

Passion (Palm) Sunday April 4th 2004, Robert Lamerton

Readings:

Isaiah 50:4-9a

Psalms 31:9-18

Philippians 2:5-11

Luke 22:14-23

Hymns: TIS: 333, 279, 231, 341 (v.1-4,7), Song Sheet

Rev'd Robert Lamerton
(transcribed from notes)

The Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ, or, as the movie is called "The Passion of the Christ."

What is this passion? We mostly think of passion as strength of feeling "She has a passion for her work"...

But originally, the word comes from the Latin "Passio", meaning "suffering" and so it is the suffering of the Christ.

It is in each of the versions, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John ... one long narration --- quite different from the other gospel stories which are short stories connected by the author. The passion stories differ from the other parts of the gospels in their continuity and their agreement, but of course they each give their own slant to the message.

Each of the four evangelists has his own distinctive view of the passion.

Mark emphasizes the isolation of Christ

betrayed, forsaken and denied by the apostles,
mocked and tortured by the enemy
abused by those crucified with him
and finally bereft of the presence of the Father.

Matthew brings out the royalty of Christ in fulfillment of all he had spoken of from the Old Testament --- But the royalty is a paradoxical royalty --- the reversal of all the accepted royal images.

John too presents a royal Christ.

But Luke takes a different line --- instead of tragedy, Luke's theme is pathos --- that quality which

evokes pity and sadness!

Luke's is a story of Jesus the martyr // the opposition which began in his home town grows to its hateful worst.

Luke also portrays Jesus as the one who goes out to others in sympathy --- this he does in words of warning to the "Daughters of Jerusalem", in his cry "Father forgive them" and in his words to the criminal "Today you will be with me".

We must note also the severity of Christ's death. Luke appears to absolve the Romans from any guilt disconnecting Pilate from responsibility **and** describing the conversion of the Centurion.

The suffering and Rejection of Jesus in the passion contrasts with the expectation and hope of the welcome only a few days before.

The welcome in Luke's gospel mentions nothing of palm branches! Nor are there hosannas. Instead, the people place their cloaks on the path and Jesus rides a colt which recalls the welcome of the ancient king Jehu.

Blessed is the king
who comes in the name of the Lord!
Peace in heaven
and glory in the highest heaven.

Here Jesus is welcomed as the Messiah, the anointed one --- which makes his rejection a suffering all the more pitiful and sad!

It was of course his upsetting of tradition and challenge of age old traditions in Temple, Priesthood and authority which his welcomers found unacceptable.

How fickle and without thought are the crowd who find that Jesus has a different agenda to the one they had imagined --- I wonder if they had interviewed him about his plans before his arrival if they would have gone along with the parade!

How quickly the mood changes --- how fickle we human beings are when things don't fit with our plans and expectations, but that is what this Holy Week is about.

In these events we see judgement

Not just for the Jews --- and that has been our failure over many years to blame the Jews --- blame someone else for what is a human problem, my problem.

The judgement is on

my weakness

my fickleness

my failure to side with the right when it really counts.

Then use the obituary of Jeff Heath, disability advocate, available below.

Dark times for Jesus calls us to look into issues for us --- looking into our own darkness:

depression

anger

despair

even hatred

failure to trust

And the darker aspects of our national life

involvement in war

oppression of women

need for men to find new values

aboriginal

environmental

And in our darkness making choices which allow God's light to find ways to improve.

This week reminds us that hard choices taken now have a lasting effect.

BUT

taking easy options will bring no real lasting change.

This is after all the crunch time of lent before the pain leads to the dawn of Resurrection.

Obituaries

ICONIC FIGHTER FOR EQUALITY AND JUSTICE

Jeffrey Stewart Heath, AM

Disability advocate

Born: October 15, 1955; Adelaide

Died: March 7, 2004; Adelaide

JEFF Heath - disability advocate, budding politician, magazine publisher, author and disability issues commentator - dedicated his life to improving the lives of people with a disability. Because of his incredible strength of character his achievements were many, selfless and significant.

Born the third child and only son of Roy and Jean Heath, at the age of seven Jeff Heath became paralysed from the waist down due to a tumour on his Spine.

He was told a number of times he wouldn't survive. but even at this early age, he had such a positive outlook and strong belief in himself that he proved the doctors wrong each time.

He spent much of the following years in hospital, sometimes for months at a time. His mother was determined that he receive a proper education, however, teaching him herself when necessary. When it came to high school his mother refused to accept that he couldn't attend school because he used a wheelchair. She went to all the local high schools until finally one agreed for her son to attend.

Jeff always had an adventurous spirit. In the 1970s, when wheelchair users rarely ventured far from home, he decided to hitch-hike around New Zealand.

He was always ready to take on a new challenge. Rock climbing, sailing, canoeing, hiking, scuba diving and orienteering were all on the list of things he gave a go.

He also taught English in Japan, featured in a TV. documentary on disability in Cent- America, drove a motorhome across *the US* wrote a book on disability in the Pacific Islands, and competed in the 1976 Paralympics.

In all, he visited 32 countries, always learning and being aware of Issues regarding people with disabilities - including the matter of airline travel. He along with a number of others in the disability movement, became a pain in the side of the big two airlines in Australia and others around the world when it came to accessing their services.

He caused trouble with the Hilton Hotel project in the early 1980s when there were no specific rooms accessible for people with disabilities, joining forces with builder's union members and refusing to give in until he got what he knew was right.

The Adelaide courts building, Social Security building, Parliament House and the GPO, all received protests regarding access - all of which Jeff Heath had a hand in.

He was instrumental in the formation of various community organisations, a successful small businessman and an internationally recognised lobbyist, author and commentator on disability issues. In 2000, he was selected as the number two candidate on the Australian Democrats Senate

ticket. He was made a Queen's Scout, and won numerous awards, among them being a Member of the Order of Australia (AM), a Rotary Youth Leadership Award, the inaugural winner of the Queen's Jubilee Award, and a Churchill Fellowship.

Up until his death, Jeff Heath published *Link Disability Magazine*, a highly successful national magazine which he had been a part of since its inception 24 years earlier.

His last big project was the website disability.com.au dedicated to disability services and news. This venture will be completed posthumously by the new publishers of *Link*.

Even though Jeff took his work very seriously, he was never too busy to see the funny side of a situation. A fine example of this comes from a recent trip he took to South Africa. He was sitting in a large swimming pool at Victoria Falls when an elephant jumped in. All the kids were shouting and screaming "Everybody get out! Run away!" Jeff just laughed out loud and shouted back: "I wish I could!"

But perhaps what Jeff will be remembered for most is his personal crusades against all that made the community inequitable for people with a disability.

From lobbying the local shopping centre for more kerb cutouts, to his legendary 20-year battle to see the GPO made accessible, he continuously fought - and often won - battles against discrimination and ignorance.

He succeeded in making South Australia a better place for people with a disability, through his determination, persistence and unshakeable sense of justice.

He is survived by his wife Yvonne, daughter Lucianne, father Roy, sisters Barbara and Elizabeth, and nieces Melissa and Kate.

A Jeff Heath Memorial Fund has been set up to help fund opportunities for people with a disability.

To make a donation, contact the SPARC Disability Foundation, phone 8342 0900.