

Lent Reflection for the Tuesday of Holy Week, 7 April 2020

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I wonder what Bible study guide you are using this year. For those of us using SPCK's Reflections for Daily Prayer, Holy Week brings an added joy that our guide is Bishop John. Today's reading is from chapter 3 of the Book of Lamentations -

I am the man that hath seen affliction by the rod of his wrath.

2 He hath led me, and brought me into darkness, but not *into* light.

3 Surely against me is he turned; he turneth his hand against me all the day.

4 My flesh and my skin hath he made old; he hath broken my bones.

5 He hath builded against me, and compassed me with gall and travail.

6 He hath set me in dark places, as they that be dead of old.

7 He hath hedged me about, that I cannot get out: he hath made my chain heavy.

8 Also when I cry and shout, he shutteth out my prayer.

9 He hath inclosed my ways with hewn stone, he hath made my paths crooked.

10 He *was* unto me *as* a bear lying in wait, and as a lion in secret places.

11 He hath turned aside my ways, and pulled me in pieces: he hath made me desolate.

12 He hath bent his bow, and set me as a mark for the arrow.

13 He hath caused the arrows of his quiver to enter into my reins.

14 I was a derision to all my people; and their song all the day.

15 He hath filled me with bitterness, he hath made me drunken with wormwood.

16 He hath also broken my teeth with gravel stones, he hath covered me with ashes.

17 And thou hast removed my soul far off from peace: I forgot prosperity.

18 And I said, My strength and my hope is perished from the LORD:

I will let you read Bishop John's commentary for yourselves and only take from it the phrase that the writer of Lamentations is here in "utter darkness".

It does not become any easier if you are following Alan Bartlett's Lenten Reflections on St Luke's Gospel, "Looking Through Jesus", for today's reading is the Parable of the Wicked Tenants, Luke, chapter 20, verses 9 – 19

9 He went on to tell the people this parable: "A man planted a vineyard, rented it to some farmers and went away for a long time.

10 At harvest time he sent a servant to the tenants so they would give him some of the fruit of the vineyard. But the tenants beat him and sent him away empty-handed.

11 He sent another servant, but that one also they beat and treated shamefully and sent away empty-handed.

12 He sent still a third, and they wounded him and threw him out.

13 "Then the owner of the vineyard said, 'What shall I do? I will send my son, whom I love; perhaps they will respect him.'

14 "But when the tenants saw him, they talked the matter over. 'This is the heir,' they said. 'Let's kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.'

15 So they threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. "What then will the owner of the vineyard do to them?

16 He will come and kill those tenants and give the vineyard to others." When the people heard this, they said, "God forbid!"

17 Jesus looked directly at them and asked, "Then what is the meaning of that which is written: " 'The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone'^a?

18 Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces; anyone on whom it falls will be crushed."

19 The teachers of the law and the chief priests looked for a way to arrest him immediately, because they knew he had spoken this parable against them. But they were afraid of the people.

On the day the Second World War broke out, 3 September 1939, Sir Michael Tippett began his oratorio "A Child of Our Time" with the words "The world turns on its dark side".

So how are we to go forward through this dark period in the life of the world, which touches us all and compounds our Lenten reflections and abstinences? How do people survive when they have no hope? Where do they turn when there's nothing but misery all around them? In whom do you put your trust and hope? The only true hope Christians have is in the Lord. When we read the book Lamentations we see a glimpse of the God whose compassions never fail.

God is a God of compassion. He knows that we are “all in this together”. Whatever we are going through or will yet go through, God's eternal truth in the book of Lamentations will strengthen our hearts and souls, so we will be enabled by His Spirit to say or sing these words, with unfailing faith and with steadfast hope in Christ Jesus, the One Who is **Faithful and True**

Great is Thy faithfulness, O God my Father;
There is no shadow of turning with Thee;
Thou changest not, Thy compassions, they fail not;
As Thou hast been, Thou forever will be.

Summer and winter and springtime and harvest,
Sun, moon and stars in their courses above
Join with all nature in manifold witness
To Thy great faithfulness, mercy and love.

Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth
Thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide;
Strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow,
Blessings all mine, with ten thousand beside!

Great is Thy faithfulness!

Great is Thy faithfulness!

*Morning by morning new mercies I see.
All I have needed Thy hand hath provided;
Great is Thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me!*

AMEN