

## TUESDAY IN HOLY WEEK

Isaiah; John 12:20-36

I sometimes feel that the pace of the gospels slows down when we come to the last week of Jesus life. Perhaps it is because we are here every day considering the events of the week unfolding.

On Sunday we considered both the events of Palm Sunday — the triumphal entry into Jerusalem with Palm branches and cloaks strewn on the road and the cries of Hosanna and the account of the passion — Jesus' appearance before the Sanhedrin and Pilate and the road to the cross. And then yesterday we moved back several days to the dinner with Jesus' friends Martha and Mary and Lazarus, in Bethany in which Mary, perhaps more in touch with what is really going on here than most of the others present, anoints Jesus with costly oil of nard, as he says, for his death.

Today the gospel moves forward once again to Jerusalem where Jesus is spending the last week of his life. Some Greeks wish to speak with Jesus but Jesus turns them away. This seems to be in direct contrast to the readings we have had through our Sundays in Lent which have been about encounter and discussion — a gradual revealing of what God's kingdom — Jesus' kingdom — is all about. Now it seems that the time for discussion is past. Jesus is aware of his destiny — and that he has come not just as the Saviour of Israel but the Saviour of all of humankind.

These Greeks will find the answer to all their questions about him — but only after his death and resurrection.

In John's gospel there is no account of the time of struggle in the Garden of Gethsemane. Instead the time at which the inevitability of his death becomes clear to Jesus is in this time when the Greeks come to see him. 'The time has come,' he says 'for the Son of Man to be glorified. Truly I tell you, unless a seed falls into the ground and dies, there can be no blossoming, no fruit, no coming of life to the kingdom which he has come to bring. But if the seed dies, from its death new life will be born — new life for the Jews and for all the world .new life for whoever chooses to follow him — for whoever with abandon the darkness and come to live in the light.

The images of light and darkness are the great theme of John's gospel.

In the prologue to the gospel in chapter 1, the Word that is made flesh and who comes into the world is light and that light is the life of all people. The light shines in the darkness and the darkness cannot overcome it.

In the various encounters with Jesus we have read during these weeks of Lent we have seen that to be the case. The Tempter in the gospel account from Matthew in the first week of Lent was unable to prevent the light from shining forth. Nicodemus, who came to Jesus in the darkness of night, was shown the way into the light. The Samaritan woman at the well, likewise, in her encounter with Jesus is brought from darkness into the light because Jesus reveals to her all that she has done and opens to her the springs of living water that open to eternal life. And a fortnight ago we had the wonderful story of the man who was born blind, to whom Jesus gives sight and true access to the light — a light which escapes the Pharisees and scribes and even the man's own parents — but which is very clear to the one who had until that hour lived in darkness.

Then finally on the fifth Sunday in Lent we learned that the light which Jesus brings is able even to overcome the darkness of death. Lazarus is raised and restored to his sisters, Martha and Mary.

But still there are those who prefer the darkness to the light. In tonight's scriptures, Jesus acknowledges that fact. He knows that he is bound for an inevitable confrontation with those who continue to hide from the light he has come to bring — those who prefer the darkness to the light. He pleads with them — with any who in that group will listen — 'The light is still here. Move into the light while there is still opportunity to do so.' Jesus makes it clear that God's love is constant. It is without limit. And yet the choice is up to each individual to make.

We who are here tonight are people who have acknowledged Jesus as the light of the world. And with that acknowledgement comes a change in the way we look at ourselves and indeed at everything.

Moreover, as I consider it, more and more I am led to conclude that walking in the light is not about walking alone. Rather it is about walking together with others who also seek to walk in the light. It is something which I feel is very well summed up in the words of one of Dennis Schmitt's hymns — a hymn which we sang at the Eucharist at the Clergy Quiet Day at the Cathedral earlier today.

\*\*\*\*\*Also, are those who have grown out of the seed that has fallen in to the earth and died. We are a part of the ever-widening field of grain —of new life — that has sprung from that original seed, Jesus the Christ. And we who have been drawn to him who is the light of the world must accept his challenge to us to live for him and to carry his light into a world which still often prefers darkness to light.

The Roman empire in which Jesus lived believed that peace —the Pax Romana — came about through martial victory. — War and conquest were the only means by which peace might be achieved. Things have not changed all that much in the centuries which have followed.

Jesus brought another message — the message of the kingdom he came to establish. And that message is that peace is brought by assuring justice for all people and by showing love toward all.

If we are to live in the light of Christ, we must work for that peace each and every day. Amen.