

SHEPPARTON UNITING CHURCH AND SHEPPARTON RURAL CONGREGATIONS

HOLY TUESDAY REFLECTION (7th April 2020)

Please pray with me the prayer of confidence in Psalm 16.

Protect me, O God; I trust in you for safety. I say to the Lord, "You are my Lord; all the good things I have come from you." How excellent are the Lord's faithful people! My greatest pleasure is to be with them. Those who rush to other gods bring many troubles on themselves. I will not take part in their sacrifices; I will not worship their gods. You, Lord, are all I have, and you give all I need; and my future is in your hands. How wonderful are your gifts to me; how good they are! I praise the Lord, because he guides me, and in the night my conscience warns me. I am always aware of the Lord's presence; he is near, and nothing can shake me. And so I am thankful and glad, and I feel completely secure, because you protect me from the power of death, and the one you love you will not abandon to the world of the dead. You will show me the path that leads to life; your presence fills me with joy and brings me pleasure for ever.

Amen.

Reflection:

Holy Tuesday is celebrated differently by different Christian traditions, but for this Holy Tuesday of 2020, our focus is on Jesus' predictions of his death.

Jesus's predictions of his death happen eleven times in the gospels. Three each from the Synoptics (Mathew 16: 21-23, 17: 22-23, 20: 17-19; Mark 8: 31-33, 9: 30-32, 10: 32-34; Luke 9: 21-22, 9: 43-45, 18: 31-34) and twice from the Gospel of John (John 12: 20-36, 13: 21-38).

All of the predictions were made in the context of Jesus teaching his disciples about his impending death with/or during a conversation with the religious leaders. Adding to the predictions of his death are predictions of betrayal (Luke 9: 43-45, Luke 18: 31-34 and John 13: 21-38) and the predictions of death in the Synoptics is accompanied by the prediction of resurrection after three days.

An important point for me in all these predictions and teaching is that Jesus only talks about death in light of the resurrection. A point that is missed or misunderstood by both the religious leaders and the disciples. The betrayal by Judas and Peter's denial are the examples.

The post resurrection community may ask, so what is the problem? He died, but we know/believe he rose again! Let's get on with it. I think that is precisely the point Jesus was trying to make...death is our greatest enemy and must be taken seriously and to die and live again in his death and resurrection would be our greatest victory. No victory is greater than the victory of life over death.

The predictions of Jesus' death and resurrection are our hope and our comfort, and we wait with much anticipation the fulfillment of that on Easter Sunday.

Questions for reflections:

1. How do you see or even teach about death in light of Jesus' predictions of his death and resurrection?
2. How do you see your own death and dying in the context of what Jesus had predicted?

Concluding prayer:

O Lord of the living and the dying. We bless you for walking the road we treaded, for bearing the burden of our fears and anxiety, and for living our life, dying our death, that whoever believe have eternal life.

Lord, remember those who are dying and those who are grieving their loss. May they find comfort in you and trust you for the days ahead.

We pray for those who are lonely and uncertain during this challenging time, may they find strength and companionship in you.

Fill our hearts with love and compassion for those who have limited resources and those who are helpless. Stretch out our arms to share what we have and who we are, that all your children may live with gratitude to you.

Amen!