

By His Wounds We Are Healed

10 April 2020

Good Friday

Reading: Isaiah 52:13-53:12

Little Johnny wasn't doing very well at school, especially when it came to maths. He went to a state school, but his parents thought he might do better at St Michael's and All Angels School here in Christchurch, a good Anglican school. Well the transformation was amazing. Every night he ran home from school went upstairs and got straight into his homework. Almost overnight his grades began to improve, especially in maths. After a while, his parents became intrigued. So, they said to him "We have noticed a vast improvement in you since you started at St Michael's, especially with your maths little Johnny. Can you tell us how this has happened?" "Oh" Johnny said, "I've seen the plus sign in every room showing what they did to the last guy who didn't do his homework."

Today is a Friday. We dare to call it good. A very long time ago the prophet Isaiah wrote about a mysterious figure called the Suffering Servant. Listen to what Isaiah wrote about 600 years before Jesus was born: "He was wounded for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities. He was the punishment that made us whole and by his wounds we are healed." By his wounds we are healed.

It would be very tempting to brush over the reality of Jesus' suffering and death today because, after all, haven't we got enough death and suffering in our world at this time? What we need is a good laugh and a jolly along. I'm sure we do need a good laugh, but Christians have always found that gazing on the suffering of Jesus actually brings us healing.

But how can someone dying so long ago actually bring us healing here and now?

One way Jesus' death brings us healing is by helping us face into our greatest fear. We discover we no longer need fear death because Jesus has gone before us. The old prayer book has the wonderful line 'In the midst of life we are surrounded by death.' With Covid 19 this has become a reality for much of our world. But for every virus there comes a vaccine. I'm no scientist but a vaccine is a little taster for the body's antibodies to build up resistance for the real thing. By gazing on Jesus dying for us, we get a vaccine that gives us strength to face our greatest fears.

But there's another way Jesus' death brings us comfort too. We know that whatever suffering we have to face, Jesus suffers with us and for us. We have in Jesus someone who understands the very worst of human cruelty and suffering and this is tremendously healing. Jesus totally understands whatever we are going through.

Thirdly when we gaze on the cross of Jesus, we see how much God loves us. It's not that Jesus had to die to change God's mind about us. God already totally loved us. Rather Jesus had to die to change our mind about God. This much God loves you: that he couldn't even withhold that which is most precious of all, his very own child. He couldn't hold back his own child because you too are his precious and beloved child.

Today then we gaze again at the cross. We gaze because by his wounds we are healed. His death brings us life. We gaze because in him we see someone who shares our suffering at the very deepest level. And finally, we gaze at the cross because on the cross we see how much God loves us.