**10th April: Good Friday**

**Collect:**

Eternal God,
in the cross of Jesus we see the cost of our sin
and the depth of your love:
in humble hope and fear may we place at his feet
all that we have and all that we are,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

**Gospel:**

Matthew 27:1-31 The Trial & Condemnation

Matthew 27:32-54

As they went out, they came upon a man from Cyrene named Simon; they compelled this man to carry his cross. And when they came to a place called Golgotha (which means Place of a Skull), they offered him wine to drink, mixed with gall; but when he tasted it, he would not drink it. And when they had crucified him, they divided his clothes among themselves by casting lots; then they sat down there and kept watch over him. Over his head they put the charge against him, which read, ‘This is Jesus, the King of the Jews.’

Then two bandits were crucified with him, one on his right and one on his left. Those who passed by derided him, shaking their heads and saying, ‘You who would destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself! If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross.’ In the same way the chief priests also, along with the scribes and elders, were mocking him, saying, ‘He saved others; he cannot save himself. He is the King of Israel; let him come down from the cross now, and we will believe in him. He trusts in God; let God deliver him now, if he wants to; for he said, “I am God’s Son.” ’ The bandits who were crucified with him also taunted him in the same way.

From noon on, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. And about three o’clock Jesus cried with a loud voice, ‘**Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?**’ that is, ‘**My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?**’ When some of the bystanders heard it, they said, ‘This man is calling for Elijah.’ At once one of them ran and got a sponge, filled it with sour wine, put it on a stick, and gave it to him to drink. But the others said, ‘Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to save him.’ Then Jesus cried again with a loud voice and breathed his last. At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. The earth shook, and the rocks were split. The tombs also were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised. After his resurrection they came out of the tombs and entered the holy city and appeared to many. Now when the centurion and those with him, who were keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were terrified and said, ‘Truly this man was God’s Son!’

**Making meaning through further prayerful reading**

Some very salient features of the crucifixion are the words that Jesus spoke from the cross. There are seven in all, but we only get them by conflating the four gospels; in Matthew we read only one. Jesus is going through the worst torture invented by man to be inflicted on man, but he was also bearing the weight of the sin of the world. It’s hardly surprising, then, that Jesus felt abandoned! As a good Jew, versed in the scriptures that we now call the Old Testament, why would he not have been heard deliriously reciting the words of Psalm 22?

Something that is unique in Matthew’s account of the crucifixion is the earthquake, and the beginning of a general resurrection. Matthew’s is the Gospel with the most distinctly Jewish character, and some scholars say there is a five-part structure to his writing in order to mimic the five books of Moses. The ten commandments, given to seal the Old Covenant were given in a mountain experience nothing short of volcanic, and the salvation of the Jews from Egypt required something of similar proportion to what we now call a Tsunami. So Matthew found a dramatic way of saying that the death of Jesus the Messiah, and the new salvation it represents, is earth shattering news. This is also symbolised in the torn temple curtain: access to God’s presence is now open to all. The writer of the Letter to the Hebrews goes over this in meticulous detail in chapters 8, 9 & 10.

Hymn:

It is a thing most wonderful,
almost too wonderful to be,
that God's own Son should come from heaven,
and die to save a child like me.

I sometimes think about the cross,
and shut my eyes, and try to see
the cruel nails and crown of thorns,
and Jesus crucified for me.

But even could I see Him die,
I could but see a little part
of that great love which, like a fire,
is always burning in His heart.