

## TUESDAY COMMUNION

**Hymn:** 172 O dearest Lord,

**Reading:** Mark 15. 33-39

**Prayers:**

Is there a more terrible cry than the one uttered by Jesus on the cross,  
“My God, My God, why have you forsaken me”?

It is a cry that gathers all the cries of anguish uttered through the centuries  
by women and men, girls and boys. In the cry of Jesus I hear, the anguish of the parents  
whose children have been killed in Gaza, the sobs of the children whose parents have  
been killed in a car crash, the desolation of the person betrayed by their friend or lover.

The words of Jesus are not original.  
They come from the opening of Psalm 22, a Psalm which begins with anguish but  
finishes as a confident statement of trust in God.

Some people have suggested that Mark places this cry on the lips of Jesus because it  
shows his belief that God will have the final word. Of course, we know that God will,  
but I don't think that Mark believed that that is the significance of those words.

For Mark, this is the cry of the good and loving man, the man of faith and trust,  
who feels abandoned by God. Here is the man who feels utterly alone, deserted in the  
time of his need, with all seemingly lost.....

Here is a man at one with those in Belsen and Auschwitz, with the grief stricken parents  
and children, the man sleeping rough and dying of cold.

I haven't been there, so I can only watch this man who has entered into the experience of  
my fellow women and men who have suffered like him in the depths of their being.

What is more, I can only imagine what it meant for Jesus to suffer that desolation.

To live so close to God, to share in the work of God with such compassion and power,  
to believe that the love of God was breaking into the world through one's words and  
deeds, and then for all this to happen.

Of course, the Gospels suggest he'd seen it coming and even warned his friends about  
what was going to happen, but can anything prepare ones on for the awful reality  
of rejection by ones own people, beatings and mocking, and the sheer physical and  
mental agony of crucifixion?

Mark tells us two other things about those final moments in Jesus' life.

**First**, the curtain which hung at the entrance to the Holy of Holies, the central shrine the High Priest alone entered once a year, the place where God was thought to dwell in all his glory, was torn in two.

To Mark the tearing of the curtain symbolises the consequence of Israel's rejection of Jesus. No longer does she have the dominant place in the human awareness of God. Yet, perhaps it also symbolised to Mark what it meant to the unknown writer to the Hebrews.

Jesus who has entered the Holy of Holies brings all his brothers and sisters, all who are united with him through faith, into the presence of God.

**Secondly**, Mark says that for the first time since the beginning of the Passion of Jesus, someone speaks a true word about him.

The Roman Centurion says, "Truly this man was God's Son!"  
In the midst of the pain and suffering of Calvary the terrible cry of rejection, this gentile glimpses the presence of God in the crucified carpenter who lives and dies amongst us.

If we have glimpsed our God in the dying Jesus then our understanding of God and our experience of life is changed for ever. We see that he comes as the servant God, entering fully into life's desolation and emptiness that our lives may not end in the darkness but in the light of God's mercy and compassion.

Thanks be to God.

Amen.