

April 2, 2021

Read Mark 15

Key verse: Mark 15:32

'Let the Messiah, the King of Israel, come down from the cross now, so that we may see and believe.'

Believe What?

I like to ask Sunday School students why they believe that Jesus is the true Son of God, and they often cite the miracles that he performed – the walking on water, the calming of the storm, and of course there's the resurrection (though they explain that as God's way of proving that Jesus was the Son of God). Of course these children are making perfect sense: God is powerful, therefore the Son of God must also be powerful, more powerful than we are, and the Son of God can use that power to do all sorts of good things in this world, like healing people and feeding large crowds on a few fish and loaves of bread.

But then why the Crucifixion? Children, and adults, often explain this (with various levels of confidence) that Jesus had to die for our sins on the cross, that he took the punishment that we deserve so that if we believe in him we won't have to suffer like he did. And so the crucifixion, to many, is a means to an end.

But the Crucifixion is an end in itself. In fact it is in the Crucifixion of Jesus, not in his Resurrection, where we witness the true glory of God! It is at Golgotha where the love of God is on display. Jesus' words and actions were all about the true love of God, a love demonstrated through service to others and forgiveness of others. Jesus said, "No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends." The Crucifixion embodies that degree of love.

After Jesus' torturous execution his disciples must have been demoralized. They loved Jesus because he had shown them what true love looks like, what the Kingdom of God looks like, but on this Good Friday it seemed to them that God's Kingdom was only a pipe dream. It looked like the ways of the world had prevailed over the ways of God.

And so we too ought to ponder, over these coming three days, whether the ways of man will forever prevail over the ways of God. Will people always be fighting over power and wealth and dominion over one another, or will we cede ourselves to the Living God, to live for his glory as Jesus did?

Prayer: Holy God, on this Good Friday we stand in awe at the foot of the cross, witnessing your extravagant love played out in suffering and death. We have a choice to make – to recognize Jesus as the true Son of God who brings your kingdom, or to see Jesus as a tragic victim of the way things are and always will be. Give us faith to believe the former. Amen.