

Holy Week Devotional – Monday 25 March 2024

Mark 14

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have life eternal. (John 3.16)

Mark 14 is a sweeping chapter with the action moving step by step towards the Cross that is held together in part by the costly love Jesus demonstrates. It starts with Jesus dining with friends and ends with Jesus utterly alone, abandoned and denied even by those closest to him.

Mark begins this part of the narrative with Jesus dining with friends in the house of Simon the Leper. This small detail points towards those who Jesus came to minister to. Time and again the gospel accounts record Jesus mixing with those normally regarded as outcast, rejected, and ignored by those in positions of power and influence. Here is Jesus sharing a meal in the house of a man known for being a leper, exactly the type of person Jesus came to set free and share the hope of the coming Kingdom. This is love.

In the next scene the story narrows our focus down to Jesus and the disciples, those with whom Jesus has most closely shared life and ministry with over the preceding years. On the night Jesus was to be betrayed he chooses to share a final meal with his closest friends and disciples. The shadow of what is to come hangs heavy in the air. Jesus predicts that he will be betrayed and denied by the very people he is sharing this meal with. Even though Jesus knows what these very people will soon do, he still chooses to share in this moment with them. He gives them with a memorial, a highly powerful sacrament by which his disciples will be able to remember him and what he came for. This is love.

The action moves to the garden of Gethsemane and the group around Jesus now reduces further. Just three disciples, Peter, James and John, are now with Jesus for this most intense of scenes. Jesus is to spend a final moment with his Father in order to prepare to face all that is to come. He invites these three to support him by being close and praying for him. Yet sleep overtakes them, and they fail in this moment to be that support Jesus needed. Jesus faces his pain fully and chooses to submit to the will of the Father in this moment. Jesus brings his pain and emotion in honest vulnerability to the Father. This is love.

The scene of betrayal comes. A moment of violence. A moment of abandonment. Jesus utterly alone. Those closest to him fleeing for their lives abandoning the one they had only just vowed to stand by in their last supper together. Jesus abandoned by all suffers for humanity. This is love.

One final scene. Jesus stands before his accusers in the Sanhedrin. Questioned, tormented, ridiculed, accused. One final disciple looks on from a distance until he too denies Jesus and flees. Alone the Son of God who was there at the very beginning of creation is willing to endure this in order that all who see and acknowledge him for who he is can be reconciled to the Father. This is love.

As we reflect on each scene, can we imagine ourselves there in one of these scenes? What would we do or say? Give thanks to God for Jesus in that it is for us too that Jesus came to save and to reconcile us with our heavenly Father out of love.

At the start of Holy Week, it is good to remember what motivated Jesus to do all that he did and just how much it cost Jesus for our sake. For us too there is a cost to follow Jesus and we too are motivated by our love for Jesus. We are also reminded that we can bring our vulnerability and emotion to the Father. *For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have life eternal.*

Songs: To God be the Glory (great things he has done), Amazing Love (oh what sacrifice)

Prayer: Loving Father - thank you so much for your Son Jesus and thank you Jesus for being the obedient and loving Son. Thank you for being willing to endure all that you did so that we can know and experience the love of God in our lives. We remember today the cost of your love and are thankful that we can with be reconciled with you through your death and resurrection. Help us Lord God, through your Holy Spirit to be willing to count the cost of being a follower of yours and willing to demonstrate and share your love in word and deed. Amen.