







can understand and you show them how to live by what is right and true in whatever situation they find themselves.

You persist in condemning what is false and wrong, even when it loses you popularity. You use your power to make things better for them and you show them that this power lives in them when they live in you. You pour out your lifeblood for them, literally and metaphorically, because this is the only way that you can get alongside them. It is not you, as God, who needs their sacrifices. It is they who need your sacrifice. *My blood is poured out for many.*

They kill you, as you always knew they would because your ways are not their ways and they cannot cope with this yet. You die because you always knew you had to. The last enemy of the human race is death and you have to go through that too. Everything human about you has to be broken and destroyed.

Only then can you come back from the deepest, darkest places and hope to be received as a God of love and power. Only then can you prove that your ways are the ways of life and truth. Only then can vulnerable human beings even begin to trust you as the one who will save them, lead them and empower them. Only then can they begin to hope that spending their lives in what you taught them to be right and true will be of benefit to them and to others because it will be a sharing in your broken body and your poured out blood, becoming the life laid down to bring about the life restored.

Why did Jesus have to die? He died for you and for me. Not to hit us with a guilt trip, nor to seize totalitarian power over us. He died to reconcile us to God, to save us from the hold that evil and death have on us, to give us life abundant and full; life that can never be destroyed. He died to demonstrate in his own body the truth about life. He died so that nothing could ever separate us from God's love.

His pain. And, if we choose to accept it, our immeasurable gain.  
Amen.