



Gospel Jn 18:1 – 19:42

N Jesus left with his disciples and crossed the Kedron valley. There was a garden there, and he went into it with his disciples. Judas the traitor knew the place well, since Jesus had often met his disciples there, and he brought the cohort to this place together with a detachment of guards sent by the chief priests and the Pharisees, all with lanterns and torches and weapons. Knowing everything that was going to happen to him, Jesus then came forward and said,

J Who are you looking for?

N They answered,

C Jesus the Nazarene.

N He said,

J I am he.

N Now Judas the traitor was standing among them. When Jesus said, 'I am he', they moved back and fell to the ground. He asked them a second time,

J Who are you looking for?

N They said,

C Jesus the Nazarene.

N Jesus replied,

J I have told you that I am he. If I am the one you are looking for, let these others go.

N This was to fulfil the words he had spoken: 'Not one of those you gave me have I lost.'

Simon Peter, who carried a sword, drew it and wounded the high priest's servant, cutting off his right ear. The servant's name was Malchus. Jesus said to Peter,

J Put your sword back in its scabbard; am I not to drink the cup that the Father has given me?

N The cohort and its captain and the Jewish guards seized Jesus and bound him. They took him first to Annas, because Annas was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, who was high priest that year. It was Caiaphas who had suggested to the Jews, 'It is better for one man to die for the people.'

Simon Peter, with another disciple, followed Jesus. This disciple, who was known to the high priest, went with Jesus into the high priest's palace, but Peter stayed outside the door. So the other disciple, the one known to the high priest, went out, spoke to the woman who was keeping the door, and brought Peter in. The maid on duty at the door said to Peter,

O Aren't you another of that man's disciples?

N He answered,

O I am not.

N Now it was cold, and the servants and guards had lit a charcoal fire and were standing there warming themselves; so Peter stood there too, warming himself with the others.

The high priest questioned Jesus about his disciples and his teaching. Jesus answered,

J I have spoken openly for all the world to hear; I have always taught in the synagogue and in the Temple where all the Jews meet together: I have said nothing in secret. But why ask me? Ask my hearers what I taught: they know what I said.

N At these words, one of the guards standing by gave Jesus a slap in the face, saying,

O Is that the way to answer the high priest?

N Jesus replied,

J If there is something wrong in what I said, point it out; but if there is no offence in it, why do you strike me?

N Then Annas sent him, still bound, to Caiaphas, the high priest.

As Simon Peter stood there warming himself, someone said to him,

O Aren't you another of his disciples?

N He denied it saying,

O I am not.

N One of the high priest's servants, a relation of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, said,

O Didn't I see you in the garden with him?

N Again Peter denied it; and at once a cock crew.

They then led Jesus from the house of Caiaphas to the Praetorium. It was now morning. They did not go into the Praetorium themselves or they would be defiled and unable to eat the passover. So Pilate came outside to them and said,

O What charge do you bring against this man?

N They replied,

C If he were not a criminal, we should not be handing him over to you.

N Pilate said,

O Take him yourselves, and try him by your own Law.

N The Jews answered,

C We are not allowed to put a man to death.

N This was to fulfil the words Jesus had spoken indicating the way he was going to die.

So Pilate went back into the Praetorium and called Jesus to him, and asked,

O Are you the king of the Jews?

N Jesus replied,

J Do you ask this of your own accord, or have others spoken to you about me?

N Pilate answered,

O Am I a Jew? It is your own people and the chief priests who have handed you over to me: what have you done?

N Jesus replied,

J Mine is not a kingdom of this world; if my kingdom were of this world, my men would have fought to prevent me being surrendered to the Jews. But my kingdom is not of this kind.

N Pilate said,

O So you are a king then?

N Jesus answered,

J It is you who say it. Yes, I am a king, I was born for this, I came into the world for this; to bear witness to the truth, and all who are on the side of truth listen to my voice.

N Pilate said,

O Truth? What is that?

N And with that he went out again to the Jews and said,

O I find no case against him. But according to a custom of yours, I should release one prisoner at the Passover; would you like me, then, to release the king of the Jews?

N At this they shouted:

C Not this man, but Barabbas.

N Barabbas was a brigand.

Pilate then had Jesus taken away and scourged; and after this, the soldiers twisted some thorns into a crown and put it on his head, and dressed him in a purple robe. They kept coming up to him and saying,

C Hail, king of the Jews!

N And they slapped him in the face.

Pilate came outside again and said to them,

O Look, I am going to bring him out to you to let you see that I find no case.

N Jesus then came out wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Pilate said,

O Here is the man.

N When they saw him the chief priests and the guards shouted,

C Crucify him! Crucify him!

N Pilate said,

O Take him yourselves and crucify him: I can find no case against him.

N The Jews replied,

C We have a Law, and according to the Law he ought to die, because he has claimed to be the son of God.

N When Pilate heard them say this his fears increased. Re-entering the Praetorium, he said to Jesus,

O Where do you come from?

N But Jesus made no answer. Pilate then said to him,

O Are you refusing to speak to me? Surely you know I have power to release you and I have power to crucify you?

N Jesus replied

J You would have no power over me if it had not been given you from above; that is why the one who handed me over to you has the greater guilt.

N From that moment Pilate was anxious to set him free, but the Jews shouted,

C If you set him free you are no friend of Caesar's; anyone who makes himself king is defying Caesar.

N Hearing these words, Pilate had Jesus brought out, and seated himself on the chair of judgement at a place called the Pavement, in Hebrew Gabbatha. It was Passover Preparation Day, about the sixth hour. Pilate said to the Jews,

O Here is your king.

N They said,

C Take him away, take him away. Crucify him!

N Pilate said,

O Do you want me to crucify your king?

N The chief priests answered,

C We have no king except Caesar.

N So in the end Pilate handed him over to them to be crucified.

They then took charge of Jesus, and carrying his own cross he went out of the city to the place of the skull, or, as it was called in Hebrew, Golgotha, where they crucified him with two others, one on either side with Jesus in the middle. Pilate wrote out a notice and had it fixed to the cross; it ran: 'Jesus the Nazarene, King of the Jews.' This notice was read by many of the Jews, because the place where Jesus was crucified was not far from the city, and the writing was in Hebrew, Latin and Greek. So the Jewish chief priests said to Pilate,

C You should not write 'King of the Jews', but 'This man said: I am King of the Jews'.

N Pilate answered,

O What I have written, I have written.

N When the soldiers had finished crucifying Jesus they took his clothing and divided it into four shares, one for each soldier. His undergarment was seamless, woven in one piece from neck to hem; so they said to one another,

C Instead of tearing it, let's throw dice to decide who is to have it.

N In this way the words of scripture were fulfilled:

They shared out my clothing among them.

They cast lots for my clothes.

This is exactly what the soldiers did.

Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary of Magdala. Seeing his mother and the disciple he loved standing near her, Jesus said to his mother,

J Woman, this is your son.

N Then to the disciple he said,

J This is your mother.

N And from that moment the disciple made a place for her in his home.

After this, Jesus knew that everything had now been completed, and to fulfil the scripture perfectly he said:

J I am thirsty.

- J Woman, this is your son.
 N Then to the disciple he said,
 J This is your mother.
 N And from that moment the disciple made a place for her in his home.
 After this, Jesus knew that everything had now been completed, and to fulfil the scripture perfectly he said:
 J I am thirsty.
 N A jar full of vinegar stood there, so putting a sponge soaked in vinegar on a hyssop stick they held it up to his mouth. After Jesus had taken the vinegar he said,
 J It is accomplished;
 N and bowing his head he gave up the spirit.

All kneel and pause a moment.

- N It was Preparation Day, and to prevent the bodies remaining on the cross during the sabbath – since that sabbath was a day of special solemnity – the Jews asked Pilate to have the legs broken and the bodies taken away. Consequently the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first man who had been crucified with him and then of the other. When they came to Jesus, they found that he was already dead, and so instead of breaking his legs one of the soldiers pierced his side with a lance; and immediately there came out blood and water. This is the evidence of one who saw it – trustworthy evidence, and he knows he speaks the truth – and he gives it so that you may believe as well. Because all this happened to fulfil the words of scripture:

Not one bone of his will be broken,

and again, in another place scripture says:

They will look on the one whom they have pierced.

After this, Joseph of Arimathaea, who was a disciple of Jesus – though a secret one because he was afraid of the Jews – asked Pilate to let him remove the body of Jesus. Pilate gave permission, so they came and took it away. Nicodemus came as well – the same one who had first come to Jesus at night-time – and he brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, weighing about a hundred pounds. They took the body of Jesus and wrapped it with the spices in linen cloths, following the Jewish burial custom. At the place where he had been crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb in which no one had yet been buried. Since it was the Jewish Day of Preparation and the tomb was near at hand, they laid Jesus there.

Reflection

The incredibly rich imagery and symbolic language that flows throughout the gospel of John gives way in some regards to a fairly stark narrative style as the gospel writer retells the central story of Christian faith. By the time this gospel was written, some 60-70 years after the events it describes, the story of Jesus' arrest, trial, torture and execution was well established in the early Christian communities. One can see across the four gospel accounts only relatively small points of difference. This indicates the fact that the account was already so well established in the Christian communities that the gospel writers felt they could not deviate much from the story that had been told and retold probably every single day in the intervening years.

In many ways, we can see that this key event was something of a starting point for each of the gospel writers. Each in their own way leads up to this event as the climactic point of the whole gospel. In the gospel of John, much of the imagery used throughout the gospel is referenced to the passion narrative. At various points, John refers to Jesus being 'lifted up' or 'raised up' and in doing so he is making reference to Jesus being lifted up on the cross. The story of 'living water' flowing from Jesus is reflected in the blood and water that flow when he is pierced by a spear. The emphasis this gospel writer has placed on the discipleship of women throughout the gospel is honoured by the presence of the women at the foot of the cross. In many ways, this gospel presents the crucifixion as the 'completion' of Jesus' work – the ultimate 'sign' to which all other signs have been pointing.

Historical Context

Jews in the fourth gospel

The gospel of John is sometimes considered 'anti-Semitic' because its portrayal of 'the Jews' is rather negative. Use of the term 'the Jews' is very evident in today's Passion narrative where other writers might have used 'the Jewish authorities'. This gospel was written at a time when the Christian community had been exiled from the Jewish faith and what had once been close bonds were dramatically broken down. The language of the gospel is indicative of the social situation at the time of its writing rather than at the time of Jesus. We must be careful to understand the context of the writer.

Scriptural Context

The Suffering Servant

It is appropriate that the first reading in today's liturgy comes from one of Isaiah's Songs of the Suffering Servant. Isaiah includes three short poems or songs about the Suffering Servant and then a much longer fourth song from which today's reading comes. Traditionally, Jewish scholars interpreted Isaiah's poems as referring to the Jewish people as a whole. The followers of Jesus made a specific link between the imagery of Isaiah and the life and death of Jesus. The writings of Isaiah had a significant influence on the gospel writers who borrowed heavily from his imagery throughout their gospels.

Have you Thought?

Veneration of the Cross

A significant element of the Good Friday service is the veneration of the Cross when all are invited to process forward and touch or kiss the Cross that is the central symbol of Good Friday. Veneration of holy objects and places is an ancient practice that draws people into connection with the mystery and history of the thing they venerate. In more recent years, the veneration of the Cross has taken on a new significance as the World Youth Day Cross and Icon travel around the world and around the host country of WYD. The act of veneration invites us into a moment of deep prayer.

Q. *In what ways is Good Friday both a solemn day and a 'good' day?*

Q. *When you listen to the Passion narrative, what images or emotions surface for you?*

Q. *What is the 'good news' for our lives that we can take from this seemingly hopeless story?*

Q. *What artistic image of the crucifixion do you find most powerful?*

Gospel Journal

In what ways is Good Friday both a solemn day and a 'good' day?

When you listen to the Passion narrative, what images or emotions surface for you?

What is the 'good news' for our lives that we can take from this seemingly hopeless story?

What artistic image of the crucifixion do you find most powerful?
