

# Good Friday

The drama of Holy Week is now in the second half in terms of the passing of days, but only barely begun from the perspective of the events themselves. Now at noon on Friday, things start to get interesting. There was the quiet supper with friends in the upper room, a meal that somehow became both memorial and institutional. There was the prayer in the Garden, while sleepy disciples - probably having drunk more wine than was either wise or temperate - snored away under the olive trees. There was the arrest - Judas leading the armed guards from the high priest's court to Jesus' side, and then sealing his betrayal with a traitor's kiss of death. The trials before the Sanhedrin, Herod, and finally Pilate, the scourging, the slog through the streets to Golgotha, the crucifixion, the thirst, the words and finally the death... it's all still ahead.

Watching the story unfold yet again is a little like watching a car wreck in slow motion. You know what's going to happen, and you want to shout, "Wait! Stop! Don't you see where this is headed?" But the events never delay, never halt; they just keep moving relentlessly forward to the cross and the tomb.

Of course, that's not the end of the story. The tomb filled on Friday is empty on Sunday, and hearts drained of their joy on Friday are filled brimful to overflowing on Sunday.

Still, in the darkness around the table on Thursday, the quiet in the garden disrupted by the sound of soldier's boots, and mob madness surrounding us this very noon - now on we know - that the tomb must be filled before it can be emptied, and that our hearts must be emptied of all our self-deception and self-importance before they can be filled with Christ.

Paul's famous phrase in Galatians 2:20 leaps to mind: "I have been crucified with Christ, and it is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me."

The temptation for us who love celebrating more than suffering, triumph more than defeat, is to leap from Palm Sunday to Easter, with perhaps a small boost from Maundy Thursday, and see in the process nothing of what it costs to make the journey.

When the crowd who lined the Palm Sunday street shouted "Hosanna!" they were really crying out "Save us!" - for that is the proper translation of the Hebrew term. They had specific ideas about that salvation. They expected the arrival of their newly-appointed king to usher in the transformation and salvation they had been waiting for: rid them of the Romans, fix the fortunes of Israel, and arrange for the final defeat of anything that would ever again threaten their way of life. They expected armies, rebellion, victory, and ticker-tape parades. What they got was a quiet last meal, an intimate betrayal, a late-night trial, and a grisly crucifixion.

What the crowd couldn't know, and what we tend to forget, is that what lies between here and Easter - the car wreck we can see but not stop - is really God's answer to the people's plea for salvation. The rough treatment of Jesus by soldiers, the piercing nails and splintery cross, the last sigh and the limp body, the cold stone slab in the eternal darkness ... this is how God saves.

"I have been crucified with Christ." You only get to the empty tomb by going through the cross. Thank God for that.

## May God bless you this Easter

# Psalms 22



Written as a Maundy Thursday Reflection by Paul Hooker  
1983 stain glass by Glen Busby and James Bunselmeier