**John 19:28-30 I am thirsty…..It is finished**

John 19 and verses 28-30 are at the heart of the Gospel. Jesus has completed all the work His Father has given Him. There is nothing left to do. Every detail of His ministry has fulfilled the Scriptures, even His cry of thirst. Everything he did and said came from the Father - yet Jesus is also a man of flesh and blood. And in this hour of need, He voices the physical thirst we have all experienced. The soldiers actually show him a shred of kindness by sharing some of their sour wine with Him.

But there is more than just physical thirst behind Jesus’ cry. There, on the cross, the agony of his separation from his Father bursts from his soul. Matthew’s account of the crucifixion records Jesus quoting the words of Psalm 22 - “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me.” Jesus’ parched spirit is crying out, thirsting for his Father

The sin of the world that Jesus carried in his body on the cross – your sin and my sin – visited on Jesus the separation from God that our sin deserves. “The wages of sin is death,” says Paul. Jesus experienced death – total death. Not just the stopping of his heart and the cessation of brain function. He was separated from his Father – the source of all life – the light of his being – the focus of his love that was so deep, that he was willing to be obedient to death.

Jesus didn’t just die physically. He died spiritually. Cut off from God by our sin, Jesus experienced hell for us. That’s what hell is - complete and utter separation from God - blackness, bleakness, loneliness, hopelessness, lovelessness. This is what Jesus died to save us from. His suffering was so much more than physical pain. His thirst for God would have been unbearable.

I sometimes wonder about that. I wonder whether Jesus’ suffering of the cross is something that remains with him. Yes, we look forward to Easter Sunday and the Resurrection. But looking forward to something, or looking back and remembering (or trying to forget) – these are earthly parameters. They’re locked into time. In eternity, there is no time. It is always ‘now’. So I find myself wondering…is the experience of the cross, as well as the experience of the resurrection, something that is with Jesus for eternity.

I am sobered by that. I have a feeling that the agony of the cross is not like physical agony, which we can put behind us, forget about, move on from. I sense that the weight of our sin is an ever present reality for Jesus. Sin & death are defeated, yes, and there is great victory and triumph in the resurrection, but I suspect that the pain of the crucifixion is also always there – part of the cost of our salvation.

And Jesus did that for me. He was willing to carry my sin, and be separated from God in my place, so that I don’t have to be.

But I am also joyful, because Jesus' last cry, *"It is finished!"* was a cry of victory, not of defeat. He fulfilled his Father’s plan; he gave his life so that we might be set free from eternal death, and he has been raised from death to offer us eternal life.

This is why this most sombre of all days, is called Good Friday. It is indeed Good News! And it requires a response from us. Unless we intentionally accept this gift of eternal life which Christ won for us, and place our lives in his hands, we are left to carry the penalty for our own sin.

I’m reminded of an incident that happened to a friend of mine. His young adult son was a leader at one of our Anglican camps at Tathra one year. The campers as usual, had been told that under no circumstances were they to go in the surf without a lifeguard present. But a couple of the campers, awake early one morning, saw that the surf was up, and it was just too tempting. They decided to go for a surf before anyone in the camp surface. Within minutes of diving in, one of the campers was swept out, way beyond the breakers, by a vicious rip. He soon got into trouble. While his mate in those seconds was debating what to do, my friend’s son came by on an early morning jog along the beach. He took in the situation at a glance. He despatched the mate to get help, and without a second thought, shed his shoes and shirt and dived into the waves. He got to the struggling camper barely in the nick of time, and brought him back to the safety of the beach. The paramedics took over and the lad was taken off to hospital.

For months and months following that incident, the young man and his family had to almost fend off the camper’s parents. They were beside themselves with gratitude. They kept contacting my friend, wanting to do something – ANYthing – that would allow them to express their thankfulness and indebtedness to this young man. Because he had saved their son’s life. Their gratitude brought forth a response.

And so we need to respond to Jesus, who gave his life for us. God accepts a simple prayer: “Lord, I’m sorry for living my life without you. Forgive me, fill me with your Spirit, and help me to live for you.”

And our response needs to be ongoing. Even if we have served Jesus for decades, we can still come to him in renewed gratitude, and reaffirm our thankfulness and willingness to serve him.

As we reflect on the meaning of the cross this day, may we not only honour Christ’s agony on the cross, but may we embrace the ecstasy of eternal life, responding in gratitude to this precious gift of Life that Jesus has won for us at so great a cost.

Let’s pray…