existence, and morals are rooted in everything in the

empathy, and collective responsibility. In this context, the themes of the Markan Passion Narrative can be seen as resonating well with African value systems and concepts of identity, for example, in Jesus' act of sacrificial love on the Cross, which is central to Mark's narrative. This motif (sacrificial love) I think can be interpreted as an expression of empathy and compassion for all of humankind. And this is not only in relation to the spiritual side of human life but also the physical conditions of humanity. This can be seen as aligning with African<sup>3</sup> conceptions of community, which prioritise caring for and supporting one another. Likewise, Jesus' selflessness in accepting his mission to die on the cross for the sake of others can be seen as a model of ethical behaviour for African communities. The idea that one person's suffering can benefit the greater community, as demonstrated in the narrative, is a concept that may resonate with African cultural traditions of communal sacrifice and sharing.

The study wishes to approach this subject in two ways. Firstly, a literary analysis will focus on the use of symbols, themes, and narrative techniques in the Passion Narrative to explore the relationship between the Cross and African(ess). This approach will involve the close reading of the text in light of the historical and cultural milieu in which the narrative was written. Secondly, to explore African(ness) in the context of the Markan Passion narrative, the article aims to employ Narrative Identity Theory<sup>4</sup> as a theoretical framework. According to this theory, only the importance of personal stories and communal narratives in shaping one's identity are considered. By utilising this framework, I wish to analyse how the Mark Passion narrative contributes to the construction(s) of African(ness) within the cultural and social setting.

### **Symbols in the Markan Passion Narrative**

The interest of this section is in navigating the evangelist's use of symbols in Mark's passion account. In other words, the issue here is what the symbols present in Mark's passion narrative and their theological significance. The Markan Passion Narrative contains several symbols that hold deep theological significance (Mk 14–15). Each of these symbols adds to the Markan theological viewpoint, and each juxtaposes African

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society irrespective of groupings, such as economic and political groupings. The image of a world in this case is primarily anthropocentric. Among the three elements, there is a force intrinsic in everything but possessed more by humans than by animals. This transcendent power is not human but Godly, though some people have the aptitude to control it. Mbiti (1990:15) clarifies that this balance is categorically important for the wholeness of the community to be maintained, and therefore, destroying one category denies its whole existence. Maluleka (2019:3) defines the philosophy of Ubuntu, with its emphasis on cultural inclusiveness, equity, and equality. According to Keevy (2009:32), ubuntu "envelops the key values of group solidarity, compassion, respect, human dignity, conformity to basic norms and collective unity, in its fundamental sense it denotes humanity and morality".

<sup>3</sup> This is not to exclude other, non-ethnic groupings, but since I write as a Black African in the southern region of Africa. And this reality is the only overall background to this study.

<sup>4</sup> Narrative Identity Theory is a psychological framework that explores how individuals construct and make sense of their personal identities through the creation and interpretation of life stories or narratives. It was originally proposed by the psychologist Dan P. McAdams in the late 1980s. Narrative Identity Theory provides a framework for understanding how individuals create and maintain a sense of self through the construction and interpretation of life stories, and how these narratives shape their identity, values, and well-being.

cultural concepts and lived experiences. In Mark's Gospel, Jesus speaks of a cup that he must drink (Mark 14:36). This cup symbolises the suffering and death that Jesus must undergo as a part of his mission. Hence, France (2002:584–585) poignantly points out that this cup's symbolism is a prevailing and primeval image of God's wrath, which must be borne by those who rebel against God. The use of the cup as a metaphor for suffering and death was common in Jewish scriptures/literature (Psalm 75:8, Jeremiah 25:15–16, Ezekiel 23:32–34, War Scroll [1QM]). Meanwhile, Marcus (2009:890–891) suggests that the cup metaphor is a reference to the Jewish practice of offering a cup of wine at the end of a meal, which was a symbol of acceptance and unity. In the context of Mark's Gospel, however, the cup symbolises suffering and rejection, as Jesus must drink it alone, without the support of his disciples. Edwards (2002:413–414) further argues that the cup symbolises the wrath of God that Jesus must bear on behalf of humanity, and that it is a reminder of the covenantal relationship between God and his people. He also suggests that the cup is a symbol of Jesus' submission to the will of God, as he must drink it to fulfil his mission. Surely, these various portrayals of the cup each show some significant nuances that add an important theological motif to the passion discourse, such as God being vengeful towards those who rebel against him. Acceptance, unity, and submission to God's will – all of these cup symbolisms noted here are central to African constructs of the concepts of God and human relations. For example, two of the early isiXhosa hymns, one by Ntsikane "UloThixo mkhulu" and Tiyo Soga's famous "Lizalise Idinga Lakho", carry or rather embody the essence of deep constructs and beliefs about God and his relation to his people. In both of these hymns, all these motifs are incorporated. The idea of God being the great God implies that he has to be revered and obeyed. Again, the fact that, according to Soga's hymn, "God, Lord of truth fulfil your promise" also assumes supplication, trust, and obedience amongst his people. Further, "lawula lawula Nkosi uYesu-reign Lord Jesus reigns" is a clear theological claim of who Jesus is and what is he capable of. "Do not let your wrath fall upon us perhaps we all going to die." A cry of utter despair and reverence on our part towards him. These assumptions or rather beliefs echo the message of Easter.

Furthermore, during the Last Supper, Jesus takes bread, blesses it, breaks it, and gives it to his disciples, saying "This is my body" (Mark 14:22). This bread symbolises the body of Christ, which will be broken on the cross for the redemption of humanity. Again, in the same meal, Jesus took a cup of wine, blessed it, and gave it to his disciples, saying "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many" (Mark 14:24). This wine symbolises the blood of Christ, which will be shed on the cross for the forgiveness of sins. The first part of the Last Supper involves a blessing associated with the bread (cf. 6:41; 8:6). Stein (2008:650) maintains that the term "bread" (ἄρτος) is not the specific term used for "unleavened bread" (ἄζυμος) yet it is often used to refer to unleavened bread (Josephus, Ant. 3.6.6 §143; cf. §142; 3.10.7 §256) and is the designation the LXX uses to describe the unleavened showbread (Exod. 40:23; 1 Sam. 21:7; 1 Chron. 9:32; etc.). It is not specified whether Jesus or God "blessed" (εὐλογήσας) the bread (Hooker 1991: 340; Donahue and Harrington 2002: 395).

As for Gundry (1993:831–840), it is dubious that the disciples of Jesus would have thought these words to mean that the bread was essentially Christ's physical body, since his body was present with them. However, there has been a strong tradition that developed, as early as the apostolic era, to think of this as referring to the actual body of

Jesus especially as a result of the statement(s) such as “this is my blood” (τοῦτό ἐστιν τὸ αἷμά μου, see 14:23–24), hence, the idea that the bread represents the person of Jesus, not simply a part of him, such as his “flesh” in contrast to his “blood,” and portrays Jesus as giving himself in death as a ransom for many (Mk 10:45). The sharing of bread was merely part of the procedure involved in issuing bread throughout the meal. In Mark 10:38–39, the term “cup” (ποτήριον) was used to describe the future death of Jesus (Mk 14:36). The interpretive word associated with the cup is more detailed than that given with the bread, “This is my blood of the covenant that is poured out for many.” Jesus’ willingness to offer his body as the ransom for many and as a gift from God for the salvation of humanity is one of the cardinal themes in the passion account. At this juncture, the obvious question is this: how does this symbol of the breaking of bread relate to African(ess)?

In this regard, one quickly relates this reality as actualised in what can be referred to as isiXhosa national Easter anthems, sung across denominational borders. One is by the famous Tiyo Soga “*sinesipho esikhulu, esisiphiweyo, sisiphiwe nguYehova* – We have a great and precious gift from God” – This gift is Jesus. Followed by “*wakrazulwa ngenxa yam* - He was pierced on my behalf”. The gesture of being appreciative is central to African life. Hence, at times it can be very difficult for an African child to distinguish when he/she is exploited because of this virtue that is central to their very life. As we grew up, we are taught to be thankful for everything, no matter how small or insignificant it is. For example, one famous isiXhosa saying, “*ucuntsu akafani no cwaka*”. The literal meaning of this saying is as follows: “One small, tiny item is not the same as silence/nothing”. Hence, this symbolic nature of the body of Christ that was offered for many as the gift of God to humankind becomes a more profound reality and lived experience amongst amaXhosa.

More than that, this symbolism of bread that was unjustly broken for humanity to an extent evokes black experiences whenever these texts are read because they recall their past unjust experiences caused by the past political realities of South Africa. Such unjust experiences are still entrenched in the collective memories of many black South Africans. Hence, based on such unique life experiences of black South Africans pre-1994, Mofekeng (1983) referred to them as “cross-bearers” while Mosala (1985:109–111) and Tlhagale (1985:126–134) termed them “working class”. Govender (1982:61), called them “*abantu*-the people”, namely “those who were crushed under the burden of making others rich, who are suppressed into the subhuman nether level of existence, those who go hungry and thirsty through life, weak and in body and mind...only these deserve to be called people-*abantu*”. Mazamisa (1987:162) further tells the story that clearly describes such black experiences. He tells the story of an old woman whom he describes as frail and fragile, who was about seventy-five years of age at the time. He visited this woman in one of the South African Bantustans. This woman lived with her three grandchildren, whose parents were both in prison. One of the children, a greasy nine-year-old boy, was lying in bed, paralysed for life and speechless after being beaten by the police. Surely, there are many such related untold stories of many black people that linger in their memories to this day. It is in the light of such experiences that the symbolism of the bread that was unjustly crushed brings comfort and healing to many who have such lingering memories.

## **Literary devices in Mark's Passion Narrative**

A literary device is essentially a method that a writer uses to give their text more weight or impact. It is frequently utilised in many different sorts of written work and is designed to assist the reader in developing a more detailed vision of what is happening within the writing. On the other hand, literary devices are the tools and techniques that writers use within any genre to craft their work effectively. These devices are not specific to a particular genre but can be found across various forms of literature. The second evangelist is a creative author in his own right in the way he uses literary devices. In this article, we will focus on only two literary devices, foreshadowing and Irony.

### ***Foreshadowing***

Mark makes use of various literary devices to bring across his theological intent as he presents the story of the crucified Messiah. For instance, Mark mentions what Ernest and Martinez (2008:93) call three formal predictions of Jesus's death (Mk 8:31, 9:31, 10:32–34). These formal predictions come from Jesus' mouth. Similarly, another incident takes place in Bethany, at Simon the leper's house. Jesus is reclining at a table when a woman approaches, carrying an alabaster flask filled with a precious and costly ointment made of pure nard. Demonstrating a profound gesture, she shatters the flask and pours the fragrant ointment over Jesus' head. Some individuals present expressed indignation, questioning the apparent wastefulness, suggesting that the ointment could have been sold for a substantial amount and the proceeds used for charitable purposes. Despite the criticism, Jesus defends the woman's action, acknowledging it as a beautiful and meaningful gesture directed towards his death. These incidents foreshadow the death of Jesus as an anticipated event that will shortly happen. As Wessel and Strauss (2010:282) note, this is the first time in Mark's gospel that the cross is mentioned. It suggests that Jesus knew how he would die and was prepared for it. Bearing a cross has little to do with a minor annoyance; rather, it has to do with the journey to crucifixion. As was demanded of Jesus (Lk 23:26; see also Mk 15:21), the image depicts a victim who has already been found guilty and is forced to carry his cross to the place of execution. So even before the actual event, the narrator prepares his readers for the actual scene of the crucifixion and death of Jesus.

### ***Irony***

In Mark 15–16, there are a few instances that can be interpreted as containing irony. For instance, there is the irony of the mocking in Mark 15:16–20, where Jesus is mocked by the Roman soldiers. They dress Him in a purple robe, put a crown of thorns on his head, and hail Him as the King of the Jews. The soldiers sarcastically kneel before him and mock his supposed kingship. However, the irony lies in the fact that despite their mockery, Jesus is indeed the true King, but they fail to recognise his divinity and the significance of his mission. Strauss (2014:2330) asserts that Mark uses startling irony throughout his straightforward, unvarnished story. Jesus is continually insulted as the "king of the Jews," and he is told to save himself on the cross because he said he would save others. Ironically, however, Jesus is the Jewish King who is currently rescuing his people by remaining on the cross and offering his life as a sacrifice for sins (10:45), not by descending from it. The story of the crucifixion (15:20c–39) follows the mocking,

and the passage concludes with a mention of the presence of women who were Jesus' supporters (15:40–41).

The reader is set up for the tale of Jesus' resurrection in verses 16:1–8, thanks to the mention of women (15:47), and the burial of Jesus (15:42–46). Jesus is mocked at first by being made to wear a purple robe and a "crown" to look like a king. In Matthew 27:29, it is mentioned that Jesus is also given a reed as a sceptre (see also Mark 15:19). Shellfish was used to produce the pricey and luxurious purple dye from Tyre (Brown 1994: 865). Emperors and monarchs wore it, and only the wealthy could afford it. It was considered to be a royal colour. The irony of the inscription in Mark 15:26 is that it is mentioned that Pilate has an inscription placed on the cross above Jesus' head, which reads, "The King of the Jews." This inscription is intended to mock and ridicule Jesus and His claim to kingship. However, once again, the irony lies in the fact that Jesus is indeed the King of the Jews and the Messiah, but the inscription unknowingly proclaims the truth of His identity to those who pass by. It's important to note that interpretations of irony may vary among individuals, and these are just a couple of examples that can be found in Mark 15–16.

Judas' betrayal of Jesus, when contrasted with certain African communal values, particularly among ethnic groups like the amaXhosa, Zulu, and Ndebele, reveals a different set of cultural priorities. In many African societies, communal bonds are highly esteemed, and trust within the community is paramount. Betrayal not only disrupts interpersonal relationships but can also have broader implications for the cohesion of the entire community. The irony surrounding the inscription, where Pilate unwittingly affirms Jesus as the King of the Jews, could be seen as a reversal of expectations. In many African cultures, oral traditions and storytelling often involve elements of irony, where apparent contradictions or unexpected outcomes reveal deeper truths. The idea of an authoritative figure, such as a king or messiah, being proclaimed in a seemingly mocking manner, only to have that proclamation turn out to be true, may resonate with African storytelling traditions that incorporate irony for narrative impact. Moreover, the concept of kingship and messiahship holds significance in various African cultures, often intertwined with African spirituality to an extent. The irony of Jesus' true identity being proclaimed mockingly on the inscription might evoke reflection on the mysterious and unexpected ways in which divine or spiritual truths are revealed in African cultural narratives. Regarding South Africa's dark hours of apartheid, liberation movements had a slogan that I suppose was very ironic. The political slogan was "*Amandla-ngawethu*" literally "Power is ours/ belongs to us". This slogan was proclaimed in such terrible moments of our history as a motivation to move forward and fight the injustices of the time. In 1994, such aspirations turned into reality and there was the birth of the New Day, a democratic South Africa. Sadly, that power is currently being misused and abused by black children against other black children, almost to the collapse of everything in the country.

These narrative techniques and symbolisms serve to make the Passion Narrative a powerful and moving account of the events surrounding Jesus' crucifixion, death, and resurrection to communicate the significance of these events to the original audience and the contemporary reader as well. What becomes apparent in this exercise is the fact that the Markan Passion narrative presents the reader with this account of the sacrificial death of Christ for the forgiveness of sin, interwoven with themes that are interconnected with

various African narratives. In light of this, one may conceivably argue that empathy is a key aspect of Jesus' sacrificial death for humanity. That can easily resonate with African(ess) to a large extent. The concept of empathy can certainly be seen as central to understanding Jesus' sacrificial death, but it is not the only or necessarily the primary way of understanding it. But empathy, which involves the ability to understand and share the feelings of another, could be seen as one aspect of the sacrificial death of Jesus, particularly in the way that it expresses God's compassion for humanity. Hence, in the next section, the focus will be to navigate that kind of connection between the African constructs of aspects of their identity and how it relates to the story of Christ's suffering, death, and resurrection. Perhaps that can explain why this Christian event is likely the Christian event that is well celebrated in these communities (Hombana 2022:2).

### **Empathy, selflessness, forgiveness and long-suffering in African conceptions of community**

In many African cultures, community and interconnectedness are highly valued. Empathy and selflessness are seen as key virtues for maintaining harmonious relationships within communities. In African traditional thought, an individual's well-being is closely tied to the well-being of the community as a whole. Therefore, acts of selflessness and empathy are seen as important in promoting the common good in these societies. For instance, in most African societies, more specially in Nguni communities, we are told that these communities are built on philosophies such as "*Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*" – the idea behind this philosophical thought is that one should leave to serve his/her fellow man. In other words, one must respect and serve his/her fellow human beings faithfully, with no ulterior motives besides cherishing the other as a fellow human being. For example, in the Bantu philosophy of Ubuntu, the individual's identity is rooted in their relationship with the community. The principle of Ubuntu emphasises the importance of empathy, compassion, and respect for others as crucial to building and maintaining strong relationships within the community. Similarly, in the Akan tradition of Ghana, the concept of *sankofa* emphasises the importance of learning from the past for the betterment of the community in the present and future. This involves a selfless commitment to preserving the wisdom of previous generations for the benefit of the community (Saphir 2001:1–8). Seemingly, one can conclude that Africans by nature are empathetic and selfless, as can be argued based on these African conceptions of human relations. For instance, the death of an individual from one family becomes a societal concern, so much so that the entire community and surroundings put everything aside to go and express their bereavement to that family. Until the actual burial of that family member, the community organises itself every day to provide communal support through daily bereavement spiritual services for comfort and healing for the family.

In light of these African conceptions of community and interconnectedness, the themes of empathy and selflessness in the Markan Passion Narrative can be seen as resonating with these values. The narrative portrays Jesus as willing to suffer and sacrifice himself for the sake of others, demonstrating a selflessness that aligns with African conceptions of community. Similarly, Jesus' empathy for others, as demonstrated in his healing miracles and his interactions with the marginalised, reflects a concern for the well-being of others that is also valued in African traditional thought. Therefore, exploring the relationship between the themes of empathy and selflessness in

the Markan Passion Narrative and African conceptions of community and interconnectedness can provide valuable insights into how the narrative might reverberate with African audiences and contribute to discussions of African identity and values.

Hurtado (2012:138) is on point when he says about Jesus that on his final night, Jesus expressed his anxiety about the ordeal that lay ahead of him, but he also emphasised that he would put his fate into God's hands and would not seek to save himself. Jesus thus presents himself in Mark as a model of selflessness and faithful submission to God's will, even at great cost to himself. Similarly, according to Edwards (2002:293, 453), as Jesus hangs on the cross, he remains focused on the needs of others, not his own. His selflessness is expressed in his prayer for forgiveness for his executioners, his words of assurance to the penitent thief, and his concern for his mother's welfare. Furthermore, Edwards writes, "For Mark, the cross is not a display of raw power or domination but rather an act of selfless love that brings salvation to humanity". He also notes that "the image of Jesus as the suffering servant who gives his life as a ransom for many (10:45) embodies a selflessness that inspires emulation by his followers. Edwards emphatically states that the selfless nature of Jesus' sacrifice in the Markan Passion Narrative is the supreme and final atoning work of redemption and salvific significance.

On the other hand, Card (2012:80–81), speaking of the forgiveness of Jesus, notes that in Mark 2:1–12, Jesus forgives a paralytic man's sins, which leads to controversy among the scribes who are present. Card argues that this episode shows that Jesus believes he has the authority to forgive sins, which was a prerogative reserved for God in Jewish tradition. He goes on to claim that this understanding of Jesus' authority to forgive sins is also present in the Markan Passion Narrative, where Jesus forgives those who crucify him (Mark 15:34) and the criminal who is crucified with him (Mark 15:39). Card contends that this forgiveness is a sign of Jesus' prophetic mission, which was to bring God's forgiveness to humanity. While Brown thinks that the cry of dereliction (Mark 15:34) is an expression of Jesus' feeling of abandonment by God on the cross, but it is also an expression of his continued trust in God's love and mercy. Brown argues that this cry of dereliction is a sign of Jesus' forgiving attitude towards his enemies, as he does not ask God to punish them, but rather asks for God's mercy on them. Brown also notes that the forgiving attitude of Jesus is present in his interaction with the criminal who is crucified with him, where he promises the criminal that he will be with him in paradise as Luke argues (Lk 23:43–44). The forgiveness of Jesus in the Markan Passion Narrative is a sign of his prophetic mission and his trust in God's love and mercy, rather than a desire for revenge or punishment.

The long-suffering of Jesus as postulated by LaVerdiere (1989:197–202) is portrayed in Mark by the evangelists' emphasis of Jesus' silence in the face of false accusations and his endurance of physical torture. LaVerdiere (1989:197–202) notes that the Greek word μακροθυμέω, which is often translated as "patience" or "long-suffering," is used to describe Jesus' attitude towards his accusation and unjust cause by the authorities (Mk 15:1–5 and 15:15–20). According to LaVerdiere, Jesus' long-suffering reflects his commitment to God's will and his love for humanity, even in the face of extreme and unbearable suffering. Bockmuehl (2004:205) discusses the idea of Jesus as a long-suffering servant in the context of Mark's Gospel, and how this depicts the Isaiah 53 suffering servant, and how Mark beautifully incorporates it in his narrative. He argues



that Mark's portrayal of Jesus as a long-suffering servant who endures unjust suffering and rejection is a deliberate theological strategy to present Jesus as the ultimate model of faithful discipleship. Bockmuehl also suggests that this emphasis on long-suffering can be seen as a particularly "Jewish" element in Mark's Christology, given the Jewish tradition of prophetic martyrdom and the concept of the suffering servant in Isaiah 53.

Edwards (2002:431), on the other hand, notes that Jesus endures physical, emotional, and spiritual suffering throughout the narrative, and yet remains steadfast in his commitment to God's mission. Edwards further suggests that this portrayal of Jesus as a long-suffering figure is meant to emphasise his divinity and his role as a sacrificial atonement for the sin of humankind. He also notes that this portrayal of Jesus as a long-suffering figure has been particularly influential in Christian theology and piety, as it provides a model for believers to emulate in their suffering and trials. This aspect is cross-cultural, but one cannot deny the fact that from within black experience, it relates so well. The story of the black child's long-suffering is an integral part of that story, to the point that the black experience survives within that conception of life and reality. It is in light of this that the passion story of Jesus is easily appreciated as a real message of hope. For instance, in the Xhosa culture, manhood is defined as "*unyamezelo nokuthatha uxanduva*", meaning that manhood is endurance and being able to take responsibility. So, as womanhood. To be human in this group of people is to be able to endure the unjust causes of life, as well as being able to take responsibility and the ability to forgive. For example, when the young man is about to go through initiation school, he is told that he is on his way back (*ikrwala*). So, the young bride (*umtshakazi*) is told by the old and wise woman that to be successful in marriage, one must be prepared to endure marriage and life issues and be ready to take responsibility for the household and family duties of marriage. Also, learning to practise forgiveness is important. These are life's perspectives grounded on the principle that "*ubomi ngumzamo*", "life is a try". The implications are that in life one keeps trying and never gives up for any reason.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the redemptive story of Jesus holds immense significance and resonates deeply with African people, particularly due to the injustices that have marred their history. This narrative offers a sense of redemption, hope, and liberation, providing solace and inspiration in the face of adversity. The philosophy of Ubuntu, emphasising empathy and interconnectedness, further reinforces the message of selflessness and compassion. Additionally, the African spirit is characterised by a remarkable capacity for forgiveness, enabling individuals and communities to heal and reconcile. Moreover, Africans have demonstrated remarkable resilience and long-suffering, enduring and overcoming unimaginable hardships. Collectively, these aspects form a powerful tapestry that speaks to the strength, resilience, and enduring life experiences of African people, making the redemptive story of Jesus a celebrated and transformative event in their lives.

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