

GOOD FRIDAY April 19, 2019

The Cross: For This He Came

Good Friday is one of the most difficult days of the Christian year because it is a day when we remember what happened about 2000 years ago. In a period of 12 hours, a man who had been praised, and glorified for performing miracles of different kinds was betrayed, beaten, despised and killed by a form of capital punishment which was declared inhumane. Crucifixion was the most disgraceful form of execution. It was reserved for slaves, foreigners, revolutionaries, and vile criminals. The only time a Roman citizen was ever crucified was for desertion from the army. It was about killing somebody in a really horrible way. Someone who was crucified suffered the maximum amount of pain as it is dying by means of exhaustion and asphyxiation.

Yet Jesus came into the world not to share about death. But Jesus came that people might have life and have it abundantly. This is difficult to comprehend on this day when we remember his death. Yet the prophets who lived a long time before Jesus was born foretold of the One who would come to bring life and to do so out of death.

The prophets wrote about who the King would be that would save his people. The Saviour was to be a descendant of King David and be born in Bethlehem. The one who preceded him would announce His coming and would prepare the people by teaching them and baptising them. Yet the prophet Isaiah states that even though he had many followers, he would be rejected by his own people. (Isaiah 53:3) The Psalmist wrote that a friend would betray him (Ps 41:9) and the price of this betrayal is accredited to another prophet, Zechariah (11:12)

The Psalmist (34:20) also wrote that he was not to have any broken bones at the time of his execution and this became evident after his death. In order to speed up the death of those being crucified often the legs and knees of the person was broken. But Jesus was already dead when the soldiers were prepared to do this.

Why did Jesus come? He lived to die, was rejected and alone as he stood silently before Pilate. Why did Jesus stand alone to face the sentence of crucifixion? Jesus knew his purpose was to save his people. He knew that he would die and in three days rise again but what he had to endure in those last 12 hours of life was extreme agony. And he suffered because and for us. He did this because he would carry the burden of the sins of all people in the world upon him. He became the way by which we as Christians believe are forgiven and reconciled with God. And it is through his death, we have faith

beyond our own dying and death. We have faith beyond our existence on earth because conquered death and rose to new life.

Jesus' words were limited during the hours he suffered from flogging, humiliation, betrayal, abandonment and rejection. Those who had promised to never leave him were those that hid for their own safety. Those who had called him the Messiah and witnessed many miracles of healing and feeding the thousands were afraid because they had associated with him. Yet after his death one believer, a wealthy man who had a new tomb, offered this place of burial to Jesus' mother, Mary and Mary Magdalene who helped prepare his body for burial. Yet as they walked away from the tomb where Jesus' body lay in state, they wept and mourn not knowing what would happen next. The tomb was sealed by a large rock and Roman soldiers were guarding it in case someone wanted to steal Jesus' body and claim he had risen. And then they mourned, grieved, wept- the One who had promised to save them- from sin and bring reconciliation, from oppression as he taught a new way of living, from their many burdens in life had offered hope and now all hope was gone.

What occurred for the next 24-36 hours was a time of waiting, grieving, hiding, and discerning their futures. Some of the disciples questioned their following of Jesus; others went fishing to think and do something and still some just hid and prayed and tried to remember all that Jesus taught. Didn't he say he would rise again? Didn't he say the temple would be rebuilt in 3 days? Didn't he say he would save others from sin? Didn't he say he had to die to save others and rise again to offer hope and reconciliation?

As we remember Jesus' arrest, trial and crucifixion this day, let us also take this in between time- to wait, grieve, and discern our future and our future relationship with Jesus. Reflect upon the cross a tool for death which brings hope to all who believe. Reflect and pray as the Spirit of God leads us to remember Christ crucified for our sake.

PRAYER God of love, hear our prayer of hope of reconciliation and of love offered to you as we remember Jesus' agony, pain and suffering on the cross for our sake. Hear our prayers offered in this time of SILENCE> Amen.