

Sermon Notes

St Mark's Anglican Church
South Hurstville

Palm Sunday

1 April 2007

Preacher

The Reverend Chris Albany

Rector

Readings: Luke 19.29-40; Isaiah 50.4-9a; Psalm 31.9-18; Phil 2.5-11; Luke 22.39-23.56

Remember me

So as we enter into this week that we call Holy we remember all that happened at the end of Jesus' life as we re-read, rehearse, enter into and relive the events which culminate in Jesus' death and resurrection. We see played out the extent of human frailty and perversity as those opposed to Jesus plot and scheme, Pilate shows his weakness, succumbing to the clamour of the mob and at the same time those who have been closest to Jesus misunderstand, deny, betray, as fear gets the better of them. And we also see courage, and compassion and faith in unexpected places and the quiet loyalty of the women disciples.

Holy week above all else is about remembering. It is important that we remember, not just because we otherwise fail to learn the lessons of history, but because in remembering we have the possibility of entering into and making real for ourselves that which we remember. To find ourselves in The Story as it were and discover that the same grace and forgiveness and new life is offered to us as to those in the story of long ago.

Tomorrow night is Passover for the Jews and they will remember the way God rescued them from slavery in Egypt and lead them to freedom in the promised land. Each year as they celebrate Passover, Jews do not just recall something that happened 3-4000 years ago but they celebrate their own freedom and liberation. As they recall those events of long ago it's as if they are made real afresh in the present. So too for us as we journey through Holy Week and relive those tumultuous events at the end of Jesus' life we are called to enter into the story. To recognise that within us lays the same potential to act out of jealousy and to cling to power and status as the scribes and Pharisees. That we too, too often act out of fear and betray and deny, our God, others, ourselves as we fail to live up to the best of what we have it in us to become. But also to discover that the same gift is offered to us as is offered to the dying thief who turns to Jesus and says remember me.

We human beings yearn to be remembered. It is innate, within us from an early age. We love to be noticed and our greatest fear is that we do not matter that no-one will remember us when we are gone. The Psalmist expresses something of this in today's Psalm when he says "I am forgotten like one dead and / out of / mind: I have be/come • like a / broken / vessel."

The naughty child seeking attention is acting out of this basic yearning, we are responding to it when we accept the gift of a child's drawing and say we'll keep it and put it on the fridge or on our walls even though it has little artistic merit. The child knows it means we will remember and think of them, that they matter.

So the thief being crucified along with Jesus turns to him and says, "Remember me, when you come into your kingdom." Jesus is about to die, be killed and yet this man has the faith and the hope to somehow know that death will not be the end of Jesus and so he says, "Remember me." And Jesus replies, "Today you will be with me in Paradise." Today – not tomorrow, not in 2-3 days time after the resurrection, not after declaration of faith – no strings attached, no conditions just simply the promise today, immediately you will be with me! That is what resurrection faith is all about,- Easter hope and life – that somehow we are, will be caught up into the mystery of the life and love of God and be remembered, by the One who never forgets any of us and who seeks to draw us all home to Godself. We are if nothing else re-remembered. Just think about that word. We are made up of

various parts, our bodily members head, hands, torso, feet etc. To be re-membered is to be put back together again. It speaks to me of being restored, made whole. Enabled to become the best that we have it in us to be, to live out the potential of who are as the sons and daughters of God, made in God's image. Easter faith and hope and life is about transformation, new life – we call it Resurrection and so it is as we are offered forgiveness, helped to see, are brought home and set free (all aspects of what it is to talk about Salvation). As we discover that the message of Jesus, the message of the Gospel is the same as that spoken to this penitent thief – that he and we, each one are held forever safe in the great ocean of God's memory and love. Blessed be God. Amen.