

The Passion of our Lord: Good Friday
Saint Dunstan's Episcopal Church, Houston, TX
15 April 2022

Hebrews 10:16-25

We are here today to remember a great injustice. Under the cover of night our Savior was arrested, accused, tried, mocked, spat upon, ridiculed, dragged from courtroom to courtroom, whipped, humiliated, and then killed as a common criminal. In the eyes of the world this great tragedy is nonsensical and unnecessary. When we say to the world that this death was freely accepted, freely chosen, and in fact, was part of God's salvation plan for the whole world, we must be ready to see incredulous looks and doubts. Why did we need someone to willingly die for us? Do we still believe that we are stained by some kind of sin that needs to be removed?

Our world has lost all concept of sin, of divine justice, of fall from grace that has separated us from a proper relationship with God. And since many no longer have a need for the hypothesis of sin, what Christ did for us on the cross becomes incomprehensible. Many in the sophisticated, post-modern, western world, have moved beyond a need for Jesus, the High Priest, who offered his blood on the altar of the cross to atone for the sins of the whole world. They no longer need a mediator or a Kinsman Redeemer. They no longer need a sacrifice through which their relationship with God is restored. They have no need to accept personal responsibility for sin, to repent, to hold fast to the content of their faith, and to look to the one who was pierced for their redemption and restoration.

What we are doing here today on this beautifully sunny day is revolutionary. We are here because we are willing to affirm that we are not yet whom God created us to be. We have not yet arrived at our destination. We are broken and in need of a Savior to guide us the rest of the way. We know that we try hard, but we also know that we fail to live up to our commitments, to love as the Messiah has loved us, to forgive as we have been forgiven, to be thankful for God's blessings in our lives, and to be aware of our privilege and wealth. In short, we fail to remember how much God has loved us. We are here today because we need Christ crucified in our lives and in the lives of our families.

We need Christ crucified because our worlds have become fluid. We no longer just inhabit this space and time, but also inhabit Cyber-worlds, where we engage in thousands of human interactions every day without ever having to leave the comfort of our homes. Our lifestyles have become fluid, as the boundaries between right and wrong have become more relative, and we have the freedom to create and recreate ourselves into anything we want. Our relationships have become more fluid, as we enter in and out of relationships at an ever increasing pace, and become more isolated from each other in the process. Our faith has become more fluid, as our mistrust of priests and institutions continues to drive us away from mainline religion, and as our faith becomes more cafeteria-style than biblical. We choose practices and beliefs from different

denominations, faith traditions, and philosophical systems and create our own version of the Christian faith. And, in the process, we become less sure of exactly what we believe.

The irony of this is that the world is hungry for divinity. The world is starving for meaning and depth. We need grace and forgiveness. We need this Jesus who is dying on the cross for us today. He is the High Priest who is “able to empathize with our weakness... he has in every way been tested as we are...” He knows what it feels like to have humanity under his skin, and he is no stranger to human suffering, betrayal, pain, and anguish. He knows what it feels like to be victimized, unfairly treated, and ridiculed. We have in this Jesus of Nazareth the answer to our human need for the sacred, the holy, the transcendental. Only in him can we find restoration and completion. He goes willingly to the cross for us today and accepts the stripes that make us whole. He is willing to let himself be crushed for our transgressions, and to carry the burden of our sins on his shoulders. He is the Kinsman Redeemer of Leviticus 25. He is the proper Ram for the sacrifice of Genesis 22. He is the Son of David of 2 Samuel 7. He is the one like Moses of Deuteronomy 18, who has come to lead us the rest of the way. He is the fulfilment of the Scriptures, and the clearest proof that God is on the side of humanity.

It is for this reason that we must approach the throne of his grace with boldness, as the Epistle to the Hebrews tells us today. Let us approach the throne of his grace that we may “receive mercy and find grace to help us in our times of need.” The cross of Christ anchors our faith and gives substance to our hope. Only this cross can help us build a strong foundation that can give us meaning and purpose. This cross is the antidote to this drifting fluidity of our world. Without this cross, we are left to our own devices. We are left orphans and alone. We are forced to rely on our own imperfect strength. But a deep awareness of this cross and what it represents allows us to see others as our brothers and sisters. We begin to see the world as the mission field. We begin to see ourselves as beloved by God and precious in his sight.

We need this radical Jesus to wake us up from our slumber, to give our faith the depth of maturity it needs, and to lead us into a lifestyle of service, firmly rooted in love of God and love of others. The world needs this High Priest, and it is our responsibility to share him with others who do not yet know him. Let us come to his altar today to get the boldness and courage we need to be his witnesses in Houston, Harris County, the State of Texas, and to the ends of the world.

Let us Pray,

Dear God, thanks of the sacrifice of your son on the cross that the whole world “might come within the reach of his saving embrace.” Help our world to see in Christ the solution to what afflicts the human heart. Help us also as a church to boldly preach the name of Jesus with our words, but most importantly, with our lives. We ask you this in his holy name. Amen!