

Text: John 19.28,29
St Stephen's

April 10th, 2009
Good Friday

"I Thirst"

The Fifth Word: John 19.28,29

Later, knowing that all was now completed, and so that the Scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said, "I am thirsty." A jar of wine vinegar was there, so they soaked a sponge in it, put the sponge on a stalk of the hyssop plant, and lifted it to Jesus' lips.

My text today is a couple of brief words, spoken near the end of Jesus' hours of suffering. But the phrase draws back to a tapestry of moments in his life, pointing to something at the very heart of the gospel.

Do you remember after his baptism when he went out into the desert and fasted for 40 days? Matthew simply says, 'He was **hungry**'. And do you also remember that he was **tempted** there. Hungry and tempted. (Matt 4)

How about the time he stopped by a well in Samaria. John notes that he was **wearied** from his journey. Exhausted, he sat down. (John 4.6)

Or how about the time that he was **astounded** at the unbelief of people in his own hometown. Couldn't do hardly any miracles there! (Mark 6.6)

Or when he was **exhausted** in that boat on the sea of Galilee. Fell dead asleep in the middle of a storm. (Mark 4.38)

Or when he just broke down and **wept** at Lazarus' tomb? And weeping again when he came into Jerusalem? (John 11.35)

And don't forget his **anger** when he entered the Temple and saw it stacked with moneychangers. Right then, he lost it. He became a one man wrecking crew, eyes flashing, voice yelling, "Get out of here". The money-changers scrambled for their lives.

How about his **loneliness** on the night before the terrible/wonderful sacrifice we remember today? He didn't want to face the weight of those hours by himself.

And do you remember his **agony** in the Garden of Gethsemani? Such agony that he sweat, we are told, great drops of blood.

Then it turned into **a long night**. After his arrest and the quick mock trials, he was scourged; his back and buttocks shredded, he would have bled profusely; the crown of thorns, the beatings, the taunting, the long walk to Golgatha – he collapsed along the way; the nails driven through feet and hands; the searing pain as he was elevated upon the cross; the unnatural position of the body; the shooting pains in his hands and feet; the impossible task of drawing another breath; by now, wounds long exposed to the night air, his muscles cramping, his head pounding, blood vessels throbbing, a fever building... All of this lay inside his words, "**I thirst.**"

I want you to **see the theme**. The writers of the gospels don't miss it, and they don't want us to miss it either. Jesus had seasons of temptation, exhaustion, anger, and disbelief at the people around him. He wept over and over again tears of sorrow and heartbreak, endured a night of agony that made him sweat great drops of blood, and here today suffers sharp torment and pain.

He was human, fully human, in every way as you and I, from the joy of his birth to the heartbreaking horror of his death.

We forget that. For those of us who have come to love him and yield our lives to him, it is **far easier to remember** his miracles, his strength, his perseverance, his resurrection in power, his triumph over death.

We **love to call him** the King of Kings, the Ruler of the Nations, and the Bread of Life; the Alpha and Omega, the Morning Star, the Lamb of God. 'True God from true God', we confess.

But his **favorite and frequent title** for himself was **a more humble phrase**, the 'Son of Man'.

We forget that we also confess that *'he was born of the virgin Mary, and **was made man.**'* We forget that He came not only to die, but also to live. And to bear all the difficulties of fallen life; to **bear every thing that you and I must bear**. We forget that he came not only to **take on our sins**, but also to **take on our sufferings**, our temptations, our weaknesses, our trials.

Because **our humanity** is at the heart of our problem, **his humanity** is at the heart of God's Gospel. He is the 'Son of Man'.

That means that you can **know that he knows – where you live, what you face, what you bear;** that he **understands**, because he has stood - where you stand; lived - as you and I must live.

Do you remember that **6 hours earlier he'd been offered drink**, but he refused it. Mark writes,

They brought Jesus to the place called Golgotha. Then they offered him wine mixed with myrrh, but he did not take it. Mark 15:22–23

Mark and Matthew tell us that it was a drugged drink, designed to numb the victims of the Roman cross. It was **an offering of mercy**. **Jesus wouldn't have even a sip of it**. He chose to embrace the full force of what lay in front of him.

Why? Well, partly **so that you could know that he knows**. That he understands, that he has stood where you stand, no matter where you stand. He knows about hardship and trial, about temptation and suffering, about exhaustion and anger, about broken hearts and betrayal and real loneliness. He understands what you are going through.

No one penned it more clearly than did the author of Hebrews.

*Jesus understands every weakness of ours, because he was **tempted in every way** that we are. But he did not sin! So whenever we are in need, we should come bravely before the throne of our merciful God. There we will be treated with undeserved kindness, and we will find help.*

(Heb. 4:15–16 CEV)

We think that the places of hardship and trial and suffering are the **places to be avoided**. So we conclude that our **present circumstances** must be changed; they are not possibly that place where God could meet us and bless us. So we run from circumstance after circumstance as places that could not possibly be right.

Dallas Willard makes the common sense observation that '*God has yet to bless anyone except where they actually are*'. (Divine Conspiracy) Hard to argue. And the humanity and sufferings of Jesus point to something filled with hope; the willingness of God to **meet us** in the very **places we can't seem to avoid**. The places **he refused to avoid**.

So, we take note today. James would say, "*Count it all joy*", Paul would write: "*We rejoice in our sufferings...*"

Why? Because they knew that **He himself has been there**, and that **He knows**. That **He cares**. That **He will meet you** there. **No matter where**. Even in the jaws of death itself.

*Jesus understands every weakness of ours, because he was **tempted in every way** that we are. But he did not sin! So whenever we are in need, we should come bravely before the throne of our merciful God. There we will be treated with undeserved kindness, and we will find help.*