

Good Friday 2020: Bishop Edward Holland

I want us to imagine that we are at the foot of the cross. We are standing with all the others – a mixed crowd. Jesus's Mother Mary and the other women with her; the disciples and other followers; his friends.

And then his enemies, those who want rid of him and those obeying orders – the soldiers and other officials, together with the curious and those who want the excitement of a public execution. And with them we wait and we watch. This broken, dying man.

Despite all the noise and disorder surrounding him there is in Jesus a deep quietness and stillness.

We have the cross before us and we wait and look we can become conscious that as we look at him so he is looking at us – how does this dying and death affect us, where do we stand?

Jesus has reached the end. There is no more choosing to be done, he has given himself fully and completely to the human race; to the Jewish people but to all of us.

He gave his life long ago – at his baptism and probably long before that. Indeed he was given by Mary at his circumcision and has given himself again and again throughout his life and ministry until that last final gift at his entry into Jerusalem – that was when the die was cast, though confirmed in the Garden of Gethsemane.

And now in the final surrender of himself into the hands of the human race to do with as they wish, he is giving himself completely and utterly to us – and that is what we see as we look. The love of God lived out in a human life - and death...

But like many gifts it contains a commitment which is also an invitation. The gift he offers to us is actually God's gift – it always is – God's love and purpose for us. God in Christ commits himself to us, to love us always whatever the situation. But to receive that gift we also need to make a commitment, to live our lives – as far as we can – God does not expect the impossible – to live our lives as far as we can as Jesus lived his in the light of the Father's love, promised to him and through him to us all, at his baptism. Jesus lived a human life in response to that promise of God.

As Jesus looks at us, while hanging there before our eyes, as he looks at us he hopes and prays that we will each and all of us receive that gift and live with it, live with the love that he lived with, the love of the Father.

Jesus is and has been throughout his life God the Father's gift to us. But he also gives himself to the Father on our behalf and the question is whether we can make Jesus' gift our own gift to the Father.

Are we merely curious, merely onlookers, merely going through a ritual process or can we make that gift our own?

The gift of Jesus is not conditional – it is not saying, if you will love me I will love you, but, rather: I will love you whatever. However, you react to my life and death - I will, and will always, love you.

So let us in silence and stillness wait for Jesus, the Christ, speak to us not so much with his lips as with his heart – he literally bleeds for us – he longs for us to know and live with the love of God – the love that lives in Jesus despite everything, despite even his dying and his death.

We look and listen to hear him speak to us with his love as we remain with him at the foot of the cross.

A Prayer.

Lord Jesus Christ,
we thank you
that as you have lived and died
for love of the Father and for us
even to the point of death on a cross,
we pray that through the gift of the Holy Spirit
we may be enabled to live
with that same love for the Father
And for all humankind that we see in you
In your name and to the glory of the Father.
So we pray. Amen