

WEEKLY SERMON

communicate@blackburn.anglican.org



Why Jesus willingly died on the cross

Luke 23:26-49

In the final moments leading up to the crucifixion of Jesus, Luke takes time and care to introduce his readers to the people who are closest to Jesus in the moments before his death. It is surprising to note the people Luke describes were not his closest followers but rather a man from Libya, two convicted criminals and a Roman Centurion.

With parallels to Jesus' birth, we recall that it was shepherds who visited Jesus and responded by giving glory and praise to God. It was Magi from Persia who bowed down in worship and presented gifts for a king of gold, incense and myrrh.

As Jesus walks to his crucifixion, Simon of Cyrene is forced to carry Jesus' wooden cross. Cyrene was a Greek city in eastern Libya in northern Africa. We can only speculate how Simon felt walking behind Jesus. The weight of the wooden cross would have been difficult to bear. The emotionally charged atmosphere filled with the cries of grieving women and scoffing crowds shouting mocking words would have made each step heavier.

Two criminals die closest to Jesus. One mocks and another professes Jesus' innocence and his own guilt. With his last few dying words, one criminal asks to be remembered by Jesus. Jesus, in response, demonstrates why he came into the world to offer eternal life. He promises the man, who cannot do anything to earn his place in heaven, that he will indeed be with Jesus in paradise.

As Jesus dies, darkness covers the land and he breathes his final words committing his life into his Father's hands. As He takes his final breath, the Roman commander who had overseen the crucifixion and probably played his part before Jesus' death in mocking Jesus now utters words of praise to God and recognises that Jesus was a righteous man.

This Easter, as we recall the events of the crucifixion may we realise afresh why Jesus willingly died on the cross.

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. John 3:16

May we too join the shepherds, Magi, the convicted criminal and the Roman Centurion in offering praise and worship to the God who offers forgiveness and life in all its fullness to anyone who believes in him. This is good news indeed.

Joy Rushton, Being Witnesses Manager

HEALTHY CHURCHES TRANSFORMING COMMUNITIES