

3rd April 2021 – Holy Saturday

Waiting

“O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?”

Bible, 1 Corinthians 15:55

On this Holy Saturday, we go to a graveside. While in 2021 we can reflect on this as a “between day”, with the pain of Good Friday on one side and the glory of Easter morning on the other, the disciples had no such luxury. In their devastation, it wasn’t “between”. It was the end. There was no future that had any meaning and purpose. They would be confused. They would be depressed. They would weep. They may even have felt that life wasn’t worth living any more. They would be broken by their grief.

In my work with bereaved people over many years, I have often heard and seen expressions of these feelings. They are deep. They cannot be dismissed with our “There! There!” So, as the disciples, men and women, named and unnamed, laid their friend in his tomb, and as they came and went from the graveside, they would rightly have experienced the hellishness of loss. Their grief might even have been overwhelming.

What can we offer people at a graveside, as they come and go, or stand, or sit, or kneel by what John Donne called their “lone undaunted place”? What comfort can we show when there is no “between” for them, when all that is good and loving and fulfilling has ended?

We are to wait. And when waiting is over, we are to wait some more. For in the waiting there is a powerful communication that in feeling hopeless, grieving people are in a proper place, in that hell which only those who are bereaved can know. They see no holiness – a Holy Saturday or anything else – in the pain of loss. But to wait with them now is to give a signal that all is not lost. To wait with them, to weep with them, to feel pain with them, is not to be hopeless, but to believe that in the waiting, a “between” *will* emerge, and a “then” *will* arise from the awfulness.

This grave will not consume us, hold us here, dominate our lives for ever. It will be a starting place of ... we know not what. But it will *not* have the ultimate victory. It will, even now, stand between what *feels* like the end and what might yet be possible. And, until that “possible” begins to take shape, we have to wait, and wait – and weep – by the grave.

A prayer for today

Wait with me, Lord, as I wait for hope, life and love to rise again. Amen

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