

Good Friday – April 2, 2010

CHRIST DIED FOR US – CHRIST DIED FOR YOU

We are here again at the base of the cross. We have heard the scripture and the prayers. We have sung the hymns and listened to the psalm. We stand beneath the cross and struggle with the death of Jesus. We want to make sense of the violence, the torture, the brutal execution. Why must Jesus die? What does it mean that Christ died for us?

We are here again at the base of the cross, standing with the mother of Jesus, and her sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary of Magdala, and the beloved disciple. We have seen more than we can bear – betrayal in the garden, the poking and prodding of soldiers, a meaningless trial and irreverent inscription. We have heard insult piled upon insult. We have witnessed pain and suffering beyond imagining. We stand beneath the cross and struggle with the death of a son, a nephew, a friend, a mentor, and a saviour. We want to make sense of the mockery, the torment and the evil. Why must Jesus die? What does it mean that Christ died for us?

We are here again at the base of the cross, standing with all believers to retell the story and to recall the experience. We see God in Christ enter a world saturated with violence, a world in which people are victimized again and again – the poor neglected, women beaten and raped, children abused, the earth plundered, prophets murdered – God comes in Christ so that the order of our society and our world, our comfortable inattention, may be disturbed. Jesus disrupts that order by announcing God's forgiveness, promising the future to the poor, welcoming outcasts and strangers, calling for repentance and a new way of life distinguished by love of God and others. We stand beneath the cross and struggle with the death of Jesus, God with us. We want to make sense of the profound truth that Jesus *must* suffer – that the boundless love of God *must* clash with a world of hostility and violence and sin – that the eternal love of God *must* come to full expression in the vulnerability of Jesus Christ – that the one who mediates God's forgiveness and inaugurates the reign of God characterized by justice, freedom, and peace *must* become the victim of the world's violence because he threatens the way of violence in the world. Why must Jesus die? What does it mean that Christ died for us?

We are here again at the base of the cross and we see in the distance Judas, and Peter and Pilate. We cringe at the betrayal, the self-serving treachery, the cowardly kiss. We gasp at the denial, the bold-faced lie, the agonizing abandonment. We choke on the sentencing, the impotent consent, the cruel indifference. We stand beneath the cross and struggle with the death of a king unlike any we have known or expected. We want to make sense of the betrayal, the denial, the indifference. Why must Jesus die? What does it mean that Christ died for us?

We are here again at the base of the cross, looking within our selves and our community of faith – wondering how we have participated in this moment of despair. Remembering how and when we have failed family and friends. Remembering when and where we have neglected the poor, ignored violence and abuse, taken more than we need, and dismissed prophetic words. Remembering how we have betrayed our Lord, when we have denied our faith, where we have chosen to go along with the crowd. We stand beneath the cross and struggle with the death of Jesus. We want to make sense of our own sin, our own need, our own hope. Why must Jesus die? What does it mean that Christ died for us?

We are here again at the base of the cross wondering how Christ reconciles us, heals us, saves us in this place. Wondering at God’s compelling love and the importance of our response – wondering about suffering and sin, brokenness and healing, death and salvation – struggling with the death of Jesus – seeking meaning as we stand here together. As we linger for a time beneath the cross we see Christ – we see God. We see the way God deals with evil – with suffering – with death. God assumes, on our behalf – for us – with us, the evil – the hurt – the pain – the death of the world. And God suffers with us and for us in this act. But it is not suffering for the sake of suffering. It is suffering for the sake of its final and ultimate defeat.

What does it mean that Christ died for us?

What does it mean for you?