

Good Friday: Get Real, Life was Jesus' test: Jesus' obedience becomes the test for others.

First hymn: 86 vv 1,2,3,5 & 7

First Reading: Luke 22:39-46

“Going out, he went to the Mount of Olives and his disciples followed him. Once there, Jesus said to them, “Pray not to come to trial.” He took himself a stone’s throw from them, and falling to his knees, prayed, saying, “Father, if you wish, remove this cup from me, but not my will, but yours be done. An angel from heaven appeared to him, strengthening him. He prayed in increasing agony. His sweat was like clots of blood, falling to the ground. Getting up from his prayers and coming to his disciples, he found them sleeping from sorrow. He said to them, “Why are you asleep? Get up and pray so that you do not come to trial.”

Dyma Iesu'n mynd allan i Fynydd yr Olewydd eto, fel roedd wedi gwneud bob nos. Ac aeth ei ddisgyblion ar ei ôl. Pan gyrhaeddodd lle roedd yn mynd, dwedodd wrthyn nhw, “Gweddïwch y byddwch chi ddim yn syrthio pan gewch chi'ch profi.” Yna aeth yn ei flaen daflriad carreg, a mynd ar ei liniau a dechrau gweddïo, “Dad, os wyt ti'n fodlon, cymer y cwpan chwerw yma oddi arna i. Ond paid gwneud beth dw i eisiau, gwna beth rwyd ti eisiau.” Yna gwelodd angel o'r nefoedd, ac roedd yr angel yn ei annog ac yn cryfhau ei benderfyniad. Gweddïodd yn fwy taer, ond gan ei fod mewn cymaint o boen meddwl, roedd ei chwys yn disgyn ar lawr fel dafnau o waed. Pan gododd ar ei draed a mynd yn ôl at ei ddisgyblion roedden nhw'n cysgu. Roedd tristwch yn eu llethu nhw. Gofynnodd iddyn nhw, “Pam dych chi'n cysgu? Codwch ar eich traed, a gweddïwch y byddwch chi ddim yn syrthio pan gewch chi'ch profi.” (Beibl.net)

Here the first victory of the passion was won. We are given a clear picture of the testing Jesus was put through before his ministry began. We do not know what happened here except that it was physically as well as mentally traumatic. At this point, he could have chosen to melt back into obscurity, or at least tried to. Once he was arrested, the die was cast, what would happen would be out of Jesus' hands, although how he reacted remained his choice until the end. We are told by the writer to the Hebrews that Jesus learned obedience through what he

suffered. We see that expressed in the words of his prayer, not my will but yours be done. That is the only glimpse we are given into Jesus' inner life at this crucial moment. Whatever was going through his mind, that prayer is what he kept hold of, not my will but your will, not my will but your will, not my will but your will. Whatever went through Jesus' mind during this time praying, Jesus chose staying to see through whatever would come and whatever the cost and as he passes this test, so he becomes part of the testing of others. Jesus' obedience to the will of God is revealed in the fact of his obedience come what may and by this act of radical obedience, he becomes the occasion of the testing of others.

Jesus' students are also undergoing a time of trial. Peter at least has been warned. As they watch the intensity of their Rabbi's distress, their ability to obey him and pray to escape this time of testing unscathed disappears and they sleep until Jesus wakes them.

As we reflect on these events, it is important not to think of this testing as being a setup, with God like the great puppet master in the sky pulling the strings of the various actors to produce, like a rabbit from a hat, the salvation of the world.

But just because it is simple to say what is not going on, doesn't make it simple to describe what is. We live in time, within the created reality. God on the other hand is and all else's isness stems from God's creative will. Of course, God knows what from our perspective is yet to be and much philosophical and theological energy has been spent in trying to work out whether we have free will given the omnipotence of God. It is important to remember that life is not like an exam, the point is not that understand entirely and fully, rather the only task that is set before us is to learn to love in the complex practical realities of our lives and of the wider context in which we live and move and have our being. The circumstances that confront us each day and how to live in obedience to the will of God within them are the only task we are set and as we move day by day from past to future, what we have learn from how we have reacted in the past can inform our decision about how to live now. What this part of the passion narrative shows us above all else is our need of prayer. My mobile phone needs charging most days and you and I if we choose, can plug ourselves in, as Jesus did

throughout his ministry to loving reality of God, who by his Spirit, puts himself, herself at our disposal. The love we are called to live is no theoretical thing, but the very life of God made real.

Silence

Our Father in heaven
Hallowed be your name
Your kingdom come
Your will be done
On earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread
Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us
Save us from the time of trial
And deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen

Second hymn: 95

Second Reading Luke 22:47-54

“As Jesus was speaking a crowd appeared, and the one called Judas, one of the Twelve, was leading them. He approached Jesus and kissed him. Jesus said to him, “Judas, betraying the son of man with a kiss?” Those with him, foreseeing what would be, said, “Lord shall we take swords to them? And one of them struck the High Priest’s slave and cut off his right ear. Jesus said in reply, “Leave it be” and touching his ear, he healed him. Jesus said to the High Priests and the officers of the Temple and the elders who had come out against him, “As if against a robber, you have come out with swords and clubs? When I was with you day by day in the Temple, you didn’t lay hands on me but this is your time and darkness, the authority. Seizing him, they led him off and brought him into the High Priest’s house. Peter followed him at a distance.”

Wrth iddo ddweud hyn, dyma dyrfa yn dod ato. Jwdas, un o'r deuddeg disgybl oedd yn eu harwain, ac aeth at Iesu i'w gyfarch â chusan. Ond dyma Iesu'n gofyn iddo, “Wyt ti'n bradychu Mab y Dyn â chusan?” Pan sylweddolodd dilynwyd Iesu beth oedd ar fin digwydd, dyma nhw'n gweiddi, “Arglwydd, wyt ti eisiau i ni ymladd gyda'r cleddyfau yma?” A dyma un ohonyn nhw yn taro gwas yr archoffeiriad, a thorri ei glust dde i ffwrdd. “Stopiwch! Dyna ddigon!” meddai

Iesu. Yna cyffyrddodd glust y dyn a'i iacháu. Yna trodd at y prif offeiriaid, swyddogion diogelwch y deml a'r arweinwyr eraill oedd wedi dod i'w ddal, "Ydw i'n arwain gwrthryfel neu rywbeth? Ai dyna pam mae angen y cleddyfau a'r pastynau yma? Pam na ddalioch chi fi yn y deml? Rôn i yno gyda chi bob dydd! Ond dyma'ch cyfle chi – yr amser pan mae pwerau'r tywyllwch yn rheoli."

Dyma nhw'n gafael ynddo, a mynd ag e i dŷ'r archoffeiriad. Roedd Pedr yn eu dilyn o bell.

Jesus is betrayed by one of his closest associates. At the beginning of this chapter, St Luke writes, "Satan enters into Judas, called Iscariot." Judas too undergoes a time of trial and St Luke describes its outcome briefly. Judas goes to the High Priests and Temple Officers about handing Jesus over to them, although there is no explanation as to why. The phrase "they agreed to give him money" suggests a motive. Judas bargains with them over the monetary worth of Jesus' life.

Luke gives us no insight into the thought processes of the Chief Priests either. St John however describes a meeting between the High Priests, the leaders of the Pharisees and the ruling Council, the Sanhedrin and shows their genuine concern that if the people rally behind Jesus, the Romans will take action and the authority of the Jewish leaders along with the whole nation will be swept away. Caiaphas, the High Priest, takes a swift decision and utters what St John sees as a prophetic word, that it is better that one man die so that the whole nation might be saved.

It is important not to allow our theological understandings of the significance of the crucifixion of Jesus to make us view the reality of the historical events as some kind of scripted drama in which people unknowingly play out the parts assigned to them before the world began. Of course, the crucifixion of Jesus is profoundly and eternally meaningful but its meaning derives from its reality. The real actions of human beings, deriving from their own hopes and fears or twisted desires led to the crucifixion and death of Jesus of Nazareth, the Word made flesh whose human life was lived in obedience to God and to the Law of Moses. By the providence and mercy of God these actions become the turning point of history

and the redemption of all that is and the salvation and remaking of humanity, but this results from the providence and mercy of God and not from the manipulation of God the heavenly puppet master. The real situation of first century Palestine and the real life situations, characters and decisions of all the people involved brought Jesus to his death. Each individual person making their choices for good or ill brought Jesus to Calvary, including Jesus' own.

Pray God the dilemmas we face will not have the human consequences of those whose decisions and actions brought Jesus to Calvary but we too face hard and difficult choices every day. We all come to our times of trial. On the big scale, we are all complicit in global warming because of the choices we have made. We are all part of creating the political culture in the United Kingdom that has produced austerity, the destruction of social security, the underfunding of the NHS, the acceptance of lies and deceit in public discourse and the xenophobia that has undergirded Brexit. We all face times of trial in our own lives and our lives and those of people around us are affected by the choices we make and our responses to the choices we have made. Jesus advice to his disciples and his own example is pray, pray and pray some more.

Silence

Our Father in heaven
Hallowed be your name
Your kingdom come
Your will be done
On earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread
Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us
Save us from the time of trial
And deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen

Third Hymn: 76

Third Reading St Luke 23:26; 32-37

As they led him away, they seized a certain Simon from Cyrene who was coming from the country and forced him to carry the cross behind Jesus. A great crowd of people followed him and women mourned and lamented him..... Two other criminals were taken with him to be put to death. When they came to the place

called the Skull, they crucified him there and the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. Jesus said “ Father forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing. Having divided his clothing, they cast lots for it. They people stood by watching. The leaders jeered at him saying, “ He saved others, let him save himself if he is the anointed one, the chosen one of God. The soldiers mocked him, coming to him offering cheap wine and saying, “If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself.”

Wrth iddyn nhw arwain Iesu i ffwrdd roedd Simon o Cyrene ar ei ffordd i mewn i'r ddinas, a dyma nhw'n ei orfodi i gario croes Iesu. Roedd tyrfa fawr o bobl yn ei ddilyn, gan gynnwys nifer o wragedd yn galaru ac wylofain..... Roedd dau ddyn arall oedd yn droseddwr yn cael eu harwain allan i gael eu dienyddio gyda Iesu. Felly ar ôl iddyn nhw gyrraedd y lle sy'n cael ei alw 'Y Benglog', dyma nhw'n hoelio Iesu ar groes, a'r ddau droseddwr arall un bob ochr iddo. Ond yr hyn ddwedodd Iesu oedd, “Dad, maddau iddyn nhw. Dŷn nhw ddim yn gwybod beth maen nhw'n ei wneud.” A dyma'r milwyr yn gamblo i weld pwy fyddai'n cael ei ddillad. Roedd y bobl yno'n gwyllo'r cwbl, a'r arweinwyr yn chwerthin ar ei ben a'i wawdio. “Roedd e'n achub pobl eraill,” medden nhw, “felly gadewch iddo'i achub ei hun, os mai fe ydy'r Meseia mae Duw wedi'i ddewis!” Roedd y milwyr hefyd yn gwneud sbort am ei ben. Roedden nhw'n cynnig gwin sur rhad iddo ac yn dweud, “Achub dy hun os mai ti ydy Brenin yr Iddewon!” (Beibl.net)

Jesus has been beaten and mocked by the Temple militia, passed between Pilate and Herod, whose soldiers also abused him. Pilate declares him innocent in front of the people of Jerusalem and their leaders but they bay for his blood and Pilate condemns him. On the mount of Olives, Jesus is in anguish but in this midst of this horror, he prays for his executioners' forgiveness. This doesn't stop them joining in the mockery. No one bar Jesus and the women who mourn for him come out of this well. A well spring of human cruelty surrounds him. Would we have been different, who knows? In this account, people reveal themselves for who they are. Jesus, amidst the torture, prays for those who are administering it, all in a day's work.

It might seem bearable, if we could truly say that things have improved. The massacres and atrocities of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries tells a different story. The pitiless passing by on the other side that we see in the United Kingdom today tells a different story. Have we been worth the saving?

As Jesus hangs dying on the Cross in the midst of this small minded viciousness, have the courage to sit before God, open-eyed before the cruelty, small and great that human beings have and still inflict one upon another. Have we been worth the saving?

Silence

Our Father in heaven
Hallowed be your name
Your kingdom come
Your will be done
On earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread
Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us
Save us from the time of trial
And deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen

Fourth Hymn: 83, Glory be to Jesus
Fourth Reading St Luke's Gospel 23: 39-43

One of the hanged criminals abused Jesus saying, "If you are the Christ, save yourself and us. The other rebuked him and said, " Aren't you afraid of God since you've received this same sentence and we justly for we are receiving what our deeds deserve but this man has done nothing amiss" and he said, "Jesus, remember me, when you come into your kingdom." Jesus said to him, "Indeed, I tell you, this day, you will be with me in paradise."

Yna dyma un o'r troseddwr oedd yn hongian yno yn dechrau'i regi: "Onid ti ydy'r Meseia? Achub dy hun, a ninnau hefyd!" Ond dyma'r troseddwr arall yn ei geryddu. "Does arnat ti ddim ofn Duw a thithau ar fin marw hefyd? Dŷn ni'n haeddu cael ein cosbi am yr hyn wnaethon ni. Ond wnaeth hwn ddim byd o'i le." Yna meddai, "Iesu, cofia amdana i pan fyddi di'n teyrnasu." Dyma Iesu'n ateb, "Wir i ti – cei di ddod gyda mi i baradwys heddiw."

The abuse continues, this time coming from another of the crucified men but in the midst of this misery and cruelty, the man on Jesus' other side speaks truthfully and with trust. Does he believe what he is saying or is he trying to salvage Jesus' dignity? Either way, he receives a promise that speaks of Jesus' continuing trust in God and in the rightness of his own obedience despite its horror and its cost. "Today you will be with me in paradise." In many ways St Luke is the most forthright of all the evangelists but he, like John, omits Jesus' cry of dereliction. "My God, my God why have you forsaken me?" St Luke does not write it, but we remember it because it offers us hope. The cry that St Luke does not include speaks volumes to us when the idea of a loving God makes no sense. The cry St Luke omits is precious. When we have lost our hope, our faith, when we like the onlookers at the terrible scene, deride ourselves that we ever for a moment thought that life was good, find that Jesus gives us the words to say as he himself was given them by the writer of the psalms. "My God my God, why have you forsaken me?" The greatest cry of loss, yet the greatest cry of faith. "Forsaken" but "forsaken" by the God who is still mine. St Luke does not include it, but we hear it alongside this small glimpse of humanity as one crucified man express his trust in Jesus' crucified beside him and Jesus finds hope for himself in the promise he holds out to another. "Indeed, I tell you, this day you will be with me, in paradise. All they can do now, is let death come.

And when it does, Jesus in the final act of his earthly life, offers all that he has been and is into the hands of God, whom, even at this point, he still names Father.

Silence

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Your kingdom come
Your will be done
On earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread
Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us
Save us from the time of trial
And deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen

Fifth Hymn:

O Sacred Head, surrounded
By crown of bleeding thorn!
O bleeding head, so wounded,
So shamed and put to scorn!
Death's pallid hue comes o'er thee,
The glow of life decays;
Yet angel hosts adore thee
And tremble as they gaze.

Thy comeliness and vigour
Is withered up and gone
And in thy wasted figure
I see death drawing on.
O Agony and dying.
O love to sinners free
Jesu all grace supplying
Turn thou thy face on me.

In this thy bitter passion
Good Shepherd, think of me
With thy most sweet compassion
Unworthy though I be:
Beneath thy Cross abiding
Forever would I rest
In thy dear love confiding
And with thy presence blest.

Fifth Reading 23: 44-46

“It was already about the sixth hour and darkness came upon the whole land until the ninth hour as the sun's light failed and the Temple's veil was split down the middle. And voicing a great cry, Jesus said, “Father, into your hand I entrust my spirit. Saying this he breathed his last.”

Roedd hi tua chanol dydd erbyn hyn, ac aeth yn hollol dywyll drwy'r wlad i gyd hyd dri o'r gloch y p'nawn. Roedd fel petai golau'r haul wedi diffodd! Dyna pryd wnaeth y llen hir oedd yn hongian yn y deml rwygo yn ei hanner. A dyma Iesu'n gweiddi'n uchel, “Dad, dw i'n rhoi fy ysbryd yn dy ddwylo di,” ac ar ôl dweud hynny stopiodd anadlu a marw.