

# GOOD FRIDAY

**Reading**     John 19:1-30

## Sermon

The text verses for the sermon tonight 5 & 6 & 30:

<sup>5</sup> When Jesus came out wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe, Pilate said to them, “Here is the man!”

<sup>6</sup> As soon as the chief priests and their officials saw him, they shouted, “Crucify! Crucify!”

<sup>30</sup> When he had received the drink, Jesus said, “It is finished.” With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

Pilate [Pailate] said: “This is the Man”. In Latin “Ecce Homo”. It can also be translated “Look at this man...”

It seems as if commentators and researchers have ignored these words. I think these words portray in a sense the answer of Jesus’ true being. It compels us to ask ourselves this day and the days to come to look more closely at Jesus and who He really was. And yes how we portray him through our following in faith!

Pilate[Pailate] says sarcastically to the mob: Does this Man really pose as a threat to you! Look at him. He is standing there obviously tired and full of pain after the severe humiliation by the Roman soldiers. Look at him...He cannot really be what he claims to be! He is basically harmless. Pilate however knew that he was governing a province on behalf of the Roman emperor which was close to revolting against the Roman empire! He also knew his own position with the emperor was at stake. The Romans conquered the city in 63 B.C. under Pompey, and appointed Herod the Great king of Judea in 40 B.C.. Judea continued to be ruled by a Roman procurator who served under the proconsul, or president, of Syria who resided in Antioch among them was Pontius Pilate (A.D. 26-36). The Jewish leaders wanted to get rid of Pilate which evidently happened a few years after Jesus’ crucifixion. In the text there are a lot of these underling currents present. The Jewish leaders for instance knew that Pilate could not take any risks with regard to his relationship with the Roman emperor. He could not face the risk of allowing the Jews to think of any other king than Caesar in Roman. In the end Pilate acknowledges this fact and handed Jesus over to be crucified. On the first account, Jesus’ claim to be the Son of God, Pilate - as a non believer - could find nothing wrong.

It is also evident what kind of person Pilate was. First he allows his soldiers to have fun with Jesus which they called their wee games. The soldiers must have enjoyed inflicting pain and suffering on Jesus who was to them only an ordinary Jew. They were the ones who were posted to a far off place; they were often the victims of the Jewish *sicarii* assassins or knife-men, who stalked the cities and towns of Israel and loved to come up behind the Romans or their sympathizers and jab them in the back with their sharp knives. They also mocked Jesus by pretending that he was a king. They dressed him with the color of a king namely a mantle of purple. They even provided him with a crown on his head that was most probably made of the thorns of the date palm, which are exceedingly sharp to the touch and can easily puncture thick plastics, to say nothing of flesh. They also flogged him. There were three types of flogging. "The first type was the *fustiagatio*, which was a lashing for less serious offenses. This lashing was usually accompanied by a stern warning against any repetition of such an offense. A more serious stage was *flagellatio*, which was a flogging or beating that was severe and was intended to be sufficiently punitive to bring the victim into a state of full submission without execution, something like the so-called thirty-nine stripes. The third and most severe form of this type of punishment was *verberatio*, which was extremely brutal. In this form of punishment the victim was forcefully brutalized with rods or whips that frequently contained leather thongs fitted with spikes, bones, or scraps of metal. When used, these whips tore pieces of flesh from the victim's body." (The New American Commentary). We do not exactly what kind of flogging Jesus endured. However all of them were quite severe!

Apart from the fact that he was a brutal man, in his questioning of Jesus it is evident that Pilate was also a dictator. He thinks of himself as in power, as if he has the power over Jesus, to crucify him. But Jesus is the One who has the power and does not have to show it - therefore the silence. When Pilate insisted that he has the power Jesus rebukes him and tells him that his power is limited to God who gave the power to him. Most probably Pilate got scared of these words especially when it came across that he is responsible for the sin against the God of Israel. For this Roman with a very superstitious mind who believed in the heathen gods this must have been a very scary thought! Therefore he wanted to release Jesus.

But then of course the Jewish leaders were so shrewd. On their second accusation Pilate could say nothing! So he opted the easy way out and handed Jesus over.

So on this Good Friday, we must ask ourselves: ECCE HOMO! – we must have a closer look at Jesus. Jesus was indeed "the man," the Saviour, who dealt with the sin of the world.

Sometimes I think we portray a different Jesus with our lives to the world. Sometimes we think that we are in power of our own lives, just like Pilate did. Pilate did not understand who Jesus really was – but we don't have that same excuse. We live as though He did not suffer for our sins. We live as though we are untouched by his love and mercy in the way we talk to our husbands, and wives, our children our partners our family members friends and other people. We live as though we have no hope at all. We

live as if we never going to die and when people die we cry as if there is no life after death!

We forget that Jesus was God who revealed himself to us as the Forgiving and Loving God. We forget that He came to bring us all into a relationship with God- a relationship where we can talk to God whenever we want to. We can trust God with everything we encounter on this earth. He hung on the cross for your and my sins.

Good Friday is about Jesus's last words when He said: " it is finished". All our sins are finished. All that we can do is to live a life of faith, a life that portray the love of Jesus, a life of gratitude.

I read an amazing story of a wee girl who walked with her mom on their shopping spree. At one place on the pavement there were two homeless people sitting in the cold with the bare clothing on. The girl paused and to the mothers unbelief she walked to the one which was a women, knelt down and hugged her. When she got up she looked at her astonished gobsmacked mother and said: If Jesus loves her, so do I".

Maybe that is what we must remember. There is nothing we can do to our salvation. Jesus did it all for us. We can only start living out our faith in love, hope and gratitude. A life that is full of forgiveness and a lot of hugs, even to people that is totally different from us!

**Amen**



## **Readings for the week**

John 18:1-19:42 (taken from Rev Angus MacLeod reflections on the website of the Church of Scotland)

"When times are difficult and there is a critical job to be done somewhere, one of the most important questions to ask is "who's in charge around here?" It's a good question to pose when reading the Passion narrative. A variety of people, from the armed gang who came to arrest Jesus, to the religious authorities in Jerusalem who sought to interrogate him to Pilate in the Governor's Palace no doubt thought that they were in charge of Jesus and the events which were about to unfold.

Yet amazingly, the way the apostle John tells the story it is quite clear that the shoe is on the other foot! From first to last we see Jesus in control of events. The crucifixion of our Lord was not some horrific and tragic accident that should never have happened. It was part and parcel of God's eternal plan for the salvation of the world This passage needs to be read with a sense of awe and wonder because it is "for us and our

salvation” that all this is occurring. God through Christ is using the deeds of evil men and institutions to accomplish what we could never do for ourselves and in the words of Samuel Crossman’s hymn: “Yet cheerful he, to suffering goes, that he his foes from thence might free.”

**Other readings:**

Isaiah 52:13-53:12; Psalm 22; Hebrews 10:16-25.