



## **Good Friday Homily**

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St Mary's Cathedral, Perth  
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The words which we have prayed together in our response to the first reading from the prophet Isaiah come from the wisdom of ancient Israel. They are an expression of faith in the goodness and fidelity of God in the face of opposition, persecution and betrayal. The Church sees them as an authentic and powerful expression of the faith of Jesus, which is to say of his faith in the goodness and trustworthiness of God his Father.

This afternoon as we gather together to solemnly remember and reflect on the great mystery of the death of Jesus I would like to invite us all to ponder on this link between faith and trust. Sometimes we think that faith is an intellectual thing: that it is all about what we believe. It certainly is about this but it is, much more, about who we believe in. As Christians we obviously believe in God, but for us our belief is in God as Jesus reveals him.

The death of Jesus which we commemorate today is so much more than the death of a really good man, and perhaps the best man who has ever lived. The death of Jesus is the death of the man whom we believe to be the very presence of God among us. The Gospel of Saint John, from which today's version of the passion story comes, presents Jesus unambiguously as divine. This Gospel, in its opening chapter, speaks of the Word of God who was with God from the beginning and who was indeed God. This Word, says the Gospel, became flesh and lived among us.

The Gospel then goes on to say that this Word came to his own but his own would not accept him. This is the great mystery we remember today. Jesus came among us, and lived a life of never-before-seen integrity, uprightness and goodness. He brought healing to the broken, hope to the despairing, forgiveness to the fallen and life to the lifeless. And yet he was not accepted. Why did he end up hated by so many, rejected by the religious leaders of his time, and abandoned by his closest companions?

The answers to such questions are no doubt complex but this much at least seems clear, and is confirmed by our own experience: people of cowardice, self-interest, cruelty and hate are horrified and angered when they are unmasked for what they truly are by the power of goodness and truth; and in their fury they seek to destroy anyone and anything which threatens them. Jesus of course was a threat to no-one except to those whose lives were already disfigured by their own sinfulness and moral blindness. They were driven to destroy him, and it appeared that they succeeded. We of course will gather again tomorrow night or on Sunday morning to celebrate the astounding truth that the forces of evil in fact did not succeed. Jesus rose from the prison of death, and in him we learn once and for all that love is stronger than hate, hope overcomes despair and life always wins out over death. The God of love and life is with us.



It nevertheless remains the case, of course, that in our broken world the power of evil still seems to hold sway. It does so in those places far away where conflict and war rages; it does so closer to home, where violence and senseless cruelty break out in our streets; and it does so in our own minds and hearts, where jealousy, resentment and anger bring so much pain to us and to those we love. And it is here that our faith is tested. The psalm we prayed a little earlier proclaims, *“But as for me, I trust in you, Lord. I say: ‘You are my God.’ My life is in your hands, deliver me from the hands of those who would harm me.”* The challenge for us is to be able to pray these same words with conviction, or at least with a glimmer of hope, when we are facing struggles, opposition, ill-treatment or worse.

For Christians faith is about trust in God, and trust in God really means handing over, entrusting, everything to God and then moving forward into the future knowing that we do so not alone but with God by our side. This trusting faith is what enabled Jesus, in the Garden of Olives, to say at the end of his prayer for deliverance from what awaited him, *“Father, not as I would have it, but as you would have it.”* Trusting faith is what inspired Jesus to teach his disciples in their prayer to say to God their Father, *“Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven”*. And trusting faith is that precious gift from God which will enable us to live our lives with a deep serenity, no matter what turmoils disturb us on the surface of our lives, because we have given everything into God’s hands. This is the peace Jesus himself promised to give us when he assured his disciples he would give them the gift of a peace not like the peace the world gives but one which can only come from God.

*Father I put my life in your hands.* May this prayer of Jesus be our prayer too as we learn from him, in his suffering, death and resurrection, that we can entrust ourselves to God because God loves us, God is faithful to his promises, and God will never abandon those whom he loves – and that means each one of us.