

Good Friday
22/04/2011

Mark the Evangelist

Isaiah 52:13 – 53:12

Psalm 22

Hebrews 10:16 - 25

John 19:1 – 19:42

Here hangs a man discarded....

Today, as we today we focus our attention on the cross, it is good to recall that on the first Sunday of Lent we heard the story of Adam and Eve's connivance with the snake over the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil in the Garden. From the beginning the choice of God or not God was there, and their choosing against has God infected us all. We know that in the Wilderness Jesus faced the test of his obedience and prevailed, awakening hope for us, but it was not all over at that time. Now the cross confronts us like a dark riddle, full of ambiguity: is this a new tree of life, or is it a tree of death? Is it both?

The cross and the passion of Jesus Christ is both a great human drama of Temptation, and a decisive moment in which God has drawn near to us in revelation. When we think of the passion and death of Jesus Christ, we are recalling the obedience of one of us who did not snatch at equality with God, but gave to God what was desired. He allowed God to be God, and showed us what it is to be fully human.

John's Gospel says Jesus is: *'the Word who was in the beginning with God, without whom not one thing was made'* [John 1:1 -3]. Even with us, a word is not separate from the one in whose mind brings it to expression and whose mouth uttered it. That Jesus is the Word of God means that God is in him, and in him God is present in creation. God's servant-form was no mere disguise, but a consequence of God's love. But that is why the lonely figure of Jesus Christ, following the way of the cross, is a long way from what we normally think of as 'Almighty God', no match for the monarch who sits somewhere on a sapphire throne, untouched by the troubles and worries of the world.

Of all the evangelists John is the clearest: to meditate on the passion of Christ is to meditate on the mystery of God. In Jesus the deepest level of reality is made known. Rather than treat Good Friday like some sort of unholy bad dream the cross is an invitation to find God among us as one of us, in this despised, rejected suffering figure. This is what God would have us see and learn. This day is about shattering our fixed ideas about God. Good Friday - God's Friday – invites us to new hope and strength because it shows that God did not disdain the worst aspects of our existence, but fully embraced them, even though we disdained the one in whom this took place.

At the end of the service we will sing the Hymn “Here hangs a man discarded”. Good Friday is about a man who was discarded. The irony is that in discarding him, we discarded God. The good news of Easter is that despite all that we could do, God did not discard us. God chose to enter fully into all that it means to be human, in order to show us the way to life. While the cross is a tree of death, it is actually the tree of life. Only as we come to understand this, will we be able to comprehend the meaning of this day, and the meaning of God’s love for the world.
