



Good Friday 2018

HOMILY

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St Mary's Cathedral, Perth
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"Ours were the sufferings he bore, ours the sorrows he carried on him lies a punishment that brings us peace and through his wounds we are healed."

The story of the passion and death of Jesus is stark, and bleak and distressing. There is betrayal and injustice and cowardice. There is vindictiveness and cruelty and brutality. There is profound sadness, and disillusionment and even, perhaps, despair. And at the end, certainly for those who do not understand that there is more still to happen in this story, there is a deep emptiness. No wonder the prophets of the Old Testament to whom we have listened this afternoon speak of sufferings, sorrows, punishment and wounds.

And yet, those same prophets also speak of peace and of healing. The man who wears the crown of thorns on his head and who is nailed in extreme cruelty to the cross bears all the pain - and we are given the gift of healing and peace.

There is a mystery here which we must be careful not to try and too easily explain - or at least not to explain away. It is certainly true, as our faith teaches us, that Jesus died to save us from our sins. And it is also true that the scandal and horror of the death of Jesus shows us that sin is never a trivial thing, something about which we can ever become complacent or unconcerned. In a very real sense we are all complicit in the death of Jesus for the cruelty and violence which led to his death lurk in our hearts as much as in the hearts of his betrayers and executioners.

The punishment of which the prophets speak, and the sufferings and the sorrows and the wounds, are man's doing, not God's. As Pope Francis so often reminds us, Jesus is the face of the Father's love and mercy. The awful and shocking truth is that when humanity encounters this love and mercy in the person of Jesus, the Son of God, our reaction is not one of overflowing gratitude and rejoicing but rejection. Not only do we so often turn our backs but we sometimes even seek to discredit and destroy those whose goodness and transparency are an affront to our own ways of thinking and acting. It is easier to turn away or to destroy than to see our failures and compromises exposed by the light of another's integrity.

Jesus, the revelation of God to us, is the Way, the Truth and the Life. He is the precious gift of God who reveals to us not only what God is like but what God is asking of us, what a fully lived life is meant to be. Jesus lived his life in total and joy-filled commitment to his Father's will, as we are all called to live - and because he would not compromise, because he would not walk away in order to avoid the cross, he was, so his enemies thought, destroyed by them. But Jesus was raised to life by his Heavenly Father. In the resurrection all that Jesus said of himself, all that he



said of God, and all that he said about living life as God intends that it be lived, was confirmed as true. And our salvation, won for us on the cross because of Jesus' unswerving fidelity, lies in our communion with him, and our living of our life in imitation of him. It is of course his freely given grace, shared with us unfailingly in the sacraments of the Church, which enables us to imitate him - and to set out again on the road of fidelity when we fail as we so often do. In and through our life in the Church, we are being constantly drawn into an ever deeper communion with the Lord. His story becomes our story, his mind and heart become our mind and heart – and his victory over sin and death becomes our victory: and in this lies the way to salvation.

Yes, ours were the sufferings he bore and ours the sorrows he carried - on him does lie a punishment which brings us peace - and by his wounds we truly are healed.