

TUESDAY COMMUNION DECEMBER 08

Hymn: 183 When my love for Christ grows weak

Reading: Mark 14. 32-42

Prayers:

When the Greeks wrote about their heroes
they were always calm in the face of death.
They were philosophers who until the last
calmly spoke about life and death
and died without any sign of inner or outer turbulence.

Maybe we would have expected the first Christians
to speak of Jesus facing death in the same way.

Perhaps one of the reasons
why this scene has the “ring of truth” about it
is that it portrays Jesus in inner and outer “agony”
over his approaching death by crucifixion.

Here is a man who throws himself on the ground
as he struggles with the magnitude of what is about to happen.

In part it is the realisation
that he is facing hours of extreme pain.

He clearly is asking whether there is a way
of avoiding the physical horror of the coming hours.

Sometimes people have tried to portray Jesus as a masochist
who enjoyed the thought of pain and suffering.

Not so – life in this world is good
and God does not want his children to suffer.

Yet, he allows suffering
and sometimes that suffering, however terrible,
can become a cause of blessing to the world.

Yet, Jesus’ suffering is only partly to do with physical suffering.

At a deeper level, Jesus must have struggled
with those questions which always afflict human being.

He had spoken of the triumph of God
and yet here he was facing death with a group of people who could not stay awake and
pray and who would surely desert him in his time of need?

Was it really God's will that all that he had said and done
should be destroyed by his death and the scattering of his disciples?

Yet, I suspect, there is a still deeper level
at which Jesus struggles.....

It is a struggle the like of which few of us have ever known.
Jesus is the at the sharp point where divine love
touches the destructive power we call evil,
the evil that seeks to destroy that true humanity
which God wants all people to enjoy.

Jesus, the truly human being
is encountering the full horror of the evil
that wants to destroy him and remove him for ever.

The cry from the cross, "My God, my God ,
why have you forsaken me?"
is the cry of a man who has felt the power of evil
to take away our sense of God's loving, Fatherly presence.

That is a terrible place to be
for someone who even in the Garden of Gethsemane
uses that Aramaic word, "Abba", "
the word a child uses to his father,
as he talks and prays with God.

One of the ways Christians have spoken of the cross
is that there Jesus bore the sins of the world.

On the cross, God in Christ feels the burden
of all the worlds hurt and failure,
all its self-deception and misdirected love,
its anger and cruelty,
all its inner and outer pain and suffering.....

If that is true, what does it feel like
to enter into that experience of bearing the world's suffering.....?

It's beyond me to say
yet it reminds us that what Jesus faces goes far beyond
the Greek philosopher calmly taking his hemlock.

Jesus enters into a struggle which he alone can face
as the one who represents God himself.....

Yet the struggle is not with point or purpose.
Jesus glimpses that this struggle is at the heart of God's purpose
to enable the world to rediscover its true humanity
in relationship with him.

This will be the struggle with evil and the victory of love
through which the world will be saved.....

However hard life may be,
however grim our world may look,
we know that through the cross and resurrection
“nothing can separate from the love of God
in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Amen.