

ST MATTHEWS

“IN TOUCH”

HOLY WEEK

STORY

C S Lewis wrote that we read stories to bring others into our lives.

This seems true whether it be fiction or biography. Powerful stories have layer upon layer of meaning. We can look at them from many different perspectives. Some touch us so profoundly we can come back to them time and time again and find something new. The scriptural story is powerful for its main themes have been regarded as sacred for at least 4 thousand years of Judeo-Christian history. You could say that story is symbol, for its ability to take our mind into the deepest, broadest and highest realms of our consciousness. The cross is a similar symbol for its simplicity touches our spirit.

Holy week is sacred to us for it is a collection of symbols all converging in the one great event. Palms and ruthless anger, bread and wine, darkness and light, chaos and peace, silence and rabble, authority and vulnerability, love and punishment, faithfulness and denial, money and betrayal, death and resurrection. It becomes the story of life's mystery and the way of salvation.

CLEANSING OF THE TEMPLE

The early story of the week focuses on the centre of life's struggle for meaning and purpose, the conflict between the utilitarian realm of living and life's deepest mysteries. The need for meeting the practical necessities of life and the humble state of turning to the deepest realm of human nourishment, prayer and worship. Jesus walks into the temple and recognises the horror of this tension which has overwhelmed this sacred space. It suggests there is little room for the mystery of spirit in people's life. Scattered throughout the building authoritarianism, the power of rich and prestigious, the display of ritual, the cocophany of market behaviour have so dominated the temple to the point it has lost any semblance of the sacred. Life has lost its' vital balance.. Godly perspective has been turned on its head so Jesus acts to recalibrate. He drives out the animals and upturns the tables of the money changes. If the first century was in such a state so is the 21st century. It is hard to find a time of history that was not out of balance. We resist it ourselves, but we witness that nature will challenge us; climate, fire and pandemics have their own power. They call to humanity to place the gift of life back at the centre of its purpose. Only then can we embrace our human responsibilities in godly fashion. The church of today faces many challenges. In what sense do you see that we need renewal?

MAUNDY THURSDAY

Maundy Thursday is the time-free story we are invited to engage with. It is the story that draws the past, present and future into the one great experience of hope. As past, it takes us back almost three and a half millennia to the time of Moses and the Hebrew slaves in Egypt. God hears their cry for mercy and promises them freedom. Of all his instructions he describes his desire for them to create a meal of sacrificed lambs which they are to repeat annually and recall the story of his great act of salvation. For the Hebrews it was apparent in the power of his metaphorical arm to lead them through the Red Sea on their journey to the promised Holy

Land. Year after year the Jewish Hebrew people celebrated this Passover meal even to this very day and each time tell their story of redemption.

Two thousand years ago Jesus gathered his intimate friends together at Passover time in preparation for the sacrificing of the lambs. Unlike any other time, he reconstituted its significance. He took the bread of hope and the wine of thanksgiving and identified them with his own broken body and his blood shed for others. He requested his followings to repeat the event and tell the story of his life of salvation.

Whenever we celebrate this meal with the recollection of his story, we are experiencing the timeless presence of his risen life. His universal message forges a bond with ancient Hebrew, the disciples of Jerusalem, the faithful of all ages. We look forward to the banquet of life's fulfillment when the divine purposes of creation are fulfilled.

GOOD FRIDAY.

From life's most basic perspective all reality seems bound in the realm of space and time. We strive to garner all that can be milked from this finite creation before the bell tolls for each of us. With the most basic understanding life will cease.

Good Friday, more accurately known as God's Friday is the day our hymn tells us 'the sky turned black', the day men's heart, mind and attitude lost their way and turned blackest. Jesus became their Passover lamb sacrificed merely one amongst thousands of simple creatures, the harmless lambs.

God dare lay down in this tomb of death. He appeared to surrender to a lonely rejection, a painful misfortune, a miserable injustice and a pointless end. He identified with the most unfortunate creatures, animal or human, whose life finished as a discard not wanted whether through this life or death.

Across three days; a night, a day and a night again, he lay motionless, alone and lifeless. Our time and space which we hold so dearly, declared this was the end. But beyond our sight of touch and imagination, a different perspective perceived a stirring.

A SCRIPTURE FOR OUR TIMES

A verse from the story of the first Passover

Isaiah 26:20. *"Go home my people and lock our doors. Hide yourself for a little while until the Lord's anger has passed." The Lord commanded a lockdown during the Passover in Egypt... when the angel of death passed over the Israelites who had protected themselves with the blood of the lamb.*

The mystery of God's timing

The Hebrews had their way of interpreting life, it may be different from the way we interpret life's events. But our global event of 2020 is not the first-time humanity has known of such a challenge. The message of hope for the Hebrews is an encouragement for us to similarly embrace our reason for hope.

Fr Geoff