



Bishop David Oakley
Palm Sunday Homily
10th April 2022

When the hour came Jesus took his place at table, and the apostles with him.

In this way, the evangelist begins an account of the most dramatic moment in the history of our world. And how did we respond to the words which came next, the story of Jesus' passion and death on the cross?

Maybe in our distractions, these words flowed over us. Perhaps we really struggled to listen to a story that is so gruesome in its detail. And maybe we thought of what is happening in our world today, in Ukraine, Syria and many other places where a similar story is unfolding in our own times. And in all of this, we feel powerless before the terror.

But this is the hour Jesus had looked forward to. This is the moment which defined his life and mission. This is the account of a merciful love which changed the world. Let us recollect the human brokenness we meet throughout the journey of this hour. At the table of the passover, there is a betraying hand. There is an argument about who is the greatest. Chosen disciples are sleeping, unable to face what is to come. Jesus' prophecy is fulfilled and Simon Peter denies the Lord three times. Unjust judgments on the part of religious leaders quickly follow. There is the weakness of a Roman prefect who prefers reputation over doing the right thing.

We also see something of the nobility of the human condition too. The Cyrenian who carries the cross. The women of Jerusalem mourn for Jesus. And the mysterious figure of the criminal who proclaims his faith in Jesus as the Messiah. There is a man from Arimathaea who has compassion and does the decent thing by Jesus.

Perhaps we recognise ourselves in one of these characters. Maybe we see ourselves in all of these, both the brokenness and the nobility.

But if this were the only place we encounter this hour, then we miss the everything within this event. Today we begin to reflect upon the saving event, the dying and rising of Jesus Christ. This is not just something we need to learn about in our minds. We need to understand how the Cross works in our lives today. A personal encounter with Jesus Christ is not a theological idea, or an experience just for the saints. Being a disciple of Jesus is about living in communion with the Most Holy Trinity - being invited into Jesus' relationship with our heavenly Father: a relationship of trust and confidence, the fruit of obedience. This is a relationship that is empowered by the Holy Spirit. This is what the Cross has won for us. This is what holiness is all about. Jesus listened to His Father's word and trusted with all his will.

To become a disciple is to enter into the mystery of this obedient love. Above all, to live our lives with gratitude for what Jesus has accomplished. We are immersed into the mystery of the cross, when we distrust our own ability to love others. Being a Christian is not about will power, but about the power of the Holy Spirit to transform us into something new.

So this week, let us walk with the Lord as we journey towards Easter. May we spend time with him, and the mysteries of his redemptive love for us.