

A Sermon preached by Lyn Jenkins for Passion Sunday

*WHEN I AM LIFTED UP FROM THE EARTH, I SHALL DRAW ALL
PEOPLE TO MYSELF ---- Words from John 12.*

Next Sunday many Christians will receive a Palm Cross – a reminder of Jesus entering Jerusalem while the people waved their palm branches. On Good Friday, Jesus will be hanging from a cross & many of those who cheered him on Palm Sunday will jeer at him on the following Friday.

What do **we** see when we look at the Cross?

So often we see the Victory. We think of the Resurrection.

But ----- we must never forget that before Jesus could rise again, he had to die ---- and he died a terrible, cruel death.

What do we see when we look at a crucifix?

For we can so easily become accustomed to seeing the figure of our Lord portrayed on the cross that we often forget the cruel suffering that accompanied the death of Jesus.

So easy to avoid thinking about the ---

Scourging of his body --- Torments, jeers & insults of soldiers & bystanders; -- Crown of thorns cutting into his head ---- Hammering of nails into his flesh ----- like to pass over quickly the fact that Jesus was hanging in AGONY, PAIN, and suffering not only the PHYSICAL TORTURE, but also the HUMILIATION.

He was an object of ridicule.

And, there was also the SPIRITUAL SUFFERING.

His teachings, his way of life – complete failure.

He had failed in his mission.

Jesus had come in LOVE, showing LOVE ----- & his love had been rejected.

And added to all this, while hanging on the cross Jesus experienced that moment of being utterly & completely alone.

“*My God, my God, Why hast thou forsaken me*” -- his suffering was complete.

Jesus had to die such a painful, terrible death --- his suffering had to be TOTAL.

There could be no limits to God's love.

To the people present at the crucifixion it was the end.

Jesus had failed

He had tried to win people for God, but apart from a few followers – even most of them ran away – apart from having a few followers, he was REJECTED.

As far as the Jewish authorities were concerned, it was 'good riddance' to him.

NO VICTORY, it seemed, on Good Friday.

But, ----- we know the rest of the story.

THE CROSS WAS NOT THE END

So, when we look at Jesus hanging on the cross, what does it mean to us?

Crosses & Crucifixes.

Above the altar in many churches there is an empty cross.

It is what many people like.

People tend to wear crosses rather than crucifixes.

They prefer them – more comforting – don't want to be reminded of the suffering of Jesus.

The cross reminds us that JESUS IS ALIVE & REIGNS -- & SO IT SHOULD.

But there could have been no empty cross without a cross on which our Lord was nailed.

NO RESURRECTION WITHOUT CRUCIFIXION.

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Now I'm not suggesting we should always dwell on the suffering Christ. For a Christian firmly believes in the LIVING LORD.

However, we must always remember that without the suffering there could be no joy.

And I believe there are times when we need to be reminded of the COST of CHRIST'S VICTORY.

And a crucifix can help us to do this.

A crucifix can remind us of the price that Jesus paid for our sins to be forgiven.

We need to be reminded of the nails through his hands & feet, the body broken, the blood outpoured.

In one word all these speak to us of LOVE ----- THE TOTAL, LIMITLESS LOVE OF GOD --- the love of God revealed to us through the Passion of Our lord.

Sometimes, I find a crucifix can be a great help in times of trouble. For the crucifix is God's way of saying: "I LOVE YOU"

"LET NOT YOUR HEARTS BE TROUBLED
TRUST IN GOD" says Jesus & trust in me. LOVE ME.

"When I am lifted up from the cross, I shall draw all people to myself."

Christ with arms outstretched allowed himself to be crucified for the whole world, for people past & present & for future generations.

BOOK MARKER.

I have a book marker in shape of a cross depicting the crucified Lord. And the words ---

"This have I done for thee. What doest thou for me?"

What a wealth of meaning there is in those few words. – words which we may rather not think about too deeply, for they can make us feel rather uncomfortable.

"This have I done for thee. What doest thou for me?"

Sometimes when things go wrong or are not going my way – I am perhaps grumbling & complaining to myself, or even to God. I am in a bad mood -- & then I notice a crucifix hanging on my bedroom wall – then those words on my book marker come to mind -- & I realise how ungrateful, how utterly selfish I have been -- & I feel thoroughly ashamed.

The Love of Christ shown on the cross stops me feeling sorry for myself – changes my mood & fills me with love for him.

THE CRUCIFIED LORD DRAWS OUT MY LOVE FOR HIM.

"When I am lifted up from the cross I shall draw all people to myself."

On the cross we see the perfect love of Christ for his people & it is that love which will draw all people to him.

The love of Christ shown as he hangs there draws out our love for him & consequently draws us ever closer, ever nearer, to our loving, crucified Lord.