

The story which we have just watched is so powerful – so confronting! And while the text is word for word as we could have read it ourselves – there is something about the images which makes it even more confronting and challenging. This is not a fictional story – or a story where the biblical context masks what is happening – this is a recount of events which are painful to sit with.

Whenever I hear or participate in the story of the passion I am reminded of a Brian Wren hymn –

*Here hangs a man discarded,  
a scarecrow hoisted high,  
a nonsense pointing nowhere  
to all who hurry by.*

*Can such a clown of sorrows  
still bring a useful word  
when faith and hope seem phantoms  
and every hope absurd?*

*Yet here is help and comfort  
for lives by comfort bound,  
when drums of dazzling progress  
give strangely hollow sound:*

*Life, emptied of all meaning,  
drained out in bleak distress,  
can share in broken silence  
our deepest emptiness;*

*And love that freely entered  
the pit of life's despair,  
can name our hidden darkness  
and suffer with us there.*

*Christ, in our darkness risen,  
help all who long for light  
to hold the hand of promise,  
till faith receives its sight.*

Brian Wren, a modern Hymn writer captures so much as he reflects on the seeming pointlessness of the crucifixion. As we listen ever so carefully to the passion of Jesus read - there is a helplessness of the situation. Where is our God of strength who had come to transform the world and bring us to freedom? Where is our God of love that such pain and nonsense can hang before us?

Yet, in its very name – Good Friday is not a day of despair – but as Wren points out - it a day when we may absurdly hope! Good Friday is a day of Lament – when we cry out in sorrow – for it appears that God is dead and yet the salvation of humanity is secured in the weakness of this one man.

I do not mean a weakness in that Jesus had failed or has sinned– but rather the weakness that makes a person open to suffering – an inability to protect oneself and to ward off shame. The writer to the Hebrews explained this to us earlier – *we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who in every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sin.* (Heb 4:15) Christ knew what it was to suffer! In the account of Jesus final hours which we just participated in, we see a man – embracing the full weakness of humanity. Not the weakness of failure or inability – but the weakness that speaks of honesty and hope. It is no wonder that the hymn writer reflects ‘where faith and love seem phantoms - and every hope absurd?’ For in this moment of Christ crucifixion the power of God is revealed in the weakness of our humanity and our experience of suffering.

We relate to God in this moment of the crucifixion because it connects with our own human experience – our own weakness. The times when we are empty and drained -

Jesus in his passion experiences the world at its emptiest. In the garden of Gethsemane Jesus looks for the comfort of his friends and his companions – only to be disappointed.

He cries out to God in pain if there is any way - take this cup away from me – only to have to come to terms with the reality that there is no turning from this path. An experience that is very human – can you think of a time when you have cried out to God – isn't there another way – only to know that this is the journey that you must take. *Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to the one who was able to save him from death and he was heard because of his reverent submission., (Heb 5:7)*

There are moments in the recount of Christ's final hours when He appears almost hysterical and filled with fear – until he comes to the moment when he must accept his death in isolation and silence. As we journey with Christ through this passion we must also ask ourselves – what parts of our lives fill us with fear? Are their things about ourselves and our situation that we must learn to accept or address?

For Christ, the answer to this question has an eternal answer – Jesus had to accept his death for in this, Christ is made known to us each day in the breaking of his body. Christ was broken for us – and it is this brokenness that we join with Christ, and all those who believe, throughout all time and space, in the Eucharist.

It is somewhat ironic liturgically that the one day in the year when we may not celebrate the Eucharist is the very day that we remember the brokenness of Christ body. The words of the Eucharist prayer are not spoken for they are enacted for us in the passion of Christ. While we will share in the Eucharist in one kind, the words of institution are left unsaid – for we stand in the shadow of the cross – and we are asked to enter into the fullness of Christ sacrifice. Maybe it is for this reason the desolation of Good Friday is even more intense. We cannot be rescued from the reality of humanities weakness – rather we must sit with Christ in his brokenness.

In a few moments the cross will be lifted before us and as it is processed around the church we will respond to the acclamation 'The Cross of Christ' with '**come let us worship**'. We will each be invited to come and knee before the cross and kiss it as a reminder of our own humanity within God – something we share with Jesus. But also as we come before the cross we recognise the weakness of our humanity and our desire for the love God which will sustain us in our life.

Nothing today in many ways makes sense. The language of Good Friday seems foreign as we speak of salvation and necessary death. And yet, there is something in Good Friday that is beyond the logic of our brains, beyond the literal which speaks the depths of our soul and spirit. And that's OK. Maybe one of the lessons of sitting in the depths of Good Friday is about letting go of our need to understand or make sense of what is happening. Sometimes grief just needs to be that – grief.

As we end our liturgy today we will sing the hymn 'My song is love unknown' – it is a poem and a prayer – and maybe one which will sustain us today. It concludes like this:

**Here might I stay and sing,  
no story so divine:  
never was love, dear King,  
never was grief like thine.  
This is my friend,  
in whose sweet praise  
I all my days  
could gladly spend.**

May God embrace us – body, mind and spirit as we sit today in the presence of the story that is unfolding. Amen.