

Reflection

12/04/20

Easter Sunday

Matthew 28:1-10

You probably remember last Sunday? You might have been tearing around inside your socially-distanced bubble, waving palm branches, shouting at the top of your voice...

It was great – I mean, really, it was just the best. *Everyone* was excited. And how could they not be? It was was all happening! Hosanna! Hosanna in the highest! And all for this bloke riding his donkey down the main street. A new Kingdom – a new world – was happening before our very eyes: a world where there was enough for everyone, a reign of love, rather than power, a world of healing, and life, and freedom from fear, when justice would roll down like a river...

Then, somehow, it all went wrong

We were telling him: *now* is the time to act – this is your moment! Right now the people will do just about *anything* for you!

But ... he didn't. So far as we could tell, he spent his time organising a quiet dinner for his mates; that was about it. And that was weird enough, too. I mean, here he is, our teacher, our master, our rabbi; and he begins by washing our filthy, mucky feet like a servant. I wasn't going to have any of it, but he insisted... Now, what does all that mean?

And then it got weirder. He looks at the bread we're sharing, and he says "you see this bread? This is my body, which will be broken for you. And this wine? This is my blood, which will be poured out for you." Can you make any sense of that, because I sure can't...

Then we went out, later that night, to a garden not far out of town. And Jesus was praying, and, you know, I don't think I'd ever seen him *afraid* before. And we didn't know what to do, maybe some of us ... slept (we were tired) just the twelve of us with him – no, wait, *eleven*; where's Judas? No, there he is – he comes to Jesus and greets him “Shalom, master,” he says; and with him come the police and the soldiers, and somebody pulls a sword but Jesus says “No!” and they take him away.

And even then, I reckon, even then, if we'd had a half-decent lawyer I reckon we could have got him off. But he didn't seem to want to defend himself. Hardly said anything at all.

And then some of us ran away and hid, and others pretended they didn't know him, and others watched from a distance, as they slowly killed him. And I think the worst bit (out of all the worst bits) came not long before the end, when this man who, all his life had known the most intimate connection with God – even that was taken from him. “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why have you left me alone here?”

And so there was nothing to do, but take him down from the cross, and lay him in the tomb.

So, on Sunday, the women go to the tomb to take care of his body, and you wouldn't believe that things could get worse but they did. His body was gone – what? What more could they possibly want to do to him? But the women said that it was okay – that they had actually *met* Jesus on the way back. And this, of course, was the worst of all. That their minds had given way under the stress of grief and horror.

And we're trying to explain to them how it couldn't *possibly* be Jesus they'd seen, when, suddenly, he's there in the room with us.

“Shalom” he says: “Peace be with you.” the words we most needed to hear in that time of terror and sorrow. “It's all right. It's just me; I'm not a ghost. Have you got anything to eat? I could *murder* a bit of fish right

now.”

Thomas wasn't with us just then; I think he was out doing the shopping – standing in line outside the supermarket... But then Jesus appeared to Thomas as well. And he said “look – do you see my hands? Do you see my feet? These are the hands and feet that suffered. Yet here I am.”

He wasn't playing at being human. The things they did to him – they really, really hurt him. When they killed him, he died. He wasn't pretending. But here he was; and his presence made all the difference.

And I remembered something he'd said not long before. “The world will hurt you, and persecute you, and make you suffer. But take courage: I have overcome the world.”

We had seen him be defeated. We had seen seen him die, and buried him. But it was true. He had overcome the world.