

## Wednesday in Holy Week

Welcome to this series of thoughts and questions. We are making our Journey with the Disciples and all followers of Jesus to the foot of his cross.

A prayer for today.

True and humble king,  
hailed by the crowd as Messiah:  
grant us the faith to know you and love you,  
that we may be found beside you  
on the way of the cross,  
which is the path towards hope and new life.  
Amen.

John 13:21-32. Judas betrays Jesus.

After he had said this, Jesus was troubled in spirit and testified, "Very truly I tell you, one of you is going to betray me."

His disciples stared at one another, at a loss to know which of them he meant. One of them, the disciple whom Jesus loved, was reclining next to him. Simon Peter motioned to this disciple and said, "Ask him which one he means."

Leaning back against Jesus, he asked him, "Lord, who is it?"

Jesus answered, "It is the one to whom I will give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the dish." Then, dipping the piece of bread, he gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot. As soon as Judas took the bread, Satan entered into him.

Jesus told him, "What you are about to do, do quickly." But no one at the meal understood why Jesus said this to him. Since Judas had charge of the money, some thought Jesus was telling him to buy what was needed for the festival, or to give something to the poor. As soon as Judas had taken the bread, he went out. And it was night.

When he was gone, Jesus said, "Now the Son of Man is glorified and God is glorified in him. If God is glorified in him, God will glorify the Son in himself, and will glorify him at once.

Some thoughts and questions from Malcolm.

Did it have to be like this? Through the centuries so many people must have asked this question. Was Jesus free to choose life or death? Were the disciples free to betray or deny Jesus - or was this a pre-determined pattern?

What we do know is that, as St Paul says, 'God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself'. In these Holy Week events it does seem that, although Jesus was free to choose, he knew what he had to do. He had been formed and nurtured by the idea of Isaiah's Suffering Servant. He was aware that he must bear the wrongdoings of the world on his shoulders so that we do not have to bear it on ours.

As Mrs Alexander says, in 'There is a Green Hill' (which there was not), 'There was no other good enough to pay the price of Sin'. It was a rough journey and we follow it all as we share thoughts and prayers each day of Holy Week.

Did it have to be like this? We need to ask the question again and again. Is this a cruel God who made his son and then the world suffer in so many different ways? Or is this a loving God who allows us to go our own ways even if it means that he is edged out of the world and on to a cross?

What does it mean to say that we have been 'saved' from sin and death through the death of Jesus on the cross? It could mean that we have to take very seriously the options open to us as we respond to the cruel or loving things that happen to us.

We are indeed free to choose how to live our lives, how to help others - or to choose not. And in this most unusual week we are challenged to explore whether faith is destroyed or deepened through this Coronavirus epidemic. - what Sue Woodcock in a recent copy of the *Yorkshire Post* called 'Humanities Crown of Thorns'.

Poem chosen by Malcolm.

Friday's Child by W H Auden

He told us we were free to choose  
But, children as we were, we thought---  
"Paternal Love will only use  
Force in the last resort

On those too bumptious to repent."  
Accustomed to religious dread,  
It never crossed our minds He meant  
Exactly what He said.

Perhaps He frowns, perhaps He grieves,  
But it seems idle to discuss  
If anger or compassion leaves  
The bigger bangs to us.

What reverence is rightly paid  
To a Divinity so odd  
He lets the Adam whom He made

Perform the Acts of God?

It might be jolly if we felt  
Awe at this Universal Man  
(When kings were local, people knelt);  
Some try to, but who can?

The self-observed observing Mind  
We meet when we observe at all  
Is not alarming or unkind  
But utterly banal.

Though instruments at Its command  
Make wish and counterwish come true,  
It clearly cannot understand  
What It can clearly do.

Since the analogies are rot  
Our senses, based belief upon,  
We have no means of learning what  
Is really going on,

And must put up with having learned  
All proofs or disproofs that we tender  
Of His existence are returned  
Unopened to the sender.

Now, did He really break the seal  
And rise again? We dare not say;  
But conscious unbelievers feel  
Quite sure of Judgement Day.

Meanwhile, a silence on the cross,  
As dead as we shall ever be,  
Speaks of some total gain or loss,  
And you and I are free

To guess from the insulted face  
Just what Appearances He saves  
By suffering in a public place  
A death reserved for slaves.

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