

Reflections for Holy Week by the Revd Bridget Brooke

Holy means 'set apart for God'. So maybe, because of our segregation, and not being occupied with our normal daily tasks, we shall be able to accompany Jesus more fully, on his way to the cross; through his suffering and dying for us. In that deepening of our prayer we shall be made more ready to share the joy of his rising on Easter Day. To help us we can use the gospel readings that are set for each day. They are from St John so as we are the church of St John the Evangelist, they are particularly for us!

Monday. John 12,1-11

Jesus comes to supper with Mary, Martha and Lazarus. We are also invited. Imagine yourself there as an invited guest. What happens? Mary takes her most expensive possession and pours it on Jesus' feet and wipes them with her hair. It was an act of great love, penitence, thanksgiving and humility. Jesus accepts it and recognises that the ointment was intended for his burial. We ask ourselves, does our love of Jesus cost us as much? Are we profoundly grateful for his love and self-offering for us on the cross? Can we respond...'Love so amazing, so Divine, demand my soul, my life, my all'.

Tuesday. John 12;20-36

Some Greeks who came to worship at the Passover, seemed to sense that something, or rather someone, was missing. They ask to see Jesus. Why? Was it because they had heard of his teaching and his miracles? Jesus tells them and us, that to follow him means sharing in his death. As his disciples we must die to self and live in him. He asks us to share his obedience to the Father. It cost him anguish of soul. Can we not obey his promptings in the pricking of our consciences, to greater love and kindness. It costs us little. Jesus knew that his dying on the cross would bring all people to life in him. His self-offering to the Father has conquered the power of evil to enslave us. Pray and praise him saying....In the cross of Christ I glory, towering o'er the wrecks of time; all the light of sacred story gathers round his head sublime.

Wednesday. John13;21-32

Good relationships with others result in openness and trust. Jesus is distressed and tells the twelve that one of them will betray him. He knows it is Judas, and Judas knows in his troubled heart that he will betray Jesus. The other disciples are perplexed and ask, 'Who is it?' We ask, 'Lord, is it I?' We need to recognise and confess the times when we do not follow Jesus in faith and trust. In what ways have we failed in love? Lord have mercy upon me, a sinner.

O Jesus I have promised to serve thee to the end.....
my hope to follow duly is in thy strength alone'

Maundy Thursday. John13;1-17

We are amazed and awe struck as we sit at table with Jesus at the Last Supper. We see him get up, lay aside his outer garment, tie a towel round his waist, and having filled a basin with water, he begins to wash our feet. He knows what he is doing. He knows he is soon to die and go to the Father in heaven. He lays down his life for us

and, as a servant washes the feet of those who come into the house, so his death will wash away our sins and give us eternal life in him. Such is the love of God for us and Jesus bids us show that same love to one another. 'Make me a clean heart, O God and renew a right spirit within me'. Teach me to love others as you, of your very nature, love me.

Good Friday. John 18 ;1-end of 19

Read this slowly, and be there as the story unfolds. Hear and feel the roughness of the soldiers as they arrest Jesus. He offers no resistance. In all his suffering he is 'handed over'. He lays down his life for us, willingly.

Peter protects his own life, and denies his companionship with Jesus, the source of true life. Ask, yourself, are you there too? Pilate cannot understand who Jesus is, What sort of king is he? Is he God's Son? Fear for his own position of power makes him ignore the fact that he is innocent. He washes his hands to be rid of this trouble.

What does that say to us?

Jesus carries his own cross to Calvary, and he carries ours. He is nailed to the cross, helpless and in agony. Yet in his pain he thinks of others and commends his mother and John to one another. He longs for God's total love for us to be fulfilled. In dying, Jesus knows it's truth. His love has won. It is finished and our redemption is completed. Joseph and Nicodemus bury the body of Jesus in a new tomb. It was in a garden,- a place of peace. Could it be a place of re-creation?

Jesus, master carpenter,
who at the last through wood and nails,
did work our full salvation;
wield well your tools upon our lives
that we who come to you rough hewn,
may by your hand be fashioned to a truer beauty
for your Name's sake. Amen'.

Easter Eve. Matthew 27; 62-end

Today is a day of quietness; a time of reflection. Christ has died; is buried, but not yet risen. We wait in hope, but the tomb is dark and cold. The chief priests and Pharisees are anxious that even now, something could go wrong. They therefore, go to Pilate and express their fear that Jesus had said in his life time, 'after three days I will rise again'. They go and make the tomb secure, sealing it with a great stone and set guards to watch. They took every precaution to ensure that Jesus who was crucified, would be gone for ever.

Let us also keep watch; not with the guards outside the tomb, but inside with Jesus-in the stillness and the dark, awaiting the dawn of a new day and a new world. I almost hold my breath there, as we wait for that glorious shout! Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!