

**Good Friday March 30<sup>th</sup>\_2018. Reflection. HEBREWS 12: 1 – 3.**

**(PP1) Where we left things on Maundy Thursday** – Jesus had shared the Passover Supper with his friends. *Luke 22: 15 How I have longed to share this Passover supper with you before I suffer.* Jesus had washed his disciples' feet and given them the new mandate: *love one another as I have loved you.*

**The elements of the Passion story are these:**

- The Last Supper.
- The agony in the Garden of Gethsemane.
- The arrest of Jesus after his betrayal by Judas. (\*)
- The examination and condemnation of Jesus by the Jews.
- The trial before Pilate during which Jesus is sentenced to be whipped and crucified.
- The crucifixion of Jesus.

(\*) An exhausting and terrible night follows Jesus taking the disciples to the Garden of Gethsemane – where he prayed and again his friends failed him in every way.

**(PP2) What followed in terms of human cruelty and unjust punishment beggars belief.** Jesus is moved from one official to another and one torture room to another. His crucifixion is the ultimate degradation. He is aligned with criminals and the despised and mocked constantly. He is on constant naked display until his dead body is finally removed and wrapped in a linen cloth and placed in a new tomb prepared for someone else. (He endures the Garden of Eden experience of naked shame, fear, loneliness and every consequence of the Fall. He is fully human).

Jesus passes through the hands of Annas the high priest for initial processing and on to Caiaphas (his son in law). He experiences a mock trial before the Sanhedrin – the Jewish Council before being taken before Pilate (who sends him before Herod who questions him and returns him) to his new “friend” Pilate. Jesus is offered before a crowd who are called upon by Pilate to choose between the infamous insurrectionist Barabbas and the “local hero” and prophet Jesus of Nazareth. The crowd who have turned from their openness on Palm Sunday to choose to set Barabbas free and call for the crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth. Although Pilate finds him not guilty of any of the crimes the Sanhedrin accuse him of (and actually wants to release him after a degrading flogging) but the Sanhedrin want Jesus extinguished and wiped off the face of the earth. He is a threat to their power and control of the Jews and their dealings with the Romans. So, Pilate condemns Jesus. He is handed to the Roman soldiers with their distinctive Barbaric barrack room torture and unkindness.

**In the same way that it would be too simple to leap a full week from the triumph of Palm Sunday to the joy of resurrection Sunday** so too it would be negligent to jump from the togetherness of the last Passover supper to the Crucifixion of Jesus. **Not to**

**contemplate what Jesus endured at the hands of human beings** is a failure not just to understand the depth of Christ suffering for us, and the depth of his love for us – but also a failure to understand the terrible fallenness and depravity of human beings. We cannot celebrate the elevation and rising of humanity through the work of Christ until we appreciate how low humanity has fallen. We surely must align ourselves with those who not just sought to silence Jesus but also to abuse him?



Jesus death penalty.

**He did not just endure the cross.** He endured the indignities of torture on a par with what internees of the untried detainees of Guantanamo Bay Prison endured. To watch in prayer with Jesus through the night of his Passion – suffering at the hands of our human race is to reach the point of longing and asking God to release him from this apparently pointless suffering. But he did not give up his spirit, his life until “it was finished”.

*Jesus did not give up because of the cross. On the contrary, because of the joy that was waiting for him, he thought nothing of the disgrace of dying, and he is now seated on the right-hand side of God’s throne...Hebrews 12: 2.*

**A whole night of torture and abuse preceded the crucifixion.** Like the disciples most of us slept through this suffering – or like Peter follow at a distance and withdraw. Jesus’ second trial before Pilate happened at about 8 am and according to *Mark 15: 25* after the agonizing walk to Golgotha the crucifixion took place at 9 am. The eclipse of the Sun took place at noon and Jesus surrendered his life at about 3 pm.

**If we see a puddle of rain,** we can leap over it to avoid getting our feet wet. If we see a road accident or crash on the road we will be diverted around it. If there was another way for Jesus to rescue us the Father would have enabled, him to take it. **But Jesus had to drink this “cup of suffering”.** To fully appreciate the love and sacrifice of Jesus you and I can’t leap from Palm Sunday to Resurrection Sunday. We cannot leap a week as if it were a puddle. To appreciate Jesus, we need to wake up and consider and contemplate what hatred he went through at the hand of humans. (*Hebrews 12: 3*) From Gethsemane arrest, through a night of abuse and injustice he was condemned to death by crucifixion. **(PP3) His naked body was torn from the cross, wrapped in a linen cloth and laid in a borrowed tomb before sunset and the sabbath.**