

ST AIDAN'S UNITING CHURCH

GOOD FRIDAY

FRIDAY 10 APRIL 2009

Rev. Vladimir Korotkov

John 18: 33-38; Mark 15: 33-37

"Good Friday Reflections"

1. The death of Jesus comes swiftly in Mark's account.

The story is brief, as if too painful to say more. Pilate condemns him. On Golgotha he is stripped, ridiculed, nailed to the cross between two rebels, mocked and asked to save himself.

But the reader knows that Jesus' power is demonstrated not in leaping from the cross but in carrying it, in giving his life for others.

The sight of the crucified Jesus produces the first full confession of faith in the Centurion. "Truly this man was the Son of God!" (15:39) A disturbing truth, one which Paul suggests, if viewed as foolishness by society. God's power is revealed in the most unlikely place; in a selfless death motivated by love.

2. John follows this mood. As Jesus' life is subversive, so also is his death. It shows in deed what Jesus taught in word: greatness is lowliness and compassion, the last is first, loving matters most.

John's Jesus knows what he is doing, remaining resolute throughout the Passion. Mark's Jesus is portrayed in more realistic terms: in the brokenness of Gethsemane and the cry of despair.

These differences are related to each author's intentions. John presents a Jesus from the perspective of the Christian faith, introducing a post-Easter interpenetration of the human and divine. As William Loader clearly states: "John is doing theology. He wants us to see divine glory in the inglorious human figure, a challenge to all human pretentiousness and power."

3. A potent symbol of the whole trial is that of kingship. Pilate represents political might. But Jesus' sovereignty is not "of this world." That is, his use of power is not other-worldly; rather, it represents a qualitatively different power which seeks the good of the other, particularly the marginalised other. Jesus came into the world to proclaim the ultimate truth of God's love—and not brute, oppressive force—Pilate, like the religious leaders, is incapable of recognising this truth (18:37). (Loader)

Jesus' ministry interprets his death and his death interprets his ministry.

Jesus is not passive. He is not a defeatist, or an ego-less doormat.

Jesus totally changes the notion of kingship: his followers are friends and co-workers, not subservient objects of God's cause.

4. Even though John looks at the story of Jesus' suffering through the eyes of Easter faith, the humanity and reality of the drama is maintained. The spearing of Jesus is only presented in John, giving evidence of the human death of Jesus.

5. 'It is finished' (19:30), in John's world of thought means: Jesus has completed the task given to

him, to make the God known (see also 4:34; 17:4). It is often linked to atonement models as if Jesus is saying: I have made the sacrifice of my body, which I came to make. This is not John's emphasis. Instead, the focus is Jesus' faithfulness to God's commission in offering light and life and truth to people. The work is complete.

Love is revealed even in the face of suffering. The effect is to reveal love and expose hate, to forgive the repentant and even to offer a new chance to failure and betrayal and so offer a new beginning.
(William Loader)