

LENT V

March 22, 2015

“... And what should I say - Father save me from this hour? No it is this for this reason that I have come to this hour.”

✠ In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. AMEN.

We have all been on journeys - to a new family home, to a new land, to a new job... And like Jesus we sometimes come to see that the *journeys* of our life are part of a greater journey and that there seems to have been a purpose - a purpose we come to see that we never saw or realised before...

As we read the Gospel, we could come to see that the journey of Jesus to Jerusalem and his eventual suffering and death were like that for him - that more and more he came to see that his heartfelt plea -

“Father save me from this hour...” was pointless for as he goes on he expresses first a sense of resignation -
“... it is for this reason that I have come to this hour.”

And then he speaks with a sense of divine triumph -
“Father glorify your name.”

And then the Gospel text responds with the voice from heaven

“I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.”

Perhaps at the end of your life, like Jesus, you will see in all your journeys the greater journey - that in your death you will have reached that point of realization that your life is also part of the Divine purpose and that you will also with Jesus be

able to say - “Into your hands O Lord, I commend my spirit.”

And of course, with the whole church throughout the world, through these Sundays in Lent *we have also been journeying with Jesus to Jerusalem.*

For this is what the Liturgy enables us to do as the whole people of God as we have followed the roller-coaster ride of the Gospel narrative of Jesus’ journey -

witnessing first, Jesus going out into the wilderness in search of God’s purpose - something we might do in making a retreat or having a break in our busy lives as we seek to understand just where we are going... but what he finds like us is the reality of the world’s temptations, (especially the temptation to take the easy way or the way where we mind find the rewards and comforts of this world) which of course unlike many of us, Jesus withstands and he chooses the way of greater challenge.

And then, in a sense he is rewarded with the divine mystery of the Transfiguration on the mountaintop yet it is to remain a mystery as he cautions Peter, James and John to tell no-one until the Son of man “has risen from the dead”. And of course in spite of all the divine light, the disciples remain in the darkness of their inability to both see and hear what was happening and who Jesus was and is.

And then the journey arrived at the “station” of the angry Jesus who, in the busy temple forecourt displayed his wrath for all to see - that his Father’s house had become a market place and so he upturned the tables and drove out the money changers signalling that he was bringing in a *new* order and as a result would anger those who were quite comfortable with the old order... and so perhaps when Jesus reminded the

disciples of the healing power of the bronze serpent that Moses had raised up in the wilderness, saving those who looked upon it when they had been poisoned by the serpents of God's anger ... And then spoke of the "...raising up of the son of man..." they were just *beginning* to understand that *only* their belief in that son of man would save them.

As we continue the Lenten journey of the people of God, today's Gospel begins with the Greeks who were at the festival and who approached Philip and asked "...Sir we wish to see Jesus." And the Gospel continues reminding us just how the good news spreads, when "Philip went and told Andrew; then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus.", who answered them quite unpredictably...

The hour has come for the son of man to be glorified..." and he then tells the parable of the grain of wheat that must fall to the ground and "die" in the earth in order that it might give new life in order that the disciples might further understand the mystery of the revelation of Jesus as THE Son of man...

Whether or not the Greeks ever *actually* saw Jesus, we are not told - I suspect that like Peter, James and John blinded by the light of the transfiguration on the mountaintop, they would also have been unable to both see *and* hear who Jesus was and is.

We are not so different today - Like the disciples it can take us a lifetime with Jesus to come to something of a real understanding of who he is. But of course we take most of our lives to understand who we ourselves are.

As the Scottish poet Robert Burns said (and I translate it into

accessible English),

“I would to God the gift he would give us, to see ourselves as others see us”

The poet was of course alluding to our difficulties of self-understanding and perhaps the need to listen and respond to the wisdom of others who might at times tell us unpalatable things about ourselves... like Jesus in the wilderness we might also be tempted to manage our way through life and take the easy way through this life and live for ourselves rather than for others - far less for God...

For living our lives for others and for God might lead us to Jerusalem and to suffering and death.

And that is the challenge of the way of holiness but as Archbishop Tutu said in another context -

IT IS THE ONLY WAY

And if our Lord Jesus Christ's life tells us any ONE thing it is the reality that his suffering, death and resurrection IS the only way to salvation.

The only hope for an uncaring and unbelieving world is expressed in the final words of today's gospel

“And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself...”