Awe at the Passion Sunday Readings 21st March 2021

Jeremiah 31. 31-34 A new covenant

Psalm 51. 1-12 A right spirit renewed

Hebrews 5. 5-10 Jesus, a priest forever

John 12. 20-33 The Son of Man, glorified

This section of Jeremiah shows a new way of thinking. As elsewhere, Israel is portrayed as the unfaithful wife, married to God, his people, his possession. That relationship is now to be deepened. His law will be written on their hearts. They will all know the will of God. This is almost akin to the Muslim assertion that God is closer than the jugular. This is intuitive conscience at work, and because of the closeness of this union, God is revealed as always forgiving.

The psalm is a yearning for just such a relationship, acknowledging universal sinfulness but earnestly seeking a way of life with a clean heart and a right spirit. It becomes, therefore, a prayer of our own as, all of us, are part of humanity with our constant eruptions of inhumanity. As a psalm of David, with that king’s turbulent history, it may have been a personal plea of his own. In our own times, thank God, we have seen such demonstrations of sacrificial service, the best of humanity. Only politicians have seemed to bolster their own positions. At the political level, the poor vision and host of unintended consequences has missed the point that in reducing overseas aid we are not just limiting supplies to, for instance, Yemen, but also denying funding to overseas science which gave us the very base from which to produce vaccines.

If divine forgiveness is the base from which our faith and spirituality grow, the writer of Hebrews sees that powerful love embodied in Christ on behalf of us all. His identity is therefore intensely human and costly and at the same time divinely priestly. His sacrifice is offered on behalf of, and for us all. In Christ resides the fullness of our humanity and the fulness of divine love.

John gives us the Greeks asking to see Jesus. What follows maps out what they are to see. It is not to see a celebrity but to encounter an unfolding story, and one very different indeed from what could be expected or hoped for. Christ’s glory is to be achieved through sacrifice. I reckon this passage from John’s gospel to be key to both an understanding of our own vocation as Christians and a blueprint for the workings of our world. It is important to remember that the characters involved had no idea of the ending of the story. For us too it provides the template for our contemplation of the mystery of Christ crucified and raised.

Personal Note. I started this exercise for what it’s worth while St. Margaret’s remained closed as a little bit of personal discipline but have been grateful for messages of appreciation. Thank you. Assuming all goes to plan, the church will be open for the Palm Sunday Eucharist at 10.30 am next Sunday, and under the same disciplines as before. This is therefore the last edition and I apologise for late publication. Only the McConnels get theirs later, by snail mail. I hope those of us who are able will be together for Passiontide and Easter. I know there will be a Zoom invitation for Maundy Thursday evening. Good Friday will see simple prayers and the reading of the St. John Passion narrative. Enjoy the sunshine while it is shining. Wishing you all well. Barry