

## Reflection: Holy Cross Day

The festival that the Church of England celebrates at this time is very different from the one that has been celebrated for over 1500 years by the Catholic Church. In fact before 1960 the Catholic Church had two separate feast days, one celebrating the discovery (in the 4<sup>th</sup> Century AD) of the buried cross on which Jesus had been crucified, and the other celebrating the return of that relic to Jerusalem after it had been looted by the Persian army in the early 7<sup>th</sup> Century.

Our readings today instead focus on Jesus' sacrifice on that cross, and what it means for us. Speaking to Nicodemus, Jesus refers back to the incident recorded in today's Old Testament reading from the book of Numbers, when the people of Israel were beset by poisonous snakes in the desert and Moses was told to put a bronze effigy of a serpent on a pole so that any who had been bitten could look at the snake-on-a-pole and not die of the snakes' venom. Jesus refers to his own coming death and says that, in a similar way, anyone who believes in the Son of Man who suffered and died while nailed to the cross would escape spiritual death and instead have eternal life.

The images we have in our church building of Jesus on the cross do not attempt to show the suffering our Lord had to endure. In reality, crucifixion was a brutally violent and humiliating experience, and often the suffering lasted several days; but our East Window, for example, shows Jesus in his kingly triumph in front of the cross. Does such an image reduce our sense of gratitude of what Jesus went through so that we could spend eternity with God in Heaven?

God is not a sadist, inflicting pain on his Son unnecessarily, but Jesus is clear that his death, and the way it happened, were always his Heavenly Father's intention, so what does that mean for how much God loves us? And what should our response be to such love?

Ian Totterdell, Churchwarden



**NEXT SUNDAY 22.09.2024 Trinity 17**

10.30am in the Church

**READINGS:** OT Jeremiah 11.18–20  
NT James 3: 13-4: 3, 7-8a  
GOSPEL Mark 9: 30-37



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# St Thomas, Exeter

**15th September 2024**

**Holy Cross**

**10.30am in Church**

### Today

**10.30am Sung Eucharist**

*Hymn Numbers.*

303 Lift High the Cross

148 From heaven you came, helpless babe

549 When I survey the wondrous cross

### Tuesday 17th September

**7.30pm** House Group at Helen's house

### Wednesday 18th September

**10am** Holy Communion (BCP)

### Thursday 19th September

**9.30-11am** St Thomas Tots

**10.30-12 noon** Knit & Natter. 19 Maple Rd

Details from Jenny on 01392 49872

### Friday 20th September

**9.30am** Morning Prayer

**10am** Staff Meeting



## Collect

Almighty God, who in the passion of your blessed Son made an instrument of painful death to be for us the means of life and peace: grant us so to glory in the cross of Christ that we may gladly suffer for his sake; who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

**Amen**

## Numbers 21: 4-9

From Mount Hor, Moses and the people of Israel set out by the way to the Red Sea, to go around the land of Edom; but the people became impatient on the way. The people spoke against God and against Moses, 'Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and we detest this miserable food. Then the Lord sent poisonous serpents among the people, and they bit the people, so that many Israelites died. The people came to Moses and said, 'We have sinned by speaking against the Lord and against you; pray to the Lord to take away the serpents from us.' So Moses prayed for the people. And the Lord said to Moses, 'Make a poisonous serpent, and set it on a pole; and everyone who is bitten shall look at it and live.' So Moses made a serpent of bronze, and put it upon a pole; and whenever a serpent bit someone, that person would look at the serpent of bronze and live.

## Psalms 22: 23-28

Praise the Lord, you that fear him;  
O seed of Jacob, glorify him;  
stand in awe of him, O seed of Israel.  
For he has not despised nor abhorred the suffering of the poor; neither has he hidden his face from them;  
but when they cried to him he heard them.  
From you comes my praise in the great congregation;  
I will perform my vows in the presence of those that fear you.  
The poor shall eat and be satisfied;

those who seek the Lord shall praise him; their hearts shall live for ever.  
All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the Lord,  
and all the families of the nations shall bow before him.  
For the kingdom is the Lord's  
and he rules over the nations.

## Philippians 2: 6-11

Christ Jesus, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross. Therefore God also highly exalted him  
and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

## John 3: 13-17

Jesus said to Nicodemus, 'No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. 'For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. 'Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.'



## Post Communion

Faithful God, whose Son bore our sins in his body on the tree and gave us this sacrament to show forth his death until he comes: give us grace to glory in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, for he is our salvation, our life and our hope, who reigns as Lord, now and for ever. **Amen**

## NOTICES

**TALKWORKS can help!** If you are feeling stressed, anxious, are experiencing ongoing low mood, or are having difficulty sleeping,

NHS TALKWORKS is a free, confidential, talking therapies service helping you to feel better and giving you the tools and techniques to improve your mental well-being.

0300 555 3344 Give us a call and see how we can support you. [www.talkworks.dpt.nhs.uk](http://www.talkworks.dpt.nhs.uk)

**Northcott Theatre** Friday 18th October to Wednesday 23rd October (local discount on Friday) *The Commotion*. More on the Prayer Book Rebellion of 1549 following our successful talk by Prof Mark Stoye. Box office phone no 01392 726363

**MacMillan Coffee Morning** We are hoping to support this on 27 September if we have volunteers to make a few cakes and run a stall in Church. Please see one of the Staff Team.

**Theatre Alibi** at their home in Emmanuel Hall are having an open day on 28 September 9-4pm to launch its new autumn programme. Please see [Home - Theatre Alibi](#)

