

Holy Week – Thursday

Luke 22:54-71 Lectionary reading morning

Then seizing him, they led him away and took him into the house of the high priest. Peter followed at a distance. And when some there had kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard and had sat down together, Peter sat down with them. A servant-girl saw him seated there in the firelight. She looked closely at him and said, 'This man was with him.'

But he denied it. 'Woman, I don't know him,' he said.

A little later someone else saw him and said, 'You also are one of them.'

'Man, I am not!' Peter replied.

About an hour later another asserted, 'Certainly this fellow was with him, for he is a Galilean.'

Peter replied, 'Man, I don't know what you're talking about!' Just as he was speaking, the cock crowed. The Lord turned and looked straight at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word the Lord had spoken to him: 'Before the cock crows today, you will disown me three times.' And he went outside and wept bitterly.

The men who were guarding Jesus began mocking and beating him. They blindfolded him and demanded, 'Prophecy! Who hit you?' And they said many other insulting things to him.

At daybreak the council of the elders of the people, both the chief priests and the teachers of the law, met together, and Jesus was led before them. 'If you are the Messiah,' they said, 'tell us.'

Jesus answered, 'If I tell you, you will not believe me, and if I asked you, you would not answer. But from now on, the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the mighty God.'

They all asked, 'Are you then the Son of God?'

He replied, 'You say that I am.'

Then they said, 'Why do we need any more testimony? We have heard it from his own lips.' **New International Version - UK (NIVUK)**

Reflection

On Monday, we look at the same readings from the Gospel of Matthew about Peter denying Jesus. Today's reading from Luke is very similar except that today we take the reading further to hear the chief priests and teachers of the law interrogating Jesus. Let's see what the spirit is saying to the church.

Firstly, we see Peter following at a distance. In Luke's version, the disciples were not scattered when Jesus was arrested and Peter merely followed the group to the house of the high priest. It is here we find Peter queried by those around him as they sat around the fire in the courtyard. Each time Peter denied that he was not a part of Jesus's group. It wasn't Jesus that was on trial first, it was Peter and despite his proclamation to Jesus he was ready to go to prison or death with him, Jesus understood the nature of humans to know that self-preservation is a strong trait when the chips are down. Hence Peter wept bitterly knowing that he had failed in this seemingly simple test of faith.

Second, we turn our attention to Jesus and those who guarded him through the long cold night. They began persecuting him. We can only presume Jesus didn't retaliate, as would be expected by those who taunted him. The beatings and mocking along with the blindfold and demands to know 'who hit you' are reminiscent of childish games.

This happened until daybreak when Jesus was brought before the council of elders and the interrogation of Jesus began in earnest. "Are you the Messiah, tell us" they ask. Jesus responds sensibly here, "If I tell you, you won't believe me and if I asked you (the same) you wouldn't answer. So here is your answer, the Son of Man will sit at the right hand of God."

Jesus led them into the next question and they fell for it neatly. "Are you the Son of God?"

"You say that I am," Jesus replied. Jesus never directly indicated that he considered himself the Son of Man and this is consistent with the rest of Luke's Gospel. Taking hold of this the council considered they had all the proof they needed, but was it enough to have him crucified? Something for us to ponder today.

As we ponder, let us join with those who pray for forgiveness and ask for ourselves forgiveness. Let us forgive others as we are forgiven by God through Jesus – in love, grace and mercy now and always. Amen.