



Sunday 28th March 2021

Good morning church at Weardale, no I am not lumping you all together, I think about you as individuals, couples, families and singles. My love to you all and please forgive me as this message is the hardest I have had to prepare (Ken usually did this time of year, or Vasile, the Romanian Pastor.)

Tears are so close to the surface even as I write and I assure you all, I am writing and speaking to myself too through this word.

Can we break for a moment and let the worship song minister to us all.

HERE IS LOVE VAST AS THE OCEAN - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v8YOPj5TnUM>

I pray Papa God has enveloped you in His love and right now He is preparing our hearts for His Word. Let us read together **JOHN chapters 17,18 and 19**. The other Gospels can be read at your leisure for comparison and confirmation but I have chosen John as it holds intimate details which we do well to recognise, accept and thank God for.

I was just going to write about Palm Sunday, the Triumphal Entry with Jesus on a colt, clothes laid on the ground and loud Hosannas ringing out and whilst I am not negating it, I find it was short lived as no sooner was Jesus acclaimed than He had to 'clear the temple' (**MATT 21: 1-17 and JOHN 12: 12-19**) The events differ between the Gospels but it does not cause me a problem as we can all have a different perspective of events, does it mean one is right or the other wrong! Not at all! What I did notice was the 'fulfilling of the Scriptures' (**MATT 21:9 fulfils PSALM 118: 25-26 & MATT 21:5 fulfils ZECHARIAH 9:9**) the same with **JOHN**. God is so meticulous He makes sure His prophesied Word is fulfilled through everything Jesus did and said. If He has taken so much care that His Word is fulfilled and confirmed, will He not also take the greatest care of each of us and every detail of our lives? We can trust Him implicitly, nothing is too hard or too much trouble for Him.

Jesus always knew His calling even as a young lad but I guess he enjoyed His life as any child would, then as He grew and began his ministry knowing what the future held for Him, powerful emotions would be lurking under the surface. Let's consider the Feast of Passover, the disciples were to go to a specific venue, let the landlord know that the Master had need of the place and His Disciples were to prepare everything there, **JOHN 13: 1-13** Jesus demonstrates humility by washing their feet. Again Peter speaks prematurely but the amazing thing is Jesus never admonishes Peter for his big and sometimes foolish mouth. Think for a few minutes – are there people who make you exasperated by 'rushing in where angels fear to tread' making wrong assumptions, perhaps unteachable and unreachable, those who don't bring out the best in us? Let us draw upon God's immeasurable Grace, name them and forgive, then bless them and finally look for ways to serve them. Holy Spirit will give us all the help and direction we need.

What about Judas Iscariot? Jesus served him at the table knowing he would betray Him! Are we willing to serve without reservation those who spitefully use us, who defame our character, who spread lies and gossip about us? Hard but do-able because Jesus says "**My Grace is sufficient for you**" (**2 COR 12: 9-10**) Holy Spirit is waiting to provide all we need to forgive and

love with His Agape Love. Take a few minutes to do this, we are not in a hurry, God is giving us plenty of time because He is concerned with cleansing and refreshing us.

It is good too if we can ask for and receive His forgiveness AND forgive ourselves, so we don't allow the enemy a foothold. **What manner of the love the Father has for us!**

Jesus in His final hours of freedom prays for Himself, then for His Disciples, then for All Believers. What a generous heart of love and what a testimony for us to follow. Who are we praying for during this Pandemic and Lockdown? These are not accusations at all, just provocative questions which God has been challenging me with during this preparation and which I hope you will find helpful.

Out in the elements, His heart aching and quite likely agony and fear attacking Him, Jesus and His Disciples crossed the brook Kidron to the Garden of Gethsemane. In **Matthews description Chapter 26** Jesus left His Disciples **v 36**, then took his trusted inner circle of Disciples; Peter James and John **v37** further on, He shares His heart of sorrow with them asking them to **"Stay and watch with me" V38**.

Oh! how many times has the Lord wanted me to stay and watch with him and my response has been to sleep!! This is what happened, Jesus, heavy hearted, sorrowful, asking His Father **"if it is possible let this cup pass from me, nevertheless not as I will but as You will" (MATT 26:39)** He came back to the three and found them sleeping, how disappointing was this for Him, even His Disciple whom He loved, John, was asleep. I can hear the agony of heart, **"could you not watch with me for one brief hour? v 40 then in V41 the warning to us "watch we don't fall into temptation, the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak!"** This happens twice more and Jesus does not let fly at them for abandoning Him in His hour of need, He urges them to get ready for He is to be betrayed. Imagine someone you trusted completely using a kiss, as a demonstration of love, to indicate to the Scribes and Pharisees, **"this is the one to arrest!" (MATT 26:48)**

He was taken like a common criminal and at that point ALL the Disciples forsook Him and fled. **(MATT 26:56)** How alone and abandoned Jesus must have felt. You see there is nothing He has not suffered so that He could understand our worst nightmares. Peter followed at a distance because he wanted to see what they were and then going to do with Jesus and we all know how he denied Jesus 3 times then the cock crowed!! Peter remembered the words Jesus had spoken and went out and wept bitterly. **(MATT26: 69-75)**

I have been so challenged with the humble attitude of Jesus throughout His false trial, all the accusations levelled against Him; the washing of Pontius Pilate's hands declaring "I find no fault in Him" The attitude and anger of the Pharisees shouting "Crucify Him" and "Release Barabas!" Even their accusations towards Pilate for writing "Jesus, King of the Jews" I ask myself "is it possible to be so bitter that every word and action is tainted" sadly, without the Holy Spirit working in us, that is how we can be. Sobering thought!

I had a particularly gruelling day last Saturday. I was speaking to a man, a neighbour, with a very bad heart who was generously having a Defibrillator mounted on the outside of his house wall so it would be available for public emergencies as well as for himself. I then came back inside and began preparing vegetables for Sunday. I remembered this man's fingernails which were all uneven and very dirty which led me on to remember Ken's hands and nails, how clean and neat he kept them and when he was not able to, I did it for him – so you can imagine how I felt on going in to the Hospital on Ken's final day here on earth – Sunday 14th July 2019 – seeing his hands resting on the bed with very dirty nails. I was so shocked I sat checking them

wondering how they could be so bad, then finding they were full of faeces!! He had been given laxatives – don't know why as he was not eating anything in the final week- and he must have felt uncomfortable and put his hands down the pampers he was wearing. I quickly took hot soapy water and a flannel and began to clean them at which point a junior nurse came in saying she had thought about cleaning his nails but did not want to use the flannel as it was his own!! I really thought I had forgiven her then but this brought it all flooding back so I had to go through the whole process again remembering to bless her this time but because I was also thinking of the message for us this week, it set me thinking of the power working in Jesus when he had been beaten so badly and mocked and taunted then horribly crucified yet HE said" **FATHER FORGIVE THEM, THEY KNOW NOT WHAT THEY DO**"

He also remembered His mother Mary and made sure that John accepted her as his mother with the cultural expectation of the day, then Jesus knew He had done all he needed and He gave up His Spirit declaring **"IT IS FINISHED"** What a victory, What a sacrifice! He did it for you and me, with love, purpose and no reservation! I hope you have all received a WhatsApp picture from me of a mother holding her baby close. Please also look at it upside down and see and feel the love of God for us.



Can we draw on that same love and give it to others -YES! He makes it freely available, even commands us to **"love one another as He has loved us"**. HE has made it all possible. What a Saviour!

What a Father! What a Holy Spirit!

Let us pray together please.

Father, how can we say thanks for the things you have done for us.

Things so underserved, yet You gave to prove Your love for us

The voices of a million Angels could not express our gratitude,

All that we are and ever hope to be, we owe it all to Thee

TO GOD BE THE GLORY TO GOD BE THE GLORY, TO GOD BE THE GLORY FOR THE THINGS HE HAS DONE

WITH HIS BLOOD HE HAS SAVED US WITH HIS POWER HE HAS RAISED US

TO GO BE THE GLORY FOR THE THINGS HE HAS DONE.

Just let me live my life and let it be pleasing my Lord to thee,

And if I gain any praise, let it go to Calvary.

WITH HIS BLOOD HE HAS SAVED US WITH HIS POWER HE HAS RAISED US

TO GO BE THE GLORY FOR THE THINGS HE HAS DONE.

Thank you Father for your presence and your constant help.

Amen

Ending song:

My Tribute (To God be the Glory) - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8HQEI0AIEr8>