



Kirkcaldy and East Calder Parish Church of Scotland

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Sermon: Rev Dr André Groenewald

Reading: Mark 15:21- 32

Background to the reading

Simon from Cyrene had to carry Jesus' cross. Cyrene was in what is now Libya in North Africa and included a large Jewish community. "Simon" was a typical Jewish name, and devout Jewish pilgrims from throughout the Mediterranean came to Jerusalem during Passover. The obvious reason for the mention of "the father of Alexandria and Rufus" is that Mark's readers/hearers knew them.

Roman soldiers could impress anyone into service to carry things for them. Because it was a religious feast and work being forbidden, Simon was not coming from "the field" (literally) as a worker. Perhaps he was late for the festival, only now arriving from Cyrene or from where he was residing temporarily in the countryside.

The site of the crucifixion might have been named "Place of the Skull" because so many deaths occurred there. Luke is the only Gospel writer who just uses the word "Skull". The Latin translation is "Calvariae" which is translated Calvary in English. The location of the site is disputed. The biblical references give us only general indications. It was outside the city. It may have been on an elevated site, since it could be seen from a distance. It was perhaps near a road since "passersby" are mentioned in Mt 27:39 and Mk 15:29.

"Wine mixed with myrrh" was probably given for pain. Myrrh was a principle ingredient in holy anointing oil. We also read in Mt 2:11 that the "Wise men" of the East brought it as an offering to the infant Jesus. Myrrh was the result of the gum or viscid white liquid which flows from a tree resembling the acacia, found in Africa and Arabia, the

Balsamodendron myrrha of botanists. However Jesus chose not to take from this mixture of wine and myrrh.

Amen

Sermon

If there is one thing in this world that really gets me is when people falsely accuse me or even go so far as to say that I am lying!

As I went through this week, I genuinely reflected a lot on how it must have been for Jesus in that crowded city of Jerusalem during his last days on earth. How did He feel when the religious leaders questioned him on every corner? How did He feel when the crowd shouted “crucify Him”? How did He feel when he was falsely accused of state treason? How did He feel when his closest ally betrayed him three times? How did He feel when He saw his mother and the other woman crying?

Well for one He did not get mad or even. He did not get carried away. The reason being - that He was fully human but also fully divine. Is that why He had to do it on our behalf, simply because we would not have done it ourselves? Did He do it because God knew us humans so well? I mean can you imagine our aggressive selves reacting when people come up to us and accuse us falsely? Can you imagine the long court cases and all the money spend? Can you imagine all the stories in the newspapers? Can you imagine all the attorneys and all the paperwork just to set the records straight?

There is no way that you and I could have done it. Jesus did it. Why? Well because of love. It is simply the truth. God loved the world so much that He gave His only Son Jesus Christ!

So tonight we are not celebrating. We are in mourning. We are like people who are guilty of the murder of Jesus Christ. We are crying and cannot be easily consoled. It is as if we are attending the funeral of a much loved one.

If there is one thing people do remember about a funeral then it is most definitely the eulogy. If you had to write a eulogy on the life of Jesus, what would you say?

Jesus was born as the Son of God. He had a life of suffering and humiliation. He was fatherless in Galilee. He was the adopted son of Joseph.

He was very sociable and never thought of Himself as better than others. He mingled with all the sinners even the toll collectors. He dared to touch woman and men that were unclean. He refused to be silenced by the church. He lived a life dictated by LOVE.

He was sentenced by the highest court of the Land to be crucified because of the fact that He dared to stand up to take the sins of the world upon Himself. In the end he died crying out very loud in "Eloi Eloi Lama Sabachtani!

Jesus died because of our sins. He died because he loved. And through his sacrificial love, we can live and wait for His resurrection!

May we never ever stop being grateful for Jesus who took our sins on His shoulders!

Amen