

TUESDAY COMMUNION

Hymn: 89 The race that long in darkness pined

Reading: Mark 14. 53-65

Prayers:

The story Mark offers us of that evening meeting of the Sanhedrin raises all sorts of questions.

- Was it a trial?
- Was it just an informal attempt to decide the charges on which Jesus would be tried a few hours later?
- Why did they meet at night?

Mark suggests that these upholders of the Law were in fact breaking the law in many ways:

- by meeting at night
- by making a direct charge against Jesus when the meeting should only have been asked to decide what the future charge should be.

The four Gospels give us accounts which vary considerably about what happened that night.

What matters most is what the four Gospel writers are telling us about Jesus himself. Mark gives us an answer to that question which we are always asking as Christmas approaches?

Who is this child who comes into our world, born in the stable at Bethlehem.

With considerable irony it is the high priest himself who, in a sense, declares the truth about Jesus as he asks:

“Are the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?”

Having been silent up until then Jesus uses a phrase which reminds us of the answer God gives Moses when Moses asks for the name of God:

In the desert God says, “I am who I am.”
Here Jesus simply says again, “I am!”

So Jesus finally acknowledges what has been hidden throughout this Gospel. He acknowledges that he comes from God with a unique place in the purposes of God.

The “I am” suggests that mystery which is always present as we look on the face of the child of Mary. He is truly one of us with all the needs and all the limitations that being human imposes on any of us.

He is truly one of us! Yet we recognise that in Jesus God himself draws close to us,

that we find in Jesus the grace of God, that never failing love that reaches out to all humanity....

Jesus also quotes words from the book of Daniel:

“You will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of power and “coming with the clouds of heaven.”

Here, too, Mark is telling us who Jesus is for that small Christian community.

Risen from the dead he sits with God, a pictorial way of expressing that God is who Jesus reveals him to be.

We don't believe in three Gods but we do believe in One God who is revealed in Jesus and who comes to be with us through the Spirit.

At the end of time, whether we think of the end of our own lives or the end of the cosmos, we encounter the God we meet in Jesus.

“Every eye shall now behold him Robed in dreadful majesty” as Charles Wesley puts it.

We shall see (once again using pictorial language) Christ seated in judgement.....

The belief in Christ as judge is scary for us all! For someone to know the truth about any of us is not something we may find easy, whether we are those who tried him in the Sanhedrin or people like Peter who follow him and deny him in so many ways.

There are two things to remember:

- Judgement is not about God being cross with us but about us coming to recognise the truth about ourselves so that what is false in us can be put right. Some may refuse that offer but it is not for us to say who will and who will not!
- Secondly, the face of the judge is still the face of Christ and still he looks on us all as the people he loves and to whom he reaches out.

To us another verse of Scripture, “He does not desire the death of a sinner, (that is, any of us) but rather that we may turn and live.”

In Advent we seek to understand the truth about ourselves now that we may not be afraid when we come before Christ in judgement but be ready for that growth into full humanity which his judgement will make possible.

Amen.