

Reflection for Good Friday 2020

Deacon Liz Day

Reflection

I want to tell you a story. It's a true story about my husband Andrew and something which he experienced several years ago and I have his permission to share it with you today.

We lived in Gateshead at the time and in a less than salubrious part of the city at that!

Andrew had been into Newcastle on the train to do some Christmas shopping and had just got off the metro at the stop closest to our manse. This meant a 15 minute walk to reach home. It was only about 5:45pm but it was already dark. He was beginning his walk when he was accosted by a group of about 5 youths. The two boys in the group pulled out knives and taunted him – wanting him to open up his rucksack.

He stood his ground and sensed that they wouldn't actually hurt him. Fortunately he was right and they ran off. As you can imagine the experience left him very shaken and upset. He was unharmed, but we still felt we had to report the incident to the police.

A very helpful and understanding police officer came and took a statement and because he was obliged to log the incident as an attempted burglary, Andrew also had to be visited by an officer from CID.

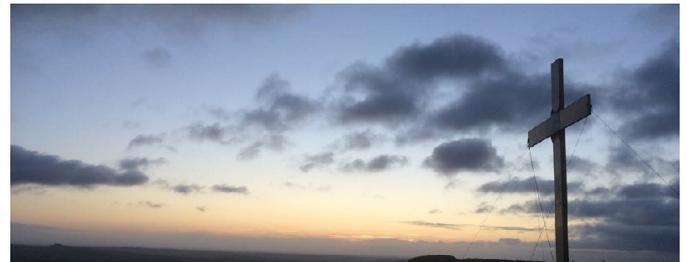
This was a totally new experience for both of us, but what an amazing visit it turned out to be.

We both spoke to the detective before he came to see us and he used vocabulary like 'pastoral'. Words which you would expect from a church community, but from the police?

Andrew was struggling with his mental health at the time and the officer picked up on this straight away. He told us of his own mental breakdown and his diagnosis of bi polar disorder. He encouraged Andrew not to press charges because he felt it would be too much for him to cope with.

But the most incredible part of the conversation was when he simply looked over to Andrew and gently said, 'Give it to me, Andrew, I'll take it from you now and deal with it'.

It was clear that this was something which had been said to him, probably in a counselling session and was immensely helpful for both of us to hear. I would go as far as saying that it was a spiritual



Reading Luke 23 : 32 - 49

³² Two others also, who were criminals, were led away to be put to death with him. ³³ When they came to the place that is called The Skull, they crucified Jesus there with the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. ³⁴ Then Jesus said, 'Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing. And they cast lots to divide his clothing. ³⁵ And the people stood by, watching; but the leaders scoffed at him, saying, 'He saved others; let him save himself if he is the Messiah of God, his chosen one!' ³⁶ The soldiers also mocked him, coming up and offering him sour wine, ³⁷ and saying, 'If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!' ³⁸ There was also an inscription over him, 'This is the King of the Jews.'

³⁹ One of the criminals who were hanged there kept deriding him and saying, 'Are you not the Messiah. Save yourself and us!' ⁴⁰ But the other rebuked him, saying, 'Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? ⁴¹ And we indeed have been condemned justly, for we are getting what we deserve for our deeds, but this man has done nothing wrong.' ⁴² Then he said, 'Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.' ⁴³ He replied, 'Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise

⁴⁴ It was now about noon, and darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon, ⁴⁵ while the sun's light failed and the curtain of the temple was torn in two. ⁴⁶ Then Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said, 'Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.' Having said this, he breathed his last. ⁴⁷ When the centurion saw what had taken place, he praised God and said, 'Certainly this man was innocent.' ⁴⁸ And when all the crowds who had gathered there for this spectacle saw what had taken place, they returned home, beating their breasts. ⁴⁹ But all his acquaintances, including the women who had followed him from Galilee, stood at a distance, watching these things.

experience for us all. I watched Andrew's shoulders as they visibly lowered as if a huge burden had been lifted from him.

'Give that to me, I'll take that from you'

Jesus says those words to us from the cross. We may feel helpless in a situation which faces us or someone we love. We may have said or done something of which we are not proud. We might know a relationship in our lives needs healing.

If we take our anxieties to the foot of the cross, Jesus will relieve us of them.

We never saw our special visitor again - never knew whether the youths had been reprimanded – but it doesn't matter. What was taken from us in such an extraordinary way left us feeling we had been visited by Jesus himself.

We can all know that deep peace and relief as we leave our difficulties in front of the person who lived and died for us and then rose again to show us that in his strength, we can overcome anything.

Hear his voice, especially today, but for always saying ' Give that to me, I'll take that from you.'

Amen

Hymn

When I survey the wondrous cross

Blessing for Good Friday

This day

let all stand still in silence

in sorrow.

Sun and moon be still.

Earth be still.

Still the waters.

Still the wind.

Let the ground gape in stunned silence

Let it weep as it receives
what it thinks it will not give up.

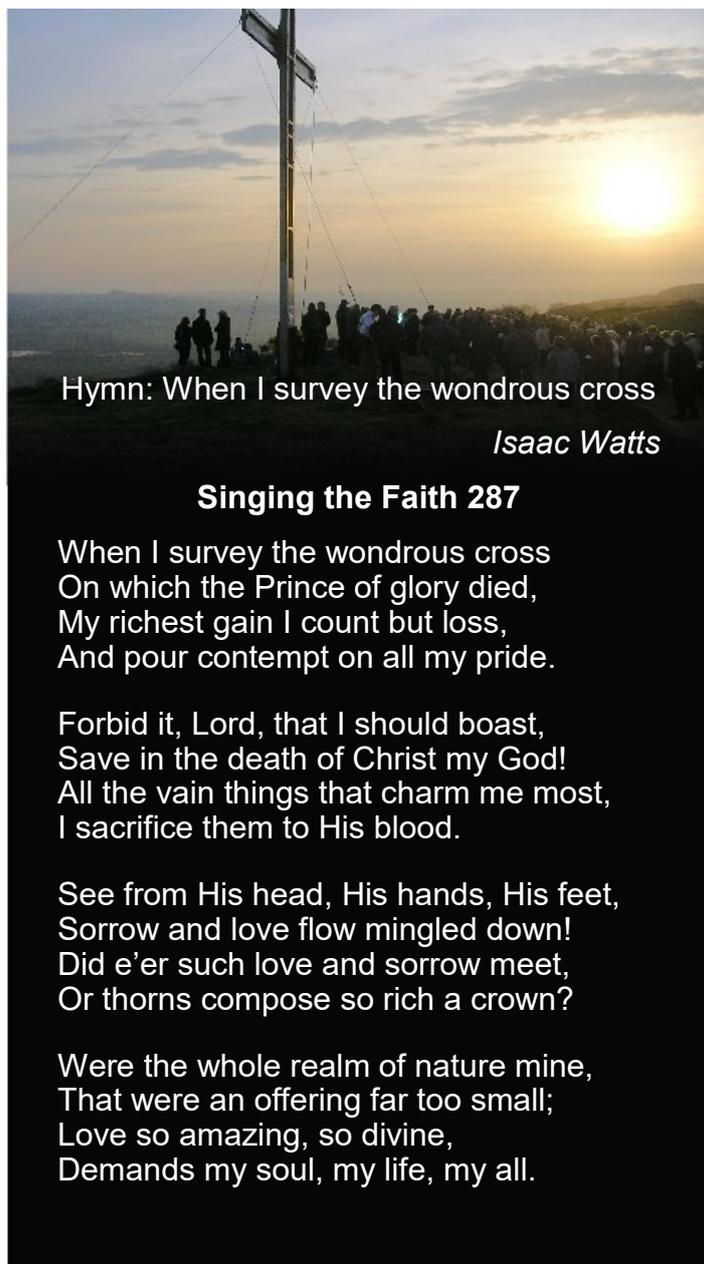
Let it groan as it gathers
the One who has thoughts forever stilled.

Time
be still.

Watch
and wait.

Still.

Jan Richardson



Hymn: When I survey the wondrous cross

Isaac Watts

Singing the Faith 287

When I survey the wondrous cross
On which the Prince of glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss,
And pour contempt on all my pride.

Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast,
Save in the death of Christ my God!
All the vain things that charm me most,
I sacrifice them to His blood.

See from His head, His hands, His feet,
Sorrow and love flow mingled down!
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,
Or thorns compose so rich a crown?

Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were an offering far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all.