

Reflection



- Showing love
- Giving hope
- Bringing peace

The Church of St John & St Leonard

Mark 15: 33 – 41

Good Friday, Friday 10th April 2020

At the foot of the Cross

³³ When it was noon, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. ³⁴ At three o'clock Jesus cried out with a loud voice, 'Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?' which means, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' ³⁵ When some of the bystanders heard it, they said, 'Listen, he is calling for Elijah.' ³⁶ And someone ran, filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on a stick, and gave it to him to drink, saying, 'Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to take him down.' ³⁷ Then Jesus gave a loud cry and breathed his last. ³⁸ And the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. ³⁹ Now when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that in this way he breathed his last, he said, 'Truly this man was God's Son!'

⁴⁰ There were also women looking on from a distance; among them were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joses, and Salome. ⁴¹ These used to follow him and provided for him when he was in Galilee; and there were many other women who had come up with him to Jerusalem. (NRSVA)

So much has happened in the past week. 5 days ago Jesus was greeted with cries of "Hosanna" by crowds who welcomed Him. Now we see Him handed over to the authorities, passed from political pillar to post and now degraded and humiliated, suffering but still fully engaged.

It is not easy for us, in the 20th Century to appreciate the horror of crucifixion. A penalty reserved for slaves and rebels.

The crowds have gone from adulation to rejection, the inner group of disciples have shared a final meal with Jesus, heard His teaching, seen His struggle in Gethsemene and have seemingly vanished and Peter has gone from defiance to denial.

But why did Jesus die, and why in such a terrible way?

In the words of Charles Wesley '*Tis mystery all! The Immortal dies! Who can explore His strange design? Or in Dave Bilborough's modern hymn "Surrender" "What love is this that takes my place?"*

As we reflect on the Cross we too can ask those, and other questions, starting to see some of its meaning, and start, at least in part take in the pivotal nature of the Cross.

By the end of Friday the world was a very different place to what it had been a few days before.

Rector: The Revd Vicki Bryson



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We see Jesus on the cross, and it is not too strong to say that we see the Trinity torn apart as our triune God agonises over His creation, His chosen people and against the evil which has resulted in this shameful spectacle.

Jesus cries out, a cry of desolation. The first verse from Psalm 22 (in Aramaic, the language of the people) , but we could miss that this is the opening of a psalm of triumph which ends "*All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the Lord ... for dominion belongs to the Lord, and He rules over the nations*"

Through the agony, the hope in and through the Cross is established, not just for individual salvation, but for the renewal and restoration of God's creation as it heralds the "New Heaven and New Earth".

The Cross brings the solution both to personal sin but also to evil in the world, dealing with the underlying idolatry at the heart of both.

It is the dawning of Hope, but it is as if that dawn will not break into view until Easter Day.

It is no coincidence that this happened at Passover – the freedom festival, but we also see reflections of the feast of atonement, forgiveness through another, but do we see the enormity of this beyond our personal need for forgiveness?

We hear of the torn curtain, speaking of reconciliation between Heaven and earth; the spontaneous statement of truth about Jesus by the soldier; and the group of women keeping watch and grieving at the foot of the Cross.

Women took on responsibility, continuing to serve by their presence, spending time and who would lay Him to rest. A love offering

As we reflect on the mystery, or is it mysteries, plural, of the Cross, let us gather with those women and ask ourselves some questions.

- Does the Cross startle us out of our already disrupted routine to spend more time with Jesus?

The Cross heralds in the New Covenant between God and those He has created. He calls each and every one of us, and the Cross releases us into that vocation

- So what is God calling you to today, this week, in the coming, unpredictable weeks or months?

The Cross of Christ brings hope.

- How will we share that hope in a time which for many seems devoid of hope? In acts of service, in timely words, in unbidden telephone conversations?

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