

The betrayal, trial, crucifixion and burial of Jesus: A reflection on Good Friday

John 18: 1 - 19:42

We have journeyed this week from Palm Sunday, the triumphant entry of Jesus into Jerusalem. Last evening, we contemplated the Last Supper, now we stand at the day of the crucifixion.

As I contemplated this journey of Jesus and our part in it during the week, I was struck by the words that Jesus spoke before entering Jerusalem:

Lk. 13: 34. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!

How Jesus loved these people, the people of God, and yet, how unwilling they were to respond to his love, to the great love of God. The great love that was to be poured out over all humanity through the actions of the day of the Crucifixion. Love defeating violence and sin.

In a short time we will listen as Peter reads the account of the Passion from John's Gospel. As we hear this account, let us make this journey too.

Let us engage with the story of the Passion of Jesus, let us enter into the drama with those who were part of this story. There are some with whose words and actions we might indentify with, others we might recoil from.

We will hear again the inevitable moving towards the cross – am I not to drink the cup? (that the Father has given me). Not my will but yours. There was no other choice, Jesus walked in obedience, absolute obedience to His Father – even to death.

We will hear again the story of the betrayal of Jesus and think on Judas, what motivated him? If not him, who else?

How do we respond to his actions?

If this journey for Jesus was inevitable, leading always to the cross, then in what ways are our own life journeys also inevitable, as we turn to Christ. Jesus told his disciples to take up their cross and follow him.

When we give our lives to Jesus, when we wait on his will for us, there is an inevitability about our journey, if we allow ourselves to be open to God and thus to the leading of the Holy Spirit, then we will know that journey, that leading, on the path that is ours and God's to travel.

We will know this – if we can let go of doubts and fears – to be open to his leading. It is in opening ourselves to following Jesus that we will know life in its abundance, the hard parts and the overwhelming joys and blessings.

Above all, God remains faithful to us.

He will not let us stumble and fall although the road may be hard.

Yet, how often we do doubt and fall short – we will be reminded of Peter this morning as we listen, Peter who Jesus said was to be the rock on which the Church of God would be built. Peter who said to Jesus, you have the words of eternal life to whom else can we go?

When it seems Jesus needed him most – Peter denied his Lord three times.

Then the journey turns to Pilate, the Roman governor – so easily swayed by the crowd to hand Jesus over to be killed.

We will hear of those who watched the procession, those who stood by the cross. The women, we remember them too.

The last words that Jesus spoke, from the cross, before he died, obedient to His Father – It is finished.

Finally burial and the intervention of Joseph and Nicodemus.

Let us listen this morning to this story of Jesus, our Lord and Saviour and the path he trod to the Cross: for you and me. There we stay and wait a while, to enter into this day, we must not pass too quickly to resurrection, without experiencing the crucifixion.

I pray that we may meet God deeply in this day, that our hearts and minds may be touched and moved by the love of God, who gave his Son to die for us. Amen