**Good Friday 2016: The Son Cries Out**

The Bible contains not one but four accounts of Jesus' death. They agree on the essentials:

*Jesus died on a cross at a place called Golgotha, hung between two men with a sign above his head, which read "King of the Jews.”*

*The charge was treason against the Roman Empire and people were so sure he was not coming down from the cross, that they divided up his clothes where he could see them. He was offered sour wine before he died and when he did it was sundown on the day before the Sabbath.*

Those are the bones of the story, which each gospel writer fills them out in a different way. Matthew and Mark's accounts are almost identical, except for a few differences in phrasing. Their **Jesus is a broken man,** who is so injured in every way, that he needs help carrying his cross and whose only word from the **cross is a cry of abandonment at the end.**

*In Luke's gospel, Jesus has more to say. Luke adds a word of pardon from the cross****--"Father forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing"--****as well as a conversation between Jesus and the two men dying with him.*

*When Jesus dies, he does not ask where God has gone. Instead, he uses his last few breaths to commend his spirit to God.* ***Luke's Jesus is as gentle and forgiving in death as he was all his life.***

**In John's gospel, however**, Jesus is neither broken nor particularly gentle. **He is brave and in charge all the way**. John does not say anything about Simon of Cyrene carrying Jesus' cross for him. **Jesus is strong enough to do that for himself.** Nor does John allow anyone to mock Jesus while he dies. Even on the cross, Jesus is in charge. He arranges for his mother's care, says he is thirsty (in order to fulfill the scriptures), and when he dies there is no question about where God is. God is on the cross, pronouncing, "**It is finished."**

While all four of these accounts report the same event, they are not easily harmonized. They are four alternative readings so different from one another and yet so faithfully told that the editors of the New Testament decided that none of them could be left out.

By including all four, those early shapers of the gospels sent the message, **that there is more than one way to view** what happened on the cross, **and all of them are right.**

Even if they do not agree on everything-not even something as important as Jesus' last words--**their very disagreement** **preserves the mystery of what happened on this day.** **There is no one definitive word.**

But rather. I think, all can be held in tension, for together they meet our need to know

* that we are forgiven, as in Luke;
  + that the cost of our sin is met – in John;
    - and that we are understood and held in the uncertainty and isolation of death and our darkest times as in Mark and Matthew.

Each of them shows us a different side of Jesus’ death; each of them shows us a different side of ourselves.

And it is in the company, of Mark and Matthew that I would like us to walk today.

I’m not sure if its because in my professional life, I worked with children who had been abandoned, or prior to that, with those living in mental health institutions, but my attention has always been caught and held by that awful cry of dereliction.

**“ My God, my God, why have you forsaken me!”**

**You see, here is a man, who was born under a star!**

And whatever else it meant, it meant that God’s hand was upon him.

He had gifts that other people didn’t have and right from the start, people couldn’t get enough of him. He was food for the hungry and hope for those who were sick and people followed his around like children.

Twice in his life, he heard a voice from heaven telling him who he was – first at his baptism and then on the mountain at his transfiguration, “**This** is **my** Son, **my** Beloved,”

Not everyone heard it, but he did and the love in that voice must have sustained him and kept him going when his best friends, missed the point, and the Pharisees hounded him at every opportunity. **The love in that voice, must have been his promise, his reassurance that the hand of God was upon him!**

**And then, one day it was gone!** And not only that, gone at the worst possible time

* when **people** were streaming into Jerusalem for Passover;
* the **Romans** were anxious about civil unrest
* and the **Temple officials** were plotting.
* The **disciples** were unsettled and then, **Judas left the room.**

**I think that things moved fast after that.** There was a final tortuous beseeching prayer in Gethsemane that the cup would be removed from him, but when he opened his eyes the cup was still there.

Silence, and then the mob arrived; the kiss; the trial and by noon the next day he was clinging for life upon the cross.

**So where was that same voice at the end, when the Beloved was panting his last few breaths, receiving the fury of those, whose values he had insulted?**

Mark says that even those who were crucified with him got in on the act. A blasphemer was much worse than a robber!

**Insults filled his ears with hate, while he strained to hear the *voice of the father who had sustained him all his life.***

*If ever there was a day he needed to hear it, if ever there was a day that he needed to be reminded of who he was and to whom he belonged,* ***it was today!***

**But there was no word**,

No sound from heaven, only Jesus' pitiful call. **"My God, my** **God, why have you forsaken me?"**

These were his last words and then a loud cry and when it came out of him, he died.

**Why him, why this?**

All I know is that **because of it,** none of us have to feel what he felt again. Because **he** was all alone and **we** have his company.

**At our most hurt, most frightened and most forsaken by God,** we have **this** companion who has been there and will be there with us.

Nothing that we think or do or in this state, can shock him or turn him away.

* If we say**, “where are you God,”** he said it first.
* If all we can do is cry out, he cried out first.
* Nothing we say can make him turn away

**It sounds like the end of faith but it is the beginning of it.**

*Jesus died talking to his father who would not talk back.*

**Is there any greater definition of faith?**

In his suffering he is the **comfort** of those who have no comfort.

In his **abandonment**, he is the God of those who have no God.

*Hearing* ***no*** *voice of love, he cried out, making a sound that for many, became the cry of love* **Amen**