

Good Friday 2021
Behold the Cross, the wood of the Cross.
Revd David Treharne

Behold the Cross, the wood of the Cross, to which the Saviour of the World was nailed

Yesterday I talked about participating in the life of God, and the difference between sharing and participating. It is one thing to share a video of Jesus of Nazareth, and for us to be mere viewers or observers. It is another thing entirely to enter into what happened, to become part of the scene and truly take on board what God has done for us in Christ Jesus on the Cross.

On the Cross Jesus identified with our human predicament and took upon himself our sin. In his death he pays the penalty for our sin and makes a new covenant between God and his people.

Jesus is the lamb who takes away sin

On the Cross Jesus reconciles us to God. He deals with all that destroys relationships and offers restoration and reconciliation

In the Cross Jesus triumphs over all the powers of sin and evil

In the Cross Jesus identifies with all the pain and suffering in the world

On the Cross Jesus sets an example of perfect love

In the Cross we see humanity trying to eliminate God and put Him to death, but love is stronger than death and ...

In and on the Cross Jesus is broken to share God's life

All this is true but there's that lovely saying Jesus is not merely a subject to be discussed, he's a person to be encountered. One could say the same about the Cross; it's not merely a subject to be discussed, it's something to be encountered.

Tom said earlier this week that the Cross gets inside of us and transforms us. That's what I'm talking about. The Cross isn't just for 2,000 years ago, it's for now, for me and for you and for the world.

Behold the Cross, the wood of the Cross, to which the Saviour of the World was nailed

We have been doing 'noticing' as part of our Lenten journey together. Today we are called to notice the wooden Cross of Jesus anew.

In previous Parishes, as a way of trying to help the Cross get inside of us, I've been a part of walking the Stations of the Cross during Lent. 14 images of the passion... put together with reflections and/or prayers. The purpose being that one makes a pilgrimage with Jesus and contemplates what he has done for us and the whole world. To really enter into it. It was really powerful as one's heart and life was drawn into the mystery of God's love shown through the passion... shown through the Cross.

I remember reflecting more than once on the questions 'Whose Cross is it?'

"Who made it?" Did human beings make the Cross, or did God?

On the one hand reflecting on the Cross we can see it is created by human beings.

At its most basic level it is made by a carpenter... which in itself is ironic. After all wood was a familiar material for Jesus... used for beauty and purpose day by day from his birth being held in a manger and then growing up wood was a source of income and security for his family. One wonders about the times of fun Jesus may have had with Joseph as a small child... and the warnings Joseph may have given about the dangers of carpentry, not knowing that one day Jesus, the son of a carpenter, would die on a cross made by a carpenter.

A wooden manger held him at his birth. Wooden boats carried Jesus for his ministry. Now a wooden Cross is used for his death.

But humanity contributed more than the physical construction of a wooden Cross.

I still remember vividly the station of the Cross that said, "Jesus, it is because of my sins that You are going to die. It wasn't Pilate who condemned you but me."

In his ministry Jesus spoke of judging others with the analogy of the eyes having a splinter or a log (Matthew 7). My judgmentalism and hypocrisy, my misjudgement, my critical spirit and my moaning, my negativity and lack of kindness have all aided the construction of the Cross.

I have personal responsibility in its construction with those things outlined in the litany we said earlier.

My ignorance, stubbornness, hardness of heart, my fear and unwillingness to repent and accept the loving call and embrace of my heavenly Father... all contribute to the Cross.

In Luke's Gospel Chapter 12 Jesus alludes to wood when he tells of the man tearing down barns to building bigger one.

My attachment to stuff, my love of money and the desire for possessions at the expense of others and the belief that wealth rather than God will bring happiness and fulfilment has helped construct the Cross.

A few weeks ago I was tempted to do the Euro millions lottery. Just think what I can do with 100 million pounds... just think what I could do? I followed that train of thought only to come to the place that if I had 100 million pounds I wouldn't have to trust God in the same way!

I have participated in constructing the Cross.

Each of us here, humanity itself has helped to construct the Cross of Jesus. A world that thought it could manage without the love and goodness and holiness of God.

It's almost as though the horizontal beam of the Cross is entirely human... made up of our sinfulness, our disobedience and rebellion against the love of God... an attempt to block heaven from earth, to separate us from God and go it alone.

In the structure of the Cross we see the desecration of our humanity as, in our sinfulness, we seek to banish the divine... cut ourselves off from what is good and holy to seemingly set ourselves free to do as we please.

The Cross is humanities attempt to subjugate God... and not allow him to speak or breath or live.

Behold the Cross, the wood of the Cross, to which the Saviour of the World was nailed

But the Cross is not just of human construction, it was God's chosen instrument of salvation.

God chose the Cross

He was involved in its construction... he is the Creator God who fashioned the trees with his hands, who created the material in the first place.

He is the one who gave gifts of carpentry

He gave the intellect of construction

It is his chosen way to show the depths of his love for us and the full extent of his love.

The Cross is God's way to be reconciled with his creation.

If the horizontal beam could be said to be of our making. The vertical beam is of God's making. He goes straight through all that which separates us from him.

In the structure of the Cross we see the co-mingling of the human and divine and the story of God's relationship with humanity reach a climax and crossroads

Our sin and sinful nature crucifies God. Yet God ends up crucifying our sin and sinful nature! (Galatians 2:20 and 1 Peter 2:24)

His love is indeed immense.

God comes to where we are to take us to be where he is
God becomes what we are, he was made sin (1 Corinthians 5:21 and Galatians 3:13), so that we might become what he is... holy and righteous.

Jesus you came to the lowest place, the darkest place, the deepest place, the most desolate place.
You came to the lowest place through the wood of the cross, a place of desolation, brokenness, hopelessness, sadness and ending... you came to the place of death.... You took it all upon yourself on the Cross...
It is not just you who was nailed to the wooden Cross, it was all of sin and death.

In the Cross God has provided... initiated... a place for us to take our lament, fear and doubt, our concern, pain and suffering. He urges us to come to the Cross with all that burdens us, all that hurts, harms and spoils our humanity.

In selfless love Jesus embraced us, and all the baggage we carry and it cost him everything.

Your unparalleled love O Lord revealed on the Cross invites a response from us. Not just observation! As you embrace us to death, may we embrace you in the hope and promise of new life...