

## **GOOD FRIDAY MESSAGE**

10 April 2020 – Rev Simon McLeay

### **Mark 15: 22-39**

*They brought Jesus to the place called Golgotha (which means “the place of the skull”). Then they offered him wine mixed with myrrh, but he did not take it. And they crucified him. Dividing up his clothes, they cast lots to see what each would get. It was nine in the morning when they crucified him. The written notice of the charge against him read: the king of the Jews. They crucified two rebels with him, one on his right and one on his left. Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads and saying, “So! You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, come down from the cross and save yourself!” In the same way the chief priests and the teachers of the law mocked him among themselves. “He saved others,” they said, “but he can’t save himself! Let this Messiah, this king of Israel, come down now from the cross that we may see and believe.” Those crucified with him also heaped insults on him.*

*At noon, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. And at three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice, “Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?” (which means “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”). When some of those standing near heard this, they said, “Listen, he’s calling Elijah.” Someone ran, filled a sponge with wine vinegar, put it on a staff, and offered it to Jesus to drink. “Now leave him alone. Let’s see if Elijah comes to take him down,” he said. With a loud cry, Jesus breathed his last. The curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. 39 And when the centurion, who stood there in front of Jesus, saw how he died, he said, “Surely this man was the Son of God!”*

### **MESSAGE:**

He knows what it’s like, you can see in his eye, you can hear in her tone, you can feel in their touch, people who know, know what it’s like. A nurse who knows what it’s like to have lost a baby, a brother who knows what it is like to have lost a parent, a friend who know what it is like to have lost a partner. We have all had losses, but some are particularly acute, the loss of a parent, the loss of a partner, the loss of a child are some of the worst. Today we might add the loss of a job, the loss of a business. And we appreciate the kind words of friends, we appreciate the prayers of strangers, but it’s interesting how the people who really do know how it feels, never say ‘that’.

Jesus went to the cross, an innocent man giving up his life for you, he died on the cross so that you might be forgiven, he died on the cross so that you might be set free, he died on the cross so that you might have hope beyond hope. That’s the great promise of Easter. But the cross had another affect also, it showed Jesus as someone who was willing to and prepared to suffer vicariously for others. Vicariously means in someone else’s place.

Jesus came to earth, he was born and he lived a life like anyone else except for sin, so he knew temptation, he knew betrayal, and he knew suffering; when he died on the cross the words of the prophet Isaiah were fulfilled, he bore our sins. That means that he took on himself the guilt of humanity and he purged it.

Now there’s a lot we can say about that, but what I want to say today is based on one of the shortest lines in the Creed. He suffered under Pontius Pilate; Jesus suffered. It wasn’t a short nor an insignificant suffering. He suffered the betrayal of a friend, he suffered the abandonment of a brother, he suffered a corrupt court, he suffered the taunts of the crowd, and then the physical suffering began, being whipped, a crown of thorns, dragging his cross and then being crucified.

All this leads me to the words of the old negro spiritual, ‘Nobody knows the trouble I’ve seen, Nobody know but Jesus’. What that beautiful old spiritual says is that slave mothers and fathers who had seen

just about all the evil that men can do, they looked at Jesus, and they saw in his eye and they heard in his tone, and they felt in his touch. That he knew. Nobody knows but Jesus.

Around the world Christians are suffering false imprisonment, trumped up charges, the torture of their friends and neighbours, and the murder of their children and sisters, and still today they look to Jesus because they know that he knows. Easter is about a Saviour, but it is also about a friend, a brother who knows.

I remember 15 years ago. I had a job working for the Presbyterian Church as a Mission Consultant, it was a fabulous job which I loved. It had the perks, like travel and a small expense allowance, but it was the work I really loved, getting alongside other pastors and encouraging them and helping them to do their best. Then the national church ran out of money, it was no one person's fault, the church's revenue was just decreasing and we got made redundant. It was a very public redundancy, there was a vote taken at the General Assembly in front of 400 people and they decided they could no longer afford us. All very business-like, but it stung. It felt like the church didn't want me anymore. But strangely I never felt that way about Jesus, because I knew that he knew what it was like.

He knows what it's like, you can see it in his eye, you can hear it in her tone, you can feel it in their touch, people who know what it is like. Easter is about the greatest victory over sin and death, on Easter Sunday we will celebrate those wonderful words from the apostle Paul, 'O death where is your sting, O grave where is your victory'.

But today let us encounter Isaiah's suffering servant – the Jesus who has seen trouble and who knows, who is a friend in every time of trouble, the Jesus of the Psalm 42, where 'Deep calls to deep'..., the Jesus of Psalm 22 who could call out; 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' I'll leave the last word to a paraphrase of the prophet Isaiah in Chapter 53.

*He was despised and rejected by people, a man of suffering, familiar with grief. Like someone from whom you hide your face he was despised, -we held him in low regard. Yet, surely he took up our pain, and bore our suffering, And we considered him punished by God, stricken by God, and afflicted. But it was for our transgressions that he was pierced, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was laid on him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; Yet the Lord laid on him, the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, he did not open his mouth. He was arrested, Judged and taken away. No one from his generation protested? For he was cut off from the land of the living; for our transgressions he was punished. He was assigned a grave with the wicked, he was associated with the loathed in his death, though he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth. Yet it was the Lord's will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the Lord made his life an offering for sin, yet the lord will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the Lord will prosper in his hand. After he has suffered, he will see the light of life and be satisfied; by his wisdom my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities. Therefore I will give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoils with the strong, because he poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors. For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.*