Reflections for Holy Week

Wednesday 16th April - Wednesday of Holy Week

Welcome

Welcome to our reflections for Holy Week, these are taken from the book 'Touching the Hem' by Jeannine Davies - today we look at Barabas:

Moment of quiet and opening prayer

Lord Jesus Christ,
in this week as we enter into your passion,
help us to learn of you, and know you,
and find a sure ground for faith,
a firm support for hope,
and the assurance of sins forgiven. Amen.

Reading

Mark 15:6-15

Now at the festival he used to release a prisoner for them, anyone for whom they asked. Now a man called Barabbas was in prison with the rebels who had committed murder during the insurrection. So the crowd came and began to ask Pilate to do for them according to his custom. Then he answered them, "Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?" For he realized that it was out of jealousy that the chief priests had handed him over. But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have him release Barabbas for them instead. Pilate spoke to them again, "Then what do you wish me to do with the man you call the King of the Jews?" They shouted back, "Crucify him!" Pilate asked them, "Why, what evil has he done?" But they shouted all the more, "Crucify him!" So Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd, released Barabbas for them; and after flogging Jesus, he handed him over to be crucified.

Reflection

They swapped him for me . . . how *could* they do that? I, a robber and murderer . . . but I didn't care – then! With a great roar, I shouted, "Yes!" I couldn't wait to get out there – to wreak havoc once again, to get my revenge on those who had put me away – oh yes, I was ready, all right.

On my way out to freedom, I passed Jesus. He looked *awful* – surely the soldiers hadn't needed to flog him *that* much, had they? The man was more dead that alive . . . I felt sorry for him.

As I drew level with him, he raised his head and looked straight at me . . . I saw the look of acceptance in his weary face . . . and in his eyes, I saw sadness and a deep understanding. I had never felt the sense of guilt before, but I knew it then . . . guilt and humility.

I looked down, unable to hold his gaze . . . I couldn't bear to see such suffering in his eyes . . . and then I walked away – and smiled at a crowd gone mad.

I didn't stay to watch the events of that day, instead, I went home – and wept. I wept for my freedom, which had cost Jesus his life, and, as I wept, the sight of his face came freshly to mind – I saw again the look in his eyes and I began to doubt by plans for revenge . . .

For as long as Jesus hung on the cross, I battled with myself – revenge or forgiveness? Suddenly, I seemed to hear a different voice – a quiet, weary voice – whispering, "Father, forgive them", and I knew it to be the voice of Jesus.

Father, forgive . . . and he – innocent.

At that moment, my inner battle ended and I chose forgiveness.

I could have gone back to my old ways of living, but I decided not to. My friends couldn't understand at first – they told me I was mad, doing an honest day's work – but some of them work with me now. And every now and then, the face of Jesus comes into my mind . . . his eyes meet mine . . . and I know that no matter how difficult my new life becomes, I won't go back on my decision – for I owe it to Jesus . . . the man who exchanged his life – for mine.

Time for reflection

Spend some time reflecting:

What struck you about the passage?
What surprised you?
How does it speak to you?

Prayer

Lord Jesus, you died for me – help me to live for you.
Amen.

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