

2nd April 2021 – Good Friday

CROSS

“I simply argue that the cross be raised again, at the centre of the marketplace as well as on the steeple of the church. I am recovering the claim that Jesus was not crucified in a cathedral between two candles, but on a cross between two thieves; on a town garbage heap; at a crossroad of politics so cosmopolitan that they had to write His title in Hebrew and in Latin and in Greek ... and at the kind of place where cynics talk smut, and thieves curse, and soldiers gamble. Because that is where He died, and that is what He died about. And that is where Christ’s own ought to be, and that is what church people ought to be about.”

George MacLeod, Only One Way Left

I make no apology on this Good Friday of 2021 for beginning my “Thought for the Day” with the longest quote I have used thus far. For in the midst of the plethora of words, concepts, ideas, metaphors and meanings which have been, and will be, shared on this particular day, George MacLeod’s words say all that I would wish to offer.

My plea, therefore, with George MacLeod is that we do not sanitise the cross. The journey of Lent in 2021, and, indeed, our difficult journey through this past year of the Covid-19 pandemic, has brought us to the awfulness of the Crucifixion. I did not choose to arrive at this place where death is the theme. I do not want to be here. I do not find what we are pleased to call “Good Friday” a comfortable place to be. I hate this day. There has been too much pain, death and destruction already for me to have to face it again, for it to be dominant once more. And yet, it is here, unavoidable, hellish, painful, even though it is too much for me right now.

So what do I try to do? Push it away; sanitise it; make it holy; hide it in my worship and in my cathedral? Maybe, for that is my inclination. “Take this pain from me,” I cry. Yet, it will not be so. It is here, right here, in the reality of our world, in that cosmopolitan place, in that smutty place, by that crossroads, on that garbage heap, in that marketplace. The cross – the real cross that causes me distress on this day – is not to avoided, not here, not now, not ever. It is, truly, “where Christ’s own ought to be.”

With George MacLeod, I am “recovering the claim”. The cross *is* raised again. Let us deal with it. For it is the reality of now.

A prayer for today

Lord, there is no life here, only death. When will hope rise again?

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