

GOOD FRIDAY 10.04.2020

Reading: Mark 15: 1-39

Introduction

‘Were you there when they crucified my Lord?’ so asks that lovely and powerful hymn so often sung on Good Friday. The answer of course is that we weren’t. But in the pages of Scripture we can read the testimony of those who were – those who experienced first-hand the grief, the horror, the pain, and the anguish of watching Jesus nailed to the Cross. We share in a Reading, a Reflection, and prayers.

Silence

Reflection

Good Friday is the day we ‘touch wood’ – we run our fingers over the letters inscribed on the Cross and feel again the touch of Christ, who sends again his message down the stream of time. This is the reality of faith.

That Cross is real, touch the wood, feel it. Know that this is no ancient myth but a true deed in history. Touch wood, and hear the message: ‘Suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried’. Touch wood, and be drawn to that Green Hill far away outside a city wall.

Touch Wood – Touch God

What an AUDACIOUS thing to say! That in coming close to the Cross we are in touch with God. Yet that is the claim, the celebration, the worship and faith of the church through all the ages.

Here is the focal point of faith. God and man come together. And it happens at the cross. This is God’s supreme miracle. This is God’s mysterious way of answering all of our questions.

The message coming to us down the stream of time is that God is with us where we are in our fear, grief, pain in the midst of this global COVID-19 pandemic. He is with us where we are in our hurting, questioning. To our wounds God’s wounds alone can speak. The Christian’s God is not only the understanding God, the compassionate God, the God who offers his help. He is the God who so loved that he gave his Son – handed him over – into the hands of those who know how to inflict pain and the demonic forces of despair abandonment and hell.

It’s the difference we may have known in times of real distress between the wise and kindly friend who offers consolation and support – and that other one who may not have much to say, who probably will not quote the Bible, but brings real help simply because you know he/she has been there.

So the God to whom we turn in our distress is the God with the human face. The God whose outstretched hands bare the marks of the nails and whose heart is the scar where the sword pierced. This is the God we touch when we touch wood this Good Friday.

Touch Wood – Touch Love

Touching the Cross this Good Friday brings us a message down the stream of time and the message is a simple equation: ‘God is Love’.

So John explains in his first epistle: ‘In this is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the expiation for our sins’. The Cross was an inevitable climax to a life of total love. Christ’s life was destroyed in outrage. It was the acceptance of the most vicious form of humiliation this rejecting of his reconciling mission. And the climax of that love is heard in the cry which overcomes the evil: ‘Father, forgive them’. Love empties itself in its care for the other. That is the word of the Cross – a word of patience and tolerance – a word of love.

Touch Wood – Touch Love – we need this touch, we need to receive its *high voltage* to free us in forgiveness, revitalise us, to open us up for the life which the life of love. Touch Wood and, feel the gentle touch of Christ who sends his message of Love down the streams of time.

One of the great advantages of Good Friday and Easter Day is that they take us out of ourselves and make us think of other things, of life and its meaning, and its suffering and events. It gives us such a lot to hope for.

Touch Wood – it’s Good Friday

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

We pray with Jesus, as he is condemned to death, for all who are unjustly condemned, because of the baying of the crowds.

Lord, hear us: Lord, graciously hear us.

We pray with Jesus, as he takes up his cross, for all who bear the burden of the fears and resentments of others.

Lord, hear us: Lord, graciously hear us.

We pray with Jesus as he falls, for all who fall under the weight of oppression and injustice, that they may recognise God among them.

Lord, hear us: Lord, graciously hear us.

We pray with Jesus, as he is stripped of his garments, for grace to be his broken body in the world

Lord, hear us: Lord, graciously hear us

We pray with Jesus, as he is nailed to the cross, for all who struggle to confront injustice with love, and despair with hope.

Lord, hear us: Lord, graciously hear us.

The Lord’s Prayer

Closing

May we watch and wait

Thanks be to God.