

Lent Reflection Week 5 Love...

*John 3.16-17- "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him."*

Reflection- John 3.16 is perhaps one of the best-known verses in the whole of scripture. It is often quoted, and we can find these quotes, if we're inclined to look for them, on tote bags, mugs and more. But somehow, it's these two verses that I have struggled with the most so far in this series of reflections. This is possibly it's so well known that there is little to add... Or perhaps it's because this verse contains some of the absolute truth of the gospel message that adding to it seems unneeded. I wrote a poor version of this reflection was about valuing the world as something to be saved rather than injured. Because creation is of infinite value to us and to God... but somehow, I could not get this to settle... What I'm left with is the question I know I often ask: what do we say when there is nothing to say?

When someone dies... When someone is very unwell... When something terrible takes places... When the awful and unpleasant happens... What do we say then? There is certain pressure that I feel, and maybe you have felt too, as a Christian that I need to bring God into a situation like this. To try and make sense of it and make it better... fix it... But that isn't possible. There so often isn't anything we can say to make a difficult situation a better one. That's why I see silence as being so valuable... sometimes saying nothing is the best thing we can do. In my own reflections this week I've been reminded that the idea of 'bringing' God into something is silly... perhaps almost laughable. Because God is always present. Always there.

These verses encapsulate so much of the gospel story and remind us that God's act of sending Christ into the world was not about saving certain people at a certain time. But the redemptive act of love changes reality stretching into the future and the past. It's for the WHOLE WORLD. Including creation. And it's about love. For me the Good News boils down to love. Love is key. Love is the lens we should see the world through. God is Love... and therefore in those terrible moments God is present, and God is love. We don't take God into a situation but find God already there when we arrive... The pain that we feel for those we love who are hurting is reflected in the love God has for them...

There are much more articulate and clever people than me who have struggled with issue of suffering. How does God allow this to happen? I don't have any answers. I don't know the reason. But I am assured of God's love because of these verses of scripture. God loves and therefore surely this is what we are called to do as well. To show love, to speak love, to share love with those around us.

I wonder how many of you know of those going through difficult times, or are facing them yourself... Please be assured that God loves you. What act of love can you show to those around you today and in the days ahead? This may be an act of loving service, doing something for someone... or offering to... Or an act of loving generosity, St. Eligius's website has a page about the Sunshine Challenge spreading love and joy through giving anonymously. It could be that you need to show someone love by accepting their offers of help. Allowing yourself to be loved. Whatever or however you can show to those around you, let's take this as our challenge for the rest of Lent to live out the love of God as best we can, Amen.