

Sunday Thought

21st March 2021 Fifth Sunday in Lent Passion Sunday

Readings

Jeremiah 31: 31 - 34
Psalm 51: 1 - 12
Hebrews 5: 5 - 10
John 12: 20 - 33

Passionate about the Cross!



I have not closed my eyes to the joy and happiness all about me, but the same eyes have been tear-moist this week. It's been day after day of sadness with events of tragedy brought to the fore in the news – and all against the backcloth of Covid19 – violence against women; racist issues; poverty; the horror of genocide in Myanmar; schoolchildren abducted in Nigeria; countless families in extremes of hunger in Yemen I could go on selecting people and places throughout the world where I hear the cry – *'Help! Will no-one come and save us?'* These cries call out from the injustices of our day to day world for compassion, respect, acknowledgement, forgiveness - for someone to plead for them! All this is the on-going, eternal Heart-rending passion of Jesus carrying God's cross to all time and space just as he did to Golgotha.

Lent is preparation time for Easter when we want cry back to the world – *'There IS help! There IS someone to save you!'* I sometimes fear that while we may enjoy the romance of palm-crosses, daffodils for mothers, easter treats, we may miss the immense wonder that is Easter as it looks beyond the pain and glory of God's burden-bearing-love for the world with the message *'Death is over! The Saviour is alive! There IS an answer to all those desperate cries!'*

We were over the moon when the first covid19 vaccine was announced. It gave hope for all the world. How much more our excitement about God's passion and hope for the world he made and for every minute detail of its life - including me and you! The Gospel reading today provides a picture of all this and challenges us to *'Think Big about Easter.'* In the reading we find Jesus and his disciples together again in Jerusalem for Passover – the festival which brought together vast crowds from many lands. The Lord's popularity has grown wider. He is being heard by people beyond his own Jewish community and faith. People like the Greek-speakers mentioned here are looking for a religion which is more than words and theological ideas with demanding ritual observances – a religion which speaks to human need, political turmoil, war, sickness, pain – speaks to all life's brokenness.

So, these enquirers approach Philip and Andrew who have a measure of greek and may have met them before in Galilee. They ask for these disciples to arrange an interview with the Master. We have no record of that interview, but John does say what their request meant to Jesus. It was a confirming sign from the Father that he had reached the climax of his ministry. What a moment! All the pain of the world is about to be expressed and shared - from Gethsemane to the last crucified cry of *'It is complete!'* and closely followed by all the joy and glory of resurrection and life; salvation, judgement and reconciliation. In the coming of these Greeks Jesus sees the beginning of the whole world finding him. The transformation of humankind and all its ills would begin with individuals like these Greeks. They would be like the single seeds sown for a great harvest.

When Easter day was past and Jesus' final acts of pain and glory were over he said to his followers - *Go into all the world and invite all people to make a faith-appointment to follow me!*

I find that every year the preaching of the Cross and Resurrection of Jesus, with its message of eternal love and life has an ever greater mind-blowing significance for our needs and the heartaches of all people. I pray we all may see it that way and take up Jesus' challenge to pray and work for all the world to come to him who first comes to them. Whatever it may cost us, will be miniscule in comparison to what it cost our Lord. That's Passion!

Prayer for Lent [from Psalm 51]

*Lord, your love is constant, a never failing supply
of forgiveness and new beginning,
of real joy, with growth into new and purer living.
The supply continues to flow freely to us
Give us the humble, penitent spirit
which is switched on to you;
to your inner cleansing
to your sincerity, truth, wisdom;
Bring us ever closer to you in obedient love;
living under the sign of your resurrection cross.*

