

the Rev. Karen Millard  
Squamish United Church  
Good Friday

April 2, 2010

### **Passion Narrative**

**Be Still and Know**

**Don't be Afraid**

**Jesus Remember Me**

**Were you there?**

**Jesus Remember Me**

The Love That Clothes Itself in Light

### **Reflection**

They went out and followed him,

Those who had sat with him at the table.

He led them to a garden

Where he prayed while they slept.

He was kissed,

And because he was kissed he was arrested,

And when he was arrested, his friends fled,

Some to go into hiding,

One to stand beside a bonfire,

And say I never knew him,

I never knew him...

Until the cock crowed.

He was brought before the religious authorities

And accused of the sin of blasphemy

And of threatening insurrection.

Having no power to deal with him,

They handed him over to the state governor,

Who listened to the accusations

And then asked the accused  
What have you to say?  
To which the response was silence.  
He had said it all.

He was not found to be guilty of any criminal charges  
But because he was an embarrassment,  
It was decided that the people should determine his fate.  
They shouted  
Crucify him!  
Crucify him!  
Crucify him!

He was cursed and spat on,  
Whipped and humiliated.  
And on his shoulders a cross was placed,  
Which he accepted with grace.  
Under the weight of it  
He stumbled and fell  
Stumbled and fell  
All the way to Calvary.

On top of a garbage dump,  
He was nailed to a cross of wood  
And left to die,  
While soldiers gambled,  
Critics joked,  
Religious leaders smiled with satisfaction  
And his mother watched and waited

The preachers I know find it hard to speak to the texts and the story of this day. And yet the preachers I know and respect dare not avoid it.  
Why would we want to engage in this dark day?  
Why enter into such a gruesome story?  
I do so with both trepidation and a heavy heart  
I do so with a mixture of theologies and contexts  
It is this story that speaks to the core of our faith,  
for me not because of how Jesus died but why he died.

Just a few days ago we sang and waved our palm branches reenacting Jesus' brave entry into Jerusalem; his courageous entry into the place where he stared straight into the eyes of injustice and offered love.

It was not long after the celebrations were over Jesus confronted the corruption in the temple, he challenged the authorities who shut others out; they attempted to trip him up with questions of paying taxes and following laws.

When the palms stopped waving Jesus faced Pharisees, Sadducees and Romans who questioned his authority and asked for his version of the truth. And so, he reminded religious leaders of their scriptures and the commandment to love God and neighbour. But this truth telling only upset them more. They asked how this carpenter dare to tell them to love? How dare he tell them what the poor give is as good as the abundance that they give? How dare he tell them that those they have judged are worthy of more? How dare he?

And it is here in the story that we find betrayal of the deepest kind; a close companion sells Jesus for a little wealth.

It is here that my heart breaks open with the psalmist and Christ as we cry why?  
Why God have you forsaken him?

Why does he not defend himself?  
Even the baffled Pilate does not understand.  
Where are you from? He asks.  
What is the truth? He inquires

He does not speak and so in silence we look into his eyes and see truth.

We see in those dark, strained loving eyes "I am truth"

"I AM" is the truth

And because I am calls us to a love and truth our world does not know

The soldiers wove a crown of thorns and put it on his head, and dressed him in a purple robe.

They mocked him, spit on him and struck his face. And then they set an innocent Jesus on trial.

The decision had already been made for unconditional love brings to the untrusting great fear.

To look in the face of Jesus brought crisis to humankind because it called for them to be different than they were, it called for them to be transformed.

And so as the mock trial ends even the authors of our scriptures seem to find it hard to bear the horror of the story; for we are left only to imagine the depth of pain and suffering.

As they take Jesus; and he carries his cross until he can carry it no more, and then a stranger journeys with him to the place of the skull where they crucify him.

This death and suffering like all death and suffering confronts us. However this death confronts me in a way that causes my stomach to churn. For this death stares me straight in the face and says this is what we do with love.

This is what we do with the one who calls us to see all creation, and all people as equal and loved by God. This is what we do when today we choose to oppress, and ridicule, and set apart those who are not worthy of our company. We say they are not worthy of God, or Christ, we say they are not worthy of love, we say they are worthy of condemnation or even death.

It is not God who calls them unworthy. It is not Jesus who says some should not be accepted. He died to prove love.

So as you look this day into the face of the crucified Christ know that he is love, and know that he understands your pain, your places of rejection, your innocence, your guilt and your grief and he loves you anyway.

Good Friday, God's Friday calls us to grieve injustice; our own, and that of others.

This day reminds us that our God has known the darkest of times in the deepest of ways and God grieves with us.

In his death we are shown that God entered fully into our human experience, even unto death.

We have a God who shares in our suffering. Hebrews says "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize without weaknesses, but we have one who in every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sin."

Isaiah had written: "By a perversion of justice he was taken away. Who could have imagined his future?" How could great love, live such death? How does it conquer sin and injustice today? Is this the end? If it is what is the future of love?

We are the future. We now have the opportunity to be the truth and love. Don't dismiss it, although that is the easiest thing to do. Don't turn from the face of love in unbelief. Live love so that, that piece of work which Jesus finished in his death we will accomplish in our life.