



GOSPEL GOSSIP

'He deserves death'

The Passion of the Lord Jesus Christ
According to St Matthew (26. 14 – 27. 66)

Sunday 29 March

Over the years there have been very many portrayals on screen and TV of the Passion of Christ. Perhaps the most graphic and brutal was Mel Gibson's 'The Passion of the Christ' which was truly shocking and horrific in its dramatization of the physical and mental suffering Christ underwent. Gibson approached his film from the perspective of a practising Roman Catholic; most other producers slipped into the Hollywood 'epic' mode such as the great biblical and historical films of the '50s.

These were largely for the purposes of entertainment. Many people delight in the macabre, the violent and horror. With the exception of sex and bad language, Christ's Passion ticks the boxes for good viewing figures and profits in the bank. This may sound cynical, but the Passion must not be reduced to entertainment, all the more gripping because it actually happened. As the Church bears witness in word and liturgy (even if only streamed at the moment), we all need to be reminded of both the reality and the necessity of the Passion.

- What does the word 'passion' convey to you – perhaps two meanings?
- What is the nature of Christ's passion?
- Is it limited to the events from his arrest to his crucifixion?
- Was the passion necessary?
- How do you regard it today?

This Sunday is Palm Sunday. We commemorate Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem, to the cheering of the crowds. In church services, this usually is demonstrated by a procession into church, where the mood swiftly changes from joy to despair as the Passion is proclaimed. As well as the liturgy, the tone of the service itself, the Passion Gospel is read. This is usually in a dramatic 'form' with all present taking part in the various group or individual roles. The Passion cannot be avoided – it is a vital part of God's will to reconcile us to him.

Just over 3 months ago, we celebrated Christmas, the Son of God becoming man. Jesus was born for God's purpose of reconciliation, of salvation. In his ministry, Jesus, the Son of God, declared that he was the Son of Man, recalling people to the fact that God was also one of us in Jesus. He also accepted that his role was to suffer – undergo his Passion – even and die. In very simple terms, this meant that he had to undergo every human experience, physical, mental and spiritual, to show God's presence in all our sufferings, all our 'passions'. More than that, as we shall celebrate, this suffering could be conquered, and Jesus' victory could be shared by all.

- Was suffering God's will for Jesus?
- How can that suffering affect us today?
- Is there an end to suffering?
- How have you coped with suffering?
- What was the outcome of suffering for you?

This Sunday's gospel reading is extremely long, but so was Christ's Passion. Read it all. Enter into it as if you were actually there. Use images in your mind. But above all don't ignore the Passion or 'airbrush' it from your faith. It was both necessary and redemptive.

Holy Trinity's services are streamed throughout the week and on Sundays: Facebook @ Holy Trinity Taunton and on our site at A Church Near You.