

Good Friday 1996 Meditation

It was only a small group of family, friends and disciples who stood near the cross as Jesus was crucified. Their hopes, their aspirations even their very lives seemed to be at an end. The end had come - Jesus cried out *it is finished* - and died.

The question **why?** must surely have been on their lips. It had been there when he was arrested, when he was taken before the Sanhedrin, before Pilate and the crowd.

How the mood had changed since that triumphal entry into Jerusalem.

That same question - **Why?** - was written on many of the wreaths and sprays at Dunblane; it has been asked repeatedly in Rwanda, in the Sudan, in Chechnya, in Bosnia - wherever evil "reigns". At this moment on Good Friday it appears that evil has triumphed.

As we remember Jesus suffering on the cross we remember also those who like him are the victims of hatred, religious intolerance, ethnic division, political intrigue.

Silence

This then was the end - but what an end! *It is finished* was not a faint giving up of the spirit but as the other gospel writers remind us a loud cry from the cross.

Tetelestai – it is finished. It was a shout of triumph!

It is finished! - what was finished?

In the garden of Gethsemane Jesus had first prayed that he might avoid the cross but he then said "*not my will but yours be done*". He was committed to his Father's will. A piece of drama seen in a service had two characters speaking - Jesus and His Father. They were viewing "human creation" and saying how they had always feared plan A, the keeping of the Law, would fail.

Now was the time for Plan B to be put into action - the sending of the Son - to die on a cross - to destroy the power of sin for ever.

There was no other good enough

To pay the price of sin

He only could unlock the gate

of heaven and let us in

He only could unlock the gate of heaven -As a child I thought that a strange phrase - it seemed to have a double meaning! It is not, of course, the only thing he could do in the circumstances but **only he who was able to do it.**

This was the end because never again would annual sacrifice be needed - the very veil of the temple, separating the people from the "dwelling" of God has been torn in two.

Now there was direct access to the Father:

No condemnation now I dread
Jesus, and all in him, is mine
Alive in him, my living Head,
And clothed in righteousness divine,
Bold I approach the eternal throne,
And claim the crown, through Christ, my own.

This morning we make our own silent response to what God has done for us in Jesus:

Silence

We rejoice in the grace of God poured upon our lives.
Loving kindness has come to us because of Jesus Christ
We rejoice in the grace of God, our hearts overflow.
What a joy to know the grace of God!

Our next hymn reminds us that as we respond to the Love of God displayed on the cross so a responsibility is placed in our lives:

What language shall I borrow
To praise thee, dearest friend,
For this thy dying sorrow,
Thy pity without end?
Lord make me thine for ever,
Nor let me faithless prove;
O let me never, never
Abuse such dying love!

(Paulus Gerhardt – "O Sacred Head")