



Passion in Perspective

For our lent course this year we will be following the passion of Christ as told in the Gospel of John while seeking to understand it within the context of the Covid pandemic. We

will look at six aspects of Christs passion; darkness, touch, anxiety, isolation, pain, and re-birth, and look how these aspects manifest themselves within the currant Covid situation

Week five. Pain

Read John Chapter 19, especially paying attention to the following

Jesus is sentenced to be crucified

Then Pilate took Jesus and had him flogged. ² The soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on his head. They clothed him in a purple robe ³ and went up to him again and again, saying, “Hail, king of the Jews!” And they slapped him in the face.

So the soldiers took charge of Jesus. ¹⁷ Carrying his own cross, he went out to the place of the Skull (which in Aramaic is called Golgotha). ¹⁸ There they crucified him, and with him two others—one on each side and Jesus in the middle.

Now it was the day of Preparation, and the next day was to be a special Sabbath. Because the Jewish leaders did not want

the bodies left on the crosses during the Sabbath, they asked Pilate to have the legs broken and the bodies taken down. ³² The soldiers therefore came and broke the legs of the first man who had been crucified with Jesus, and then those of the other. ³³ But when they came to Jesus and found that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. ³⁴ Instead, one of the soldiers pierced Jesus' side with a spear, bringing a sudden flow of blood and water. ³⁵ The man who saw it has given testimony, and his testimony is true. He knows that he tells the truth, and he testifies so that you also may believe. ³⁶ These things happened so that the scripture would be fulfilled: "Not one of his bones will be broken,"^[c] ³⁷ and, as another scripture says, "They will look on the one they have pierced."

Consider the following

The salvation of the world is worked out through an act of violence. When we consider that sentence, the pain that Jesus endured is put into stark perspective. A blood sacrifice for the atonement of sin is a theme that runs through the whole of the Bible. In Genesis, Cain and Abel bring an offering to God. God dismisses Cain's offering of the produce of the land, but is pleased with Abel's "blood offering" This favouritism leads to Cain killing his own brother and igniting Gods anger against him. The gospels do not go into explicit detail regarding the pain that Jesus endured, however we do not need to stretch our imagination to far in order to contemplate the horror of crucifixion. The crucifixion and the beatings that preceded it are not the only examples of pain, there is also the non-physical pain to consider as well

- The pain of separation. Jesus must have felt the pain of loss as those closest to him deserted him
- The pain of rejection. It was only a few days ago that crowds greeted Jesus with shouts of “hosanna” as he rode into Jerusalem on a donkey. Now the crowds are shouting “crucify him”
- The pain of others. Jesus would have seen those for whom he loved as he carried his cross. People who may have followed him wherever he went. Not least his own Mother who watched him die at the foot of the cross.

Consider the following

In Samuel Wells Book *Hanging by a thread* he offers an alternative view to the orthodox interpretation of the Crucifixion; *was the cross the tragic, cruel, and ugly epitome of the world's failure to embrace the utter goodness of God embodied in Christ?* What wells is saying is does the cross illustrate the scale of humanities inability to accept the love of God through Jesus Christ?

We often look through the crucifixion towards Easter Sunday. We often say “but it was alright in the end, wasn't?” however we are in danger of sanitising the cross if we refuse to engage with the full horror of the crucifixion. Jesus was beaten to a pulp, flogged, then left to die in the full glare of the sun! an ending so terrible that we often refuse to engage with it. But it was an ending, a cruel and barbaric ending that we must consider before we even contemplate the joy of resurrection!

Putting it into context

Pain and death have been prevalent in the pandemic. The pain of not seeing a loved one. The pain of not being able to touch. The pain of having a loved one in hospital, on a ventilator, with no visitors allowed! The pain of death. The pain of the funeral. The pain of loss and the pain of grief!

Pain robs us of what we hold dear. Stability of life, the ability to function in our day to day living, the joy of life, the ability to love! The pain of the cross allows us to invest our own pain into Gods timeless compassion! If we are able to offer our pain to God, then there is no separation between ourselves and the pain of Calvary. Our pain is Gods pain, and we are subsequently caught up in the boundless love of God.

We can only contemplate the Easter story, its full ending, when we too have endured the cross!

Night Prayer

You may wish to light a candle and have some reflective music playing in the background.

The Patrick Compline

Patrick (389-461) was a Briton and a former slave in Ireland. He became the 'Apostle to Ireland', travelling widely, evangelizing tirelessly and organizing churches and monasteries. He established his episcopal seat in Armagh, which became the centre of Christianity in the whole of Ireland. Patrick was fearless in the pursuit of his aim: to destroy paganism and to exalt the name of the Triune God.

*If this Compline is being used in a group setting the * notation indicates a change of reader; words in bold are said all together; words in bold italic are said by each person in turn; and + indicates where you might make the sign of the cross.*

+ (silently)

**In the name of the King of life;
in the name of the Christ of love;
in the name of the Holy Spirit:
the Triune of my strength.**

* I love you, O Lord my strength.

The Lord is my rock,
my fortress and my deliverer.

My God is my rock
in whom I take refuge.

* I will praise the Lord who counsels me;
even at night my heart instructs me.

* I have set the Lord always before me.
Because He is at my right hand,
I shall not be shaken.

***I am placing my soul and my body
under Thy guarding this night, O Christ.
May Thy cross this night be shielding me.***

* Into Your hands I commit my spirit;
redeem me, O Lord, the God of Truth.

* The God of life with guarding hold you;
the loving Christ with guarding fold you;
the Holy Spirit, guarding, mould you;

each night of life to aid, enfold you;
each day and night of life uphold you.

**May God shield me;
may God fill me;
may God keep me;
may God watch me;
may God bring me this night
to the nearness of His love.**

* The peace of the Father of joy,
the peace of the Christ of hope,
the peace of the Spirit of grace,

**the peace of all peace
be mine this night**

**+ in the name of the Father,
and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit.
Amen.**

*'Taken from Evening Prayer from Northumbria Community's Celtic
Daily Prayer published by Collins.'*