

Reflection by Diana Johnson

John 19:25b to 27 then Matthew 27:45 to 50

St Mary and St Michael, Trumpington

Good Friday, 10th April 2020

Meditations on the Cross

Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of all our hearts be acceptable to you, O

Lord, our rock and our Redeemer. (Ps 19.14 alt.)

John 18.1-end of 19

²⁵...

Meanwhile, standing near the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. ²⁶When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing beside her, he said to his mother, 'Woman, here is your son.' ²⁷Then he said to the disciple, 'Here is your mother.' And from that hour the disciple took her into his own home.

The Death of Jesus Matthew 27:45 to 50

⁴⁵ From noon until three in the afternoon darkness came over all the land. About three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "*Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?*" (which means "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?").

When some of those standing there heard this, they said, "He's calling Elijah."

Immediately one of them ran and got a sponge. He filled it with wine vinegar, put it on a staff, and offered it to Jesus to drink. The rest said, "Now leave him alone. Let's see if Elijah comes to save him."

And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit. And died.

The worst of it

A monologue by Mary

The worst of it was not when he finally died.

After what they did to him, to see there was no more heaving of his chest, no more breath being gasped for, was a relief. His pain was over. They could not lay a hand on him any more. I longed to reach for him, to cut him down from there, to cradle him.

That was not the worst of it.





Seeing him exposed and broken, and being unable to hold him one last time, even in death. No mother should have to see her child tortured, mocked, insulted like he was. The way they treated him, like the lowest of criminals. Oh, my boy. But not once did he spit back or protest. Not even as he took the whip, as his skin broke and bled.

Even that was not the worst of it.

And the cruelty of crowning him with thorns, dressing him up like a king, parading him out in the streets, bowing and scraping around him, jeering and howling like crazed animals, enjoying their contempt for him. And I could not stop them. I could not stop any of it. I could not rescue my son. I could not even grasp his hand, speak a word of love in the chaos. I tried to keep as close as I could in all the pushing and shoving of men and soldiers, but I was powerless to ease his torment.

Even that was not the worst of it.

I could not look as they took the nails and ropes and forced him down then hoisted him up. I knew what to expect – we have all seen it before. The wretchedness of hanging there for days, waiting for the mercy of death. How

long would it be for him? How long till he breathed his last? I feared it would be slow and long for him.

But that was not the worst of it.

No, the worst of it was his shout, his wail of abandonment. I do not know how he had the breath left for such a harrowing cry. He cried against heaven, against the Almighty, a final desolate groaning at being forsaken in the end. Forsaken by his Father. At the end of your faithful, passionate, joyful life, my son, in the end they defeated you.

Oh, my child. You were never cut off, forgotten, left by our God. You were never abandoned, even at the last! But you cried out the misery of being deserted, the pain overwhelming you in the end. Who can blame you? But after all your years of hope and faith, all you taught us, all your life and laughter, I cannot bear that at the end you felt cast aside by your Father, our Father. 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?'

Jesus, my boy, if only I could tell you, it was never like that. You were anything but forsaken! You were loved to the end, loved beyond death. Oh God, why did they break you so completely?

Why?

Jo Love, Spill the Beans¹

¹ Quoted in Ruth Burgess Spring pp264f from Wild Goose Publications, Glasgow, by permission



Prayer:

Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord, Jesus Christ.

We praise you, Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, for you submitted to the discipline of a son's obedience, and perfectly revealed in your death the loving nature of God.

We praise you, Lord Jesus Christ, Son of Man, for as a champion of humans and for our sake you entered the battle against evil, and won the complete victory over its power.

We praise you, Lord Jesus Christ, Servant of God, for you accepted the suffering of those who seek to be at one with those they serve, and by your sacrifice made us one with God.

Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord, Jesus Christ.

Amen.

Hymn:

184 Were you there when they crucified my Lord?

Word count (Reading and Reflection only): 742 Time: 6 mins plus prayer silence hymn
Approx. 125 words min⁻¹