A JOURNEY TO EASTER

LENTEN MEDITATION- WEEK 7

The reflections and linked meditations are derived from 'An Ocean of Grace', © Tim Chester

The Victory of God

1. O Christ, your cross speaks both to us and to our world. In your dying for us you accepted the pain and hurt of the whole of creation. The arms of your cross stretch out across the broken world in reconciliation. You have made peace with us.
Help us to make peace with you by sharing in your reconciling work. *Ali Newell*.

HYMN

From heav'n you came, helpless babe,
entered our world, your glory veiled;
not to be served, but to serve,
and give your life that we might live.
This is our God, the Servant King,
he calls us now to follow him,
to bring our lives as a daily offering
of worship to the Servant King.

There in the garden of tears,
my heavy load he chose to bear;
his heart with sorrow was torn,
"yet not my will, but yours" he said.
This is our God,…….

Come see his hands and his feet,
the scars that speak of sacrifice,
hands that flung stars into space
to cruel nails surrendered.
This is our God,……

So let us learn how to serve,
and in our lives enthrone him;
each other's needs to prefer,
for it is Christ we're serving.
This is our God,……..

CONFESSION Lord Jesus, forgive us for failing you, as even the disciples did. Through thoughtlessness we betray you, through fear we run away from you, through cowardice we deny you, not wanting people to know that we are your followers. Have mercy on us, as you had mercy on Peter and the others, and when the cock crows in our hearts and we realize what we have done, help us to bear your gaze of love. *Angela Ashwin*.

May the God of love bring us back to himself, forgive us our sins, and assure us of his eternal love in Jesus Christ our Lord. Common Worship

READINGS and REFLECTIONS

2. The whole crowd of disciples began joyfully to praise God in loud voices for all the miracles they had seen: "Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord"….. Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Jesus, "Teacher, rebuke your disciples!" "I tell you", he replied, "if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out." *(Luke 19.37-40)*

3. As Jesus entered Jerusalem, he was acclaimed by the crowds. It was a prophetic moment – a sign of his true identity and status. But it was not humanity's final verdict on Jesus. A few days later the religious leaders judged Jesus to be a blasphemer; the political authorities condemned him as a rebel, and public opinion cried out for his crucifixion. In the court of heaven this verdict was overturned. Jesus was not a blasphemer – he is the Son of God. Nor was he a rebel – he is the rightful King of creation.

4. *We worship you, Lord Jesus, exalted above the heavens. On earth you were hated and scorned by men; now you are adored by angels. On earth your name was reproached; now God has given you "the name that is above every name"*… This is comfort for the poorest Christian…. We cannot lift up Christ higher in heaven, but we may lift him up in our hearts. So let us believe him, adore him and love him, and exalt him in our lives, for all the doxologies and prayers in the world do not exalt Christ so much as a holy life.*
(Thomas Watson) *Philippians 2.9

5. (Jesus said) "Now my soul is troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour?' No, it was for this very reason I came

to this hour. Father, glorify your name!" Then a voice came from heaven, "I have glorified it, and will glorify it again". *(John 12.27-28)*

6. These verses capture Jesus' real anguish as he faced the prospect of the cross, reminding us that he is truly human. Secondly, we see the resolute love of Jesus; he was deeply troubled by the suffering he was about to endure, but he also recognized that this is why he came – to redeem his people in love. Jesus would be literally lifted up as he was hoisted up on the cross, but he was also metaphorically lifted up as his saving love became evident and he draws all people to himself. Cyril reminds us that Christ's experience of suffering helps us in ours; his anguish calms ours and his troubled soul liberates our troubled souls.

7. *My Saviour, Jesus Christ, a man born of woman, not in deceptive appearance or mere fancy but rather by nature and in truth, possessing every human quality, except for sin- for that which has not been taken into your nature has not been saved- you are the firstfruits of a new humanity; in you our nature was restored to newness of life, for you are the second Adam….The cross is glory. For at the season of your Passion, you willingly and patiently endured many insults, and voluntarily accepted sufferings for our sake which you could have refused…. So now when we feel overwhelmed by dread or grief or alarm, restore our courage with the truth of the word, and comfort our hearts through the word made flesh*. (Cyril of Alexandria)

8. For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. *(1 Cor.1.18)*

9. From the earliest days people have regarded faith in a crucified Saviour as foolish. If anything, it seems the epitome of weakness and failure. But Cyril of Jerusalem invites us to glory in the cross. Jesus' miracles are impressive, but nothing compared to the cross, which atones for the sin of God's people across the ages. God could have been true to his justice and destroyed humanity, but what then of his loving kindness? Or God could have overlooked sin, but what then of his justice? The glory of the cross is that Christ, the God-Man with life in himself, "took our sins" and the penalty they demand. His death brings life to all those who are his.

10. *Everything you did, Lord, gives us reason to glory. But our greatest glory of all is your cross… It was truly wonderful that one blind from birth should receive sight in Siloam*, but what is this compared with the blind of the whole word? It was a great thing, and beyond natural explanation, for Lazarus to rise again on the fourth day**, but what is this compared with the dead in sins throughout the world? …May we never be ashamed of the cross of our Saviour but rather glory in it. For it was not a mere man who died for us, for you are the Son of God, God made man.* (Cyril of Jerusalem). *John 9.1-7, **John11.44.

PRAYERS

Lord, we give you thanks for the great sacrifice you made for us, for the gift of life. You give us in abundance, help us to share your gifts.

We pray for our troubled world, where leaders enforce their will on others, where there is warfare, where there is poverty and hunger.

We pray for our churches. Help us to enable your kingdom here on earth.

We pray for the sick and suffering in mind, body or spirit, especially we pray for……..

May the cross of our Lord protect those who belong to Jesus, and strengthen our hearts in faith to Christ, in hardship and in ease, in life and in death, now and forever. (Simon of Iran)

We say the **LORD'S PRAYER**

We share **THE GRACE**

THOUGHTS Jesus didn't come up to the crowd's expectations, so they rejected him. Would we have done any better? Would we prefer not to get involved?

Week 7 – Notes on the writers, a brace of Cyrils

(NB see last week's notes for a biography of Thomas Watson)





Cyril, Bishop of Alexandria was born in Didouseya (modern-day El-Mahalla El-Kubra) in Egypt in around 376 AD,and died in Alexandria in 444. He succeeded his uncle as Bishop of Alexandria, the second city of the Roman Empire. Cyril has been described as somewhat of a "Marmite figure". He was arrogant, described by Edward Gibbon, not flatteringly, as an "episcopal warrior". He expelled the members of the heretical Novatian sect from Alexandria; these people refused to allow those who had been forced to deny their faith under persecution to be readmitted to the church. He may have inflamed tensions that led to the murder of the Hellenistic philosopher Hypatia by a "Christian" mob. After his death, a theological opponent, Theodoret of Cyr, wrote "his survivors are delighted at his departure. The dead, maybe, are sorry. There is some ground of alarm lest they should be so much annoyed at his company as to send him back to us". Cyril was bitterly opposed to Nestorius, Bishop of Constantinople. Nestorius thought that Christ's humanity contradicted his divinity, which, to Cyril, invalidated the incarnation. He wrote "for scripture says not that the Word united himself to the person of a man, but that he was made flesh. This means nothing else than that he partook of flesh and blood like us. He made our body his own, not ceasing to be God". He was an eloquent preacher and a major contributor to theology.



Cyril, Bishop of Jerusalem, was born around 313 AD near Caesarea Maritima, in modern day Israel, and died in 386 in Jerusalem. Cyril was well read in the writings of early Christian theologians as well as the Greek philosophers. In 350, he succeeded Maximus as Bishop of Jerusalem but spent several times forced into exile; initially he made an enemy of Metropolitan Acacius of Caesarea, who was jealous of the importance assigned to Cyril's see by the Council of Nicaea. Acacius charged Cyril with selling church ornaments and a valuable robe, probably to feed starving people in Jerusalem during a period of famine. Subsequently, Cyril was banished from and readmitted to Jerusalem at the whim of succesive emperors.Unusually for the period, Cyril's writings are filled with the loving, forgiving nature of God; "The Spirit comes with the tenderness of a true friend to save, to heal, to teach, to counsel, to strengthen and to console". He himself never showed ill will to those who wronged him.