



Darkness to Life : Matthew 27:45-61

Our sermon on Sunday was essentially two sermons - the first run through the text presented the events of Jesus' death as they seemed to those who saw them unfold. The second looked at them again and asked whether all really was as it seemed. My goal was to show that there is a gigantic plot twist in the story, and that when properly understood, what looks like defeat in this event is the victory of all victories.

Darkness

1. Why is it important for us to see the way the narrative of Matthew's gospel *slows down* as we approach the death of Jesus? What emphases does this story-telling strategy bring to the surface?
2. What help does this passage offer us as we seek to understand the *lostness* of the human condition? (The terrible reality of humans inflicting dreadful pain, the crowds' failure to recognise the name of God, the horrible experience of the women's grief, of the disciples failure to stand up for their master, Jesus' aloneness at the end - My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?)
3. Why might 'too late' be a good caption for the scene as it seemed to the different actors in the story from the human perspective? (the women, the soldiers, Joseph of Arimathea)

Life

1. What was happening in Jerusalem at the same time that Jesus was dying and why is this striking?
2. In the sermon we returned to Genesis 1-3, (esp Gen 1:3) and I used the phrase 'from Darkness we came and to darkness we will surely return.' Discuss this. Why did the sun go dark when Jesus died?
3. The expectation that by quoting just a segment of a verse from the Old Testament the audience will bring to mind the whole context from which it comes is what Jews call *Remez*. Why is this a supremely important idea for our understanding of Jesus' cry from the cross (read slowly right through Psalm 22)
4. What was the significance of the tearing of the temple curtain, and what is the significance *for us*. Trace the references to Cherubim from Gen 3.24, Ex 26.1, 2 Chron 3.14.
5. Why might 'too late' actually be a very inappropriate caption for this scene, when we see it in the light of the gigantic plot twist that God's word points us to here? (for the women, the soldiers, Joseph of Arimathea)
6. Why is the observation that Joseph, with all hope and self-confidence exhausted, buried Jesus *in his own tomb* a potentially life-transforming reality for us?