

Good Friday Reflection: Beverley Minster 19th April 2019

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John 19:16-42

Meanwhile, standing near the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene.

I will never forget Dana. 4 years old, recently arrived from Syria. Living in a 2 bedroomed flat with 12 other family members. She was the first to be allocated a school place. She arrived in my classroom, previously exposed to the terrors of war, ravaged by the journey to the UK and speaking not a word of English. Left by a family member she took to my classroom like a wild cat, locked in a cage- every fibre of her being alive with terror, desperate to escape- to return to the one stable feature in her whole universe.

A dramatic moment, one of the hardest of my teaching career as I held this little girl, seeking to keep her safe, to ease her into her new reality.

I can only imagine what her mother must have felt like- her fight to freedom at an end- and yet just at the beginning....the love for her children that motivated the hugely risky escape and flight to an unknown and unfamiliar country. The love that grabbed the chance for a hope and future offered to her youngest child.

The drama of Holy Week is social, political, spiritual and religious. But it's also deeply personal. A mother who fled as a refugee with her child to preserve his life now watching his life ebb away. Every fibre of her being screaming with love and agony, confusion and desperation. Her son, trapped and unable to escape- pinned to a tree.

This is unknown and unfamiliar territory- it wasn't the story she believed she was called to be a part of, it's all of her deepest fears realized.

It had been a triumphant entry- the glorious ride into Jerusalem- the start of the revolution, the new era of justice and freedom for the Jewish people. Her son, her Jesus was destined to be king, to lead his followers to their long dreamed of future. She would continue her journey of nurture and adventure alongside her son and his followers.

He had indeed been crowned and announced as King- but with a crown of thorns piercing his skull, a crown of thorns offered with jeering and scorn. A notice of his supposed blasphemy nailed to the same wood as his hands and feet.

A notice that stated the truth his mother knew in her heart, the truth Pilate knew in his: Jesus of Nazareth: King of the Jews.

A crucified King, their leader beaten, scourged and whipped- his life ebbing away.

The triumphant entry, turned into one of the most brutal death penalties ever invented. Pain unimaginable and unthinkable. Kingship turning to the agony of death.

Jesus sees his mother who has not left his side, who will not leave his graveside and commends her to his disciple:

"Woman, here is your son." and to the disciple, "Here is your mother."

He sees her and he cares for her- in the depths of his agony, the bonds of love remain.

Her heart broken, waiting with her friends, unable to leave, too painful to bear. I wonder what thoughts and images passed through her mind- rumours she'd heard from the disciples, things that didn't quite make sense....

"The hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified. Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain

"The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men. They will kill him, and after three days he will rise

But surely he couldn't have known, he could have disappeared, found another way - no-one could knowingly go through with this.....

IT IS FINISHED.....

His words pierced her heart, stopped her thoughts, stopped time. My precious son:

"Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word."