

***A Sermon preached by Emma Hodge on Sunday 17th
March 2024 at St. Michael & All Angel's Church,
Sandhurst***

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, Amen

Today is the fifth Sunday in Lent and it is sometimes known as Passion Sunday. Our Gospel reading gives some glimpses of Jesus passion

I want to start by putting our gospel reading into context;

The country was occupied by Romans

The passage is located in John's gospel after a few events have taken place

- After Jesus has raised Lazarus from the dead
- after the Sanhedrin have condemned Jesus to death,
- after he had been anointed at Bethany and
- after the events of Palm Sunday.

And now we have our gospel reading.

GOSPEL READING

I want you to take a moment, and imagine yourself as part of the crowd where our reading is set, the crowd may be larger than normal because people were in Jerusalem for the festival of Passover, the crowd is made up of people who are Jews by birth, those who are Greek and had travelled to Jerusalem for the

festival, they could have been converts to Judaism, or those just in town but people were anxious to see Jesus.

How are you feeling?

- You may be joyful after what happened in Jerusalem the other day when Jesus entered riding on a donkey and everyone, including you, shouted HOSANNA!
- Are you looking forward to hearing Jesus,
- Are you anticipating change?
- Are you looking forward to overthrowing the Romans?
- Or perhaps you are fearful of how the Romans will react?
- Or possibly you are looking forward to hearing Jesus speak and wondering if he will tell one of those stories that you've heard people talk about?

Then you hear Jesus speak;

It's not one of his stories that are told but instead what you hear is words about

- the Son of Man being glorified and that a grain of wheat must die to bear a lot of fruit;
- And that if you love your life you need to lose it;
- To serve Jesus then you need to Follow Him and that where Jesus is then his servants are with him. And that Jesus' servants will be honoured by His Father.
- Then Jesus speaks about his soul being troubled and asks for the father to save him from his hour

- Asking his Father to glorify his name

How are you feeling now?

- Does this message seem to be different from the joy of the other day when Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey and everyone shouted Hosanna? You may have been so happy and joyful and looking forward to a life of freedom
- And now you hear these messages about dying and living? About serving and glory?
- Are you confused?
- Do you understand them?

Then...

Then another voice speaks

“I have glorified it and I will glorify it again”

What was that noise?

- Do you think it is thunder or angels speaking?

or

- Do you recognise it as God’s voice?

Are you feeling scared or uncertain or possibly even more confused?

But to return today,

The crowd consisted of both Jews and Greeks, This is a crucial point here

The crowd contains Greeks, Greeks were not part of the local community. Their presence emphasises the fact that Jesus came to earth, lived, died and rose again for everyone, those who were Jews by birth, those who were Greek, it doesn't matter who you are, Jesus came for everyone, he doesn't discriminate. His message is for everyone.

A message that is about life.

The words that Jesus spoke in our reading may seem strange but they all tell the same message.

He is telling the crowd including his disciples that his ministry on earth is entering the next phase, His time on earth is coming to the end.

In Jesus speech, he mentions about the hour coming that he, the son of man, will be glorified. The hour that Jesus mentions is the time for him to die. The term "Son of Man" is used almost exclusively in the Gospels which Jesus uses to describe himself.

Jesus then goes onto use an imagery of a grain of wheat to illustrate his message. A grain of wheat is not big, however it has the potential to transform into a stalk of wheat which bears many other grains, and as part of the transformation process it changes and through the change it brings life to other grains of wheat. Jesus uses the imagery of the wheat as that seeds transform and their shape and form is lost and changed and in some ways the grain of wheat dies and that the actual grain is an active participant in the transformation to new life that is represented by the stalk of wheat.

Jesus himself is like that grain of wheat. Jesus' life on earth will end but just like the grain of wheat it is not the end, it will be transformed, Jesus' death will not be the end, as and sorry for ruining any Easter surprise, but he will rise after his death and he is alive now, his resurrection will bring eternal life.

However there is more, this eternal life is that is not limited to just Jesus, but to everyone who believes, for Jews and Greeks and everyone else who is willing to lose their own life, not literally but metaphorically, to follow Jesus and by following Jesus, we also will be in the company of Jesus' father and then we will also be honoured by Jesus' Father.

Jesus' father is not just someone rich or a celebratory, instead Jesus' father is God, who we also call our father. The honour we are given is that we have a personal relationship with Jesus and God the Father and I want to draw your attention here to the wonderful glimpse of the relationship between God the Father and Jesus the Son, and especially the parent and child response

Jesus was afraid, he knew he had to die in a painful way, and fear is a human emotion, we see Jesus being fully human at this time but John's gospel draws our attention to the parental response from God, God the Father responds by speaking to his Son, the only instance in John's gospel where God speaks to Jesus, and his words are powerful, they are able to be heard by others (even if they don't recognise it), and the words that are spoken are to Jesus, reassuring him that he has been glorified, and that he will be glorified. When Jesus the son was afraid, God the Father responded as parents do, by speaking to their child, to

comfort, to reassure. Jesus knew that his hour had come, that this was the path that he had to take, despite the fear but Jesus asked his Father to “glorify his name”. God the Father responds confirming that it has been glorified and will glorify it again.

Glorified means to praise and honour someone. John’s gospel is not the only gospel that notes Jesus being afraid before the crucifixion, the other gospels put this scene after the Last Supper in the Garden of Gethsemane, where he prays as depicted our chancel wall.

This passage, looks forward to the cross, to the death that Jesus will have to die, but the cross is not the end, it is a symbol of victory, a symbol of life not death, in dying Jesus draws all people, including Jews and Greeks, to him, and gives everyone the hope of salvation and life everlasting.

To conclude,

- 1) Jesus came for everyone, his message is for all, both Greeks and Jews, no one is excluded.
- 2) We see in this passage the humanity of Jesus, his fear, all four gospels reflect that there was a moment of Jesus being afraid. John puts it in this passage where unlike the other gospels, we hear God’s voice as well and in doing so we see the wonderful demonstration of the relationship between the father and the son.

- 3) Jesus came to die, to be transformed and so, as the banner on our wall states, that we may be healed and also come to have eternal life.