

Behold the man

ODCC 12/04/09 (Behold the man.doc)

Text: John 18:33 to 19:30

Introduction

1. I read through each of the gospel accounts of the events surrounding the crucifixion of Jesus in order to get some inspiration for my message today.
 - a. Over the last couple of weeks as I read through the passages of scripture, I was touched with the passion of all that took place and of all that it means.
 - b. In all of human history there is no event as touching and as far-reaching as this story.

Historical relationship to Christ

1. As you read the story and take note of each and every character that is mentioned each one of those people had a relationship of some kind with Jesus Christ:
 - a. Whether it be the disciples who slept while Jesus prayed and did not keep watch with Him and then, when He was arrested they all fled, deserting the Lord and one of them, Peter, even denied Him. I do not know the man.
 - b. Or the young man – thought to be Mark – not one of the 12 but a follower of Christ who hid and watched Him as He prayed and sweat drops of blood;
 - c. Or Judas Iscariot who betrayed the Lord with a kiss as he led a band of soldiers to arrest Him.
 - d. There were the religious leaders whose trial was a mockery of the judicial system and who were bent of executing an innocent man – these were the men who had said, “If we were alive during the time of the prophets we would not have killed them” and yet one greater than all the prophets stood before them and they called for the death penalty – not just the death penalty but death by hanging. It was considered a curse to die on the cross and so they demonstrated their utter contempt for Jesus.
 - e. There were secret followers like Joseph of Arimathea who asked for the body of Jesus and buried Him in his own tomb. Actually, Joseph was one of the religious leaders and, give him his credit, he did stand up for Christ on at least one occasion, but was terrified to openly state his belief because he feared the Jews – his peers.
 - f. There were the political leaders like Pilate, a weak man who did not have the courage of his conviction and who took the easy road of appeasement.
 - g. There were the crowds – often called “the people”. The people were those who gathered in their thousands to witness the miracles. They were amazed! They listened to Jesus teaching and they were delighted. And when Jesus supernaturally fed them on a couple of occasions “the people” became theologians. They said, “Moses gave our forefathers manna to eat – you also give us a sign – give us bread and we will follow you” (John 6). Jesus said, “I am the bread... unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in yourselves.” But their hearts were hard so that they could not understand what He was talking about. It was the crowds who one day called: “Hosanna” as Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey and then the next day cried “Crucify him!”

“Now” relationship

1. The thing that has always struck me and I was made aware of as I read the scriptures relating to the crucifixion again is that everyone who hears the account has to place themselves in the story.
 - a. Pilate, not wanting to crucify Jesus, had Him beaten. The soldiers had not only beaten Jesus with lashes but had spent time mocking Him, beating His face and then placed a plaited crown of thorns on His head.
 - b. Jesus was returned to Pilate before the Jews and showed terrible signs of physical abuse – His back bleeding, his face bruised and bloodied and a crown of thorns pressed down upon His head added to the fact that He would have been exhausted not only from hunger and lack of sleep but also from the anguish He was suffering.
 - c. His suffering was not personal. God was to pour out upon Him the guilt of sin and vent judgement upon Him. On this most holy Feast where the Jews were remembering how a lamb was slain and the blood painted on the doorposts and lintels kept the destroyer away and remembering the words of God, “When I see the blood, I will pass over you” (Ex 12:13), a lamb was being prepared for sacrifice.

- d. Now standing before Pilate and the Jewish leaders and the crowd, Pilate says, “Behold, the man!”
 - e. He wanted a response.
4. Behold the man. We are there in the story. It happened 2000 years ago but the relevancy of the crucifixion has not lost any importance or power.
- a. For over 2000 years God’s witnesses have gone out into the farthest reaches of the world’s continents and islands. And everywhere this story has been told as Christ prophesied: *“This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come”* (Matt 24:14).
 - b. And everywhere the gospel is preached the witnesses point and say, “Behold, the man!”

Behold the man!

1. Some reject Him outright – they will have nothing to do with Him – there’s plenty of those.
 - a. Some blow hot or cold. Joshua said, “Choose this day whom you’ll serve...” and Elijah, years later said “How long will you falter between two opinions? If the Lord is God, then follow Him...but the people did not answer him a word.” (I Kings 18:21).
 - b. Some want to straddle the fence. I was talking with Wayne a couple of days ago and he pointed out, if you are going to serve Jesus, if you make Him Lord, then you can’t keep it a secret in the school, in the work place, among family members, at the footy club, etc. Jesus said, “Let your light shine”.
 - c. **Jesus is not** a pair of special jeans you can wear on special occasions. **Jesus doesn’t work** at the call centre answering 000 calls when we have an emergency. **Jesus is not** an hour or two on a Sunday.
2. Jesus is Lord, He is God, He is the Saviour. The question that each of us has to answer is this: “Who is He to me?”
 - a. You’ll remember when He died on the cross the curtain in the temple was torn from the top to the bottom.
 - b. The Holy of Holies that had always been a forbidden place, a holy place, a place of fear, a place of “no entry”, a place of the presence of God, suddenly it stood open.
 - c. Christ has made a way into God’s presence by His great sacrifice. The grace of God, the love of God, the mercy of God, the patience of God have made possible the intimacy of God.

Conclusion

1. Behold the man – what is your relationship with Jesus this Easter?