

# Diocese of Hallam – Lenten Talks 2016

## THE PASSION OF THE LORD

### 4. The Passion according to Luke

Both Matthew and Luke tidy up Mark's grammar and stylistically improve their major source. Matthew follows Mark closely while adding material of a popular and memorable nature. Luke changes the whole tone of the Passion story. He softens the bleak, dark atmosphere and introduces pastel colours of reconciliation, healing forgiveness. Thereby, hope is more apparent.

Again we will concentrate in this presentation on the significant changes Luke make to Mark, and examine some important textual issues.

A major theme of Luke is announced by Mary in her *Magnificat*, “He casts the mighty from their thrones/ and raises the lowly”, and Jesus repeats this motif in his manifesto at Nazara when he quotes from Isaiah, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.” (4, 18-19). This theme runs through his ministry and the Passion-story.

#### **Passover.**

Luke does not have an anointing before the Passover meal. Jesus was anointed earlier in the house of Simon the Pharisee by a woman (not Mary Magdalene) who had a name in the town, who washed his feet with her tears and wiped them with her, unbound, hair. (7,36-50). The crowd have a more prominent role. The chief priests and the scribes are looking for a way to put Jesus to death but are afraid of the people. Judas confers with the chief priests “and officers of the Temple police” about how he might betray him to them. He begins to look for an opportunity to hand him over to them when no crowd is present.

The authorities agree to give Judas money but are not told that Judas has asked for any payment. Judas' motive is obscure, except that we hear, “Then Satan entered into Judas, called Iscariot, who was one of the Twelve”. When Satan tempted Jesus in the wilderness, the episode concluded with “(Satan) departed from him until an opportune time” (4,13). Ominously, now is that opportune time.

The preparations for the Passover are made by Peter and John, two disciples who will have a prominent role in the early chapters of the Acts of the Apostles. Luke is going to treat the disciples much more gently than Mark, for they are to be the heroes of his second volume and he does not want to denigrate them more than he must. Judas' betrayal and Peter's denials cannot be avoided but otherwise Luke is very positive towards the disciples.

Luke emphasises Jesus' determination ("eagerly desire") to eat the passover with his disciples "before I suffer", which he links with an eschatological saying "I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the Kingdom of God".

Luke's 'institution narrative' is more complicated than that in Mark/Matthew, in that he has a taking, giving thanks and giving of a cup (of wine) before he takes, gives thanks, breaks and gives bread to the disciples, saying "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me"; and then doing the same with the cup, saying, "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood". Luke's tradition here is closer to Paul (1Cor 11,23-26) than to Mk/Mt. There is an emphasis on the sacrificial/atonement purpose of his giving his body which is "for you" (Mk/Mt - "for many"); and there is emphasis on the remembrance, therefore the to-be-repeated aspect of the taking and sharing of the bread and wine, which is absent from Mk/Mt. Luke's Jesus also explicitly speaks of "the new covenant in my blood", echoing Jeremiah 31,31-34. This account seems to reflect the liturgy of Luke's community. "The Last Supper is therefore one of Luke's most important scenes. It reaches back to summarize the entire ministry of Jesus as a life given for others. It reaches forward in portraying the authentic spirit of the Church as living in remembrance of the crucified and risen Christ." [Senior, "*Passion- Luke*", p.64].

Immediately, in "a jolting contrast" [ibid] Jesus is announcing his betrayal and woe to the one who betrays. The Son of Man is going "as it has been determined", ie according to the Scriptures, in God's plan, but Judas' is not thereby compelled to act. Jesus omits however, the saying, "Better for that man if he had never been born". Luke does not dwell on the betrayal but quickly moves to Jesus' concern for the faithful others.

Quickly comes Jesus' teaching on the way to greatness among his followers: "The greatest among you must become like the youngest, and the leader like one who serves. For who is greater, the one who is at table or the one who serves? Is it not the one at the table? But I am among you as one who serves." (22, 26-27). Luke has often placed Jesus' teaching in the context of a meal (15,1-2). He has taught about taking the lowest place at table, about who should be on the guest list (those who cannot pay you back). John makes a very similar point in the explanation following the feet-washing (Jn. 13,4-14).

We now hear praise for the disciples the like of which we hear no where else: “You are the ones who have stood by me in my trials”. It is as if Luke is getting the praise in while he can. The disciples flight will not be told by Luke. But they are certainly not close by when Jesus actual trial takes place.

The praise and promise continues: “I confer on you, just as my Father has conferred on me, a kingdom, so that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and you will sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.”. (thus the need for Judas to be quickly replaced after the Resurrection). Eating and drinking, especially with unsavoury types, has been a major theme of the Gospel. The eating and drinking will continue after the Resurrection (at Emmaus; with the disciples -“Have you anything to eat?”) as a foreshadowing of the Kingdom. And in the new community (the new Israel) the disciples will rule like the Judges of old, administering justice and making decisions.

Luke will protect the disciples as much as he can from any blame regarding their (in)actions through Jesus Passion. He is going to write about their heroic deeds after the Resurrection and he does not want to taint them in any way before hand. Every barb of Mark he will omit or soften as far as he is able. He cannot air brush Judas' treachery, nor be silent about Peter's denials. It is to Peter that Jesus now turns with a violent image. But the impact of this fierce shaking is soften by words of encouragement:

“Simon, Simon, listen! [This was the name used at the miraculous catch of fish (chp5) when Simon was called; subsequently 'Peter' has been used.] Satan has demanded to sift you all like wheat, {is this a reference to separating wheat from chaff, and indicates the disciples (chaff) separated from Jesus (wheat) or Judas (chaff) separated from the others?} but I have prayed for you {a sure sign that it will work out as Jesus intended, for the Father will not deny his beloved Son} that your own faith may not fail; and you, once you have turned back, strengthen your brothers.” Satan has entered Judas and he has demanded (of whom? who can make demands of God? It is typical of Satan to overplay his power (cf second temptation “All authority has been given to me” -Lk 4,6), now he intends to give the disciples a hard time but Jesus' prayer will protect, and Peter, once he has turned back ie after his denials and his tears, he will strengthen his brethren; that will be his role in the Acts, building on his faith -“The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon!”(24,34). But no disciple can expect not to have some aspect of the cross in his/her discipleship.

Peter, characteristically, cannot keep quiet, “Lord, I am ready to go with you to prison and death!” And, in due time, he will endure both. But first there will be the denials and the cock crow.

The next paragraph is puzzling. Jesus reminds them that when he sent them out they

needed nothing. But now, the eschatological time of crisis they must ensure that they have a sword. Is he speaking metaphorically and they take him literally? He cuts through the discussion with an abrupt “Enough!”

There are no predictions on the walk to the place on the Mount of Olives. They have all been placed in the calmer setting of the meal-room.

Reaching “the place” he instructs them, “Pray that you may not come to the time of trial”. Prayer has been more significant in the third Gospel than any other. Now the disciples must pray to avoid the great time of testing (*peirasmós*). There is no separation from the disciples, other than he moves away “about a stone's throw” and kneels (in proper fashion) to pray. There is no anguish as we found in Mk/Mt. His prayer is composed, though the content is close to that of Mk/Mt.: “Father, [inserted into the final words of Jesus from Psalm 31] if you are willing remove this cup from me; yet not my will but yours be done”. Jesus is a model for how to pray in dire circumstances. Stephen will show similar composure (Acts 7, 59-60). “This Jesus, who is far from indifferent to the sufferings of others (7,13; 7,38 with 47-48; 10,41; 13,11-12) is so at peace with God that he cannot be distraught by the sufferings that are inflicted on him (4,29-30; 6,11-12; 13,31-33). His only concern in that regard is the inevitable divine judgement that such injustice to him will bring on Jerusalem (13,33-34; 23,28). [Brown, “*Death*”, p.157].

He returns to the disciples only once to find them sleeping. Again he treats them gently, explaining that their sleep is “because of grief”; and he repeats his warning to pray to avoid coming to the time of trial.

You will be surprised by the calm shown by Jesus in his prayer at the place on the Mount of Olives. Where is “the agony in the Garden of Gethsemane, our first sorrowful mystery of the rosary? If you look closely at your New Testament, there will either be brackets around vv43-44 of chapter 22, or there will be a footnote, explaining that these verses are not found 'in some ancient authorities'. The verses in question read: “Then an angel of heaven appeared to him and gave him strength. In his anguish he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down on the ground.”

The issue is a textual one. We do not have any original editions of the Gospels. The manuscripts, codices, that we have date from the third/fourth centuries. The copies were carefully made by scribes working in conditions which might not always have been conducive to efficient work, in terms of light/dark, heat/cold, alert/fatigue; and mistakes could be made in many ways. In addition, scribes might seek to improve the text that they were copying from. They might believe that an earlier scribe had made a mistake and correct it; they might improve the text to clarify it based on what they remembered from another Gospel. They might want to remove what was considered

damaging to the Church, or add what would aid the Church's cause.

Some ancient codices have these verses and some do not. On balance, if such is possible, the weight of authority would seem to many to favour omitting the verses. However, we have to examine more than the number of occasions these verses are included against the number where they are omitted. We need to ask how far these verses agree with Luke's thinking about Jesus. Do they match with what we know of Luke's style, vocabulary and thought? And we need to ponder: is it more likely that a zealous scribe would remove these verses; or more likely that a pious copier would add them?

Regarding style and vocabulary, Brown concludes that this [passage is closer to Luke than to any other NT author [*Death*”, p.182] so a scribe inserting it would have had to be able to impersonate Luke well.

It is hard to imagine Luke have Jesus pray and there be no response from his Father. In a parallel scene, at the Transfiguration, Jesus prays and is joined by the heavenly Moses and Elijah. Jesus has just prayed for Simon and he will in time strengthen his brothers.

A scribe might add such a passage to counter claims from docetists that Jesus was not truly human; but the argument was being made in antiquity that Mk/Mt's troubled and prostrate Jesus was not a worthy divine figure. Showing an angel strengthen Jesus suggests the angel is superior to weak Jesus; surely an argument for dropping the verses.

A conclusion to this question might become clearer when we examine what is being said about Jesus in this scene.

At the end of the Temptations Luke tells us that Satan left Jesus “to return at an opportune time” (4,13). Mk/Mt told us that angels ministered to him. (1,13/4.11). This is that 'opportune time' for this is the “your hour and the power of darkness” (22.53b). And God sends his angel now to strengthen Jesus.

Angels play a part in three of the Gospels when Jesus prays/is arrested. In John Jesus asks if the Father should save him from this hour and immediately answers his own question with a firm “No”. He adds, “Father, glorify your name” (12,28). The Father answers but bystanders think it is an angel who has spoken to him. In Matthew at his arrest, Jesus says, “Do you not think that I cannot appeal to my Father and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels” (26,54). Luke stands between Mk's silence, and Mt's potential angelic help, with actual angelic assistance, which does not go as far as Jn's Father's voice which sounds to some like an angel.

Angels as ministers of aid are frequent in the accounts of martyrdom's in Jewish tradition, including in the fiery furnace (Dan 3,39). And when Stephen dies his face appears like that of an angel (Acts 6,15). “This martyrological background offers insight as to how Luke's readers may have understood the presence of the strengthening angel in Jesus' passion i.e., as God's loving response to his servant who was suffering from unjust persecution.” [Brown, “*Death*”, p.188].

The meaning of '*agonia*' is not the same as English 'agony'. The English word means a situation of extreme pain. This is not the case in Greek. Mediterranean society was an agonistic culture, that is, the men were competitive and every encounter was a verbal joust. *Agon* originally was the place of an athletic contest. Its meaning developed to mean the contest itself. And *agonia* was the pain, the tension that an athlete feels just before the contest begins, at which time sweat may well break out over the athlete's body and he is ready for the starting gun. “In such an interpretation, the *peirasmós* or great trial, which Jesus now knowingly will enter, resembles the athletic contest. Gamba compares the strengthening role of the angel to that of a trainer who readies the athlete; the prayer of Jesus is the last minute preparation. Unlike the disciples who sleep, Jesus is now poised at the starting line.” [Brown, “*Death*”, p.189].

The sweat of blood is metaphorical, not literal, and so requires no medical research to explain it. Jesus, now strengthened by the angel, assured of his Father's support, can face the trial, for which the disciples are preparing by dozing. Jesus gets up from prayer, vigorous.

## **The arrest.**

Noteworthy in Luke's account of the arrest is Jesus' deflection of Judas' attempted kiss. As Judas approaches Jesus asks, “Judas, is it with a kiss that you are betraying the Son of Man?” He uses his betrayer's personal name. He may have the devil within him, but he is still a person, responsible for his actions. The disciples ask if they should use their sword (Luke has prepared for this eventuality with the curious discussion about swords as they left the supper -room) and the slave of the High Priest has his ear cut off – which Jesus promptly heals, introducing a motif that will extend throughout the passion-story. Jesus has said, “Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you...” (6,27ff) and he puts his teaching into action.

Jesus complains that they treat him like a bandit when he has been teaching in the Temple day after day. “But this is your hour and the power of darkness”. We hear nothing of the disciples. We are not told that they fled. They simply disappear into silence.

## **Peter's denials.**

We are told Jesus is led away and taken to the High Priest's house but there is no interrogation or trial of any sort at this time. It is when day dawns that questions will be asked. Thus the later rules of the *Mishna* are being observed.

Peter has followed at a distance. "They" who must be the arresting party make a fire in the courtyard and Peter sits among them. A servant-girl, someone else and "another" challenge him. He responds, "Woman, I do not know him"; "Man, I am not"; "Man, I do not know what you are talking about". (There is no curse). At that moment the cock crows. Dramatically we are told, "The Lord turned and looked at Peter". We had no idea the two were so close, as to be within eye-contact. Peter remembers Jesus' words, goes out and weeps bitterly. It is Jesus' look more than the cock-crow that causes Peter's collapse. Jesus continues to care for his erring disciple for whom he has prayed that, after he has tuned back, he will strengthen his brothers.

## **Before the Council.**

Jesus is beaten up, mocked, blindfolded, told to "Prophecy", struck and insulted. The assailants are identified only as "they".

He is brought before a council of elders consisting of chief priests and scribes. They ask, "If you are the Messiah, tell us!" The "if you are..." echoes the challenge of the devil in the temptations - "If you are the Son of God...". Jesus response is enigmatic: "If I tell you you will not believe; and if I question you you will not answer." Then he goes on, "But from now on the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the power of God." They ask a further question, "Are you the Son of God?" Jesus replies, "You say that I am." They take it to be assent and have heard enough. "What further testimony do we need? We have heard it ourselves from his own lips."

That there is a separation between the two titles, 'Messiah' and 'Son of God' implies that each has a meaning different to the other. Messiah is a royal, Davidic title which implies a victorious warrior but which Jesus has redefined in terms of suffering-unto-exaltation. Son of God was also a royal, adoptive title, but was probably not used by Jesus or his disciples during his ministry but was used very early by the young Church (see Brown, "*Death*", p 473ff).

The issue here is only Jesus' identity. In Mk/Mt the issues have been both Jesus' identity and the question of the Temple's destruction/survival. Luke moves all that discussion to the episode in Acts which deals with Stephen's preaching and fate. When Luke is writing he knows of the destruction of Temple and city (Jesus' description in 19, 43-44 when he sees Jerusalem and weeps has the accuracy of hind-

sight). By placing the discussion of the Temple's destruction in his second volume he is able to put the blame on Sadducees and chief priests for the eradication of the Temple as God's punishment for the way they treated not only Jesus but Stephen and Peter and Paul and the other martyrs.

Luke is more positive about the Temple than the other evangelists. It is where he opens his Gospel and concludes it. It remains a positive place for him until it is destroyed.

## **Before Pilate.**

The whole Council bring Jesus to Pilate and make a series of three accusations, or one accusation: “perverting our nation” and two examples of this crime: “forbidding us to pay taxes to the Emperor”, which is a blatant untruth of it is based on the conversation in 20,20-26; and “saying that he himself is the Messiah, a king”. The questions asked in the Council's proceedings were concerned with Jesus' identity and, in particular, religious titles. Now the religious aspects have been dropped in favour of political matters which should concern Pilate. When Pilate shows no interest, “I find no basis for an accusation against this man” - the first time of three that Pilate will declare Jesus innocent, they make a further accusation: “He stirs up the people by teaching throughout all Judea, from Galilee where he began even to this place”.

Pilate's decision for Jesus is based on a single question, “Are you the king of the Jews?” and an enigmatic answer, “You say so”. This shows Pilate's main, perhaps only, concern: Is Jesus a threat to his control by claiming to be a rival ruler? If he is not, Pilate has no interest.

Hearing the reference to Galilee, Pilate asks if Jesus is a Galilean, and sends him to Herod, who is staying in Jerusalem. Thus Jesus fulfils his own prediction that his followers would be “led before kings and governors for the sake of my name” (21,12).

His royal judge is Herod Antipas, son of Herod the Great, and murderer of John the Baptist, ruler of Galilee and Perea; builder of cities, Tiberias on the shores of the Sea of Galilee and Sephoris (destroyed after the rebellion following the death of Herod the Great and rebuilt to be the jewel of Galilee) and creator of fortresses like Macchabeus where John was (probably) killed. He would seek the title 'king' once too often and would be deposed and exiled to Gaul by Caligula in 39CE. He died shortly thereafter. Jesus is warned by Pharisees that Herod intends to kill him and he must move out of his territory. Jesus refers to him as “that fox” (13,31-33), a reference to his rapacious nature rather than cunning.

Herod has wanted to see Jesus for some time (cf Lk 9,9b) but only to see him perform some sign – something Jesus has rejected (11,29-30). The chief priests and scribes have come along and continue their vehement accusations but Jesus is silent. Herod and his soldiers finally join in the mocking. Herod clothes Jesus in a radiant/shiny robe and sends him back. This appears to be a sign that Jesus is innocent, but scholars have a variety of interpretations. Jesus has said nothing but we are told Herod and Pilate, erstwhile enemies became friends that day. Jesus, just by being, reconciles; even someone who has wanted to kill him with someone who will order his death.

Pilate now calls together the chief priests, the leaders and the people (*laos*). The people have a representative role for the false prophet must be rejected by the nation. Luke will show that some people remain on Jesus' side and many more are influenced by his death. Pilate repeats his conclusion that Jesus is innocent and, together with the testimony of Herod, whom Pilate says has also found Jesus innocent, that makes two witnesses/judges declaring for him. Pilate therefore makes his judgement: Jesus is to be flogged (!) and released. Actually, there is no description of Jesus being scourged/flogged in Luke's account, despite this being part of Jesus' final prediction of his suffering and death -18,32-33).

The crowd now demand the release of Barabbas, in prison for insurrection and murder, and repeatedly cry “Crucify him!” against Jesus, shouting down Pilate. He again (third time) declares Jesus innocent. Then he gives in to the wishes of the crowd.

Pilate's repeated declaration of Jesus' innocence might be a means for Luke to show that Jesus was no insurrectionist and Rome need have no fear of revolt from his followers, but the cost of that argument is to show a Roman Prefect, weak before a mob and unable to enforce Roman Law.

Luke makes little of the Barabbas-event, other than the dramatic, underplayed contrast: “He released the man they asked for, the one who had been put in prison for murder, and handed Jesus over as they wished.”

## **Crucifixion.**

“They led him away” - but who is “they”? Because there is no flogging, there are no Roman soldiers. It seems that Pilate hands Jesus over to the leaders of the people who led him away. This is historically very doubtful. However, it dramatically shows that in the contest between Pilate and the Jewish authorities, Pilate has caved in. They leave with the prize.

Simon of Cyrene is seized to assist Jesus. He carries the cross behind Jesus, as a good

disciple must (cf 9,23). Others (“a great number”) also follow, including women who beat their breasts in a customary gesture of remorse/sorrow in the Middle East, and wail (as if he were already dead). Jesus speaks to them, “Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me but weep for yourselves and for your children.” In a lament that recalls his own weeping over the fate of the city he pronounces an enigmatic counsel of despair. The final months of Jerusalem were horrible, as Luke well knows.

Jesus' proverbial closing remark is opaque. “For if they do this when the wood is green, what will happen when it is dry?” First of all, who is “they” who do this? Is it the Romans, the Jewish leaders? Green wood does not burn well, but dry wood blazes rapidly and can be soon out of control. There is therefore a movement from a lesser to a greater. Fitzmyer offers four explanations:

- if the Romans treat me like this, an innocent man, how will they treat the guilty when they do revolt?
- If the Jews treat me like this, who have come to save, how will they be treated for killing me?
- If this is how humans behave before the cup of wickedness is full, what will happen when it overflows?
- If God has not spared Jesus, how much more will an impenitent Judaism learn how serious is divine judgement? [J Fitzmyer, *Gospel of Luke Vol 2*, p.1498-99]

The crucifixion itself, at the place called 'The skull' is stated matter-of-factly. Two criminals accompany Jesus to the place and are crucified, one on each side. We then have another serious textual issue.

“Then Jesus said, 'Father, forgive them for they do not know what they are doing'.” The evidence from ancient manuscripts falls evenly. By the 2<sup>nd</sup> century some copies of Luke had the prayer and others did not. Brown lists four possibilities for the origin of the prayer:

- it was spoken by Jesus and preserved only by Luke; later copyists removed it.
- It was spoken by Jesus but not preserved by Luke, circulating as an independent saying until placed in its present context in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century by a scribe who thought it fitted into Luke's way of thinking. Others copyists knew nothing of it. (This is the history of the story of the woman caught in the act of committing adultery, now found in Jn 8)
- It was not spoken by Jesus but invented by Luke (or a pre-Lukan tradition) as a vocalization of what Jesus was thinking. Others removed it.
- It was not spoken by Jesus but was added by an enlightened copyist. [“*Death*”, p.975].

An argument for its later insertion notes that it interrupts the flow. Omit it and the

story flows well. Contra: Luke is breaking up his source, interrupting Mark's flow dramatically with a prayer for forgiveness for those carrying out these actions, and others. The style and vocabulary are those of Luke; as are attributions of ignorance to Jesus' opponents (Acts 3,17; 13,27) and a very similar sentiment is expressed by Stephen as he is about to die - "Lord, do not hold this sin against them" (Acts 7,60).

Why would such a beautiful prayer be excised by anyone? Perhaps because it proved ineffective. Jerusalem was destroyed in 70CE, as Jesus has predicted several times. This prayer contradicts those earlier prophecies of doom. Perhaps, more ominously, some scribes and others did not favour Jesus forgiving his enemies, the Jews. Hostilities continued between Church and Jewish authorities, and many Christians experienced the Jews as relentless persecutors. A third factor might have been a feeling that Jesus had no right to forgive those who clearly knew exactly what they were doing; and must show genuine repentance before there can be the possibility of forgiveness. John Chrysostom, among many other writers on this topic could conclude, "After you killed Christ...there is no hope left for you, no rectification, no forgiveness, no excuse." (Speech against the Jews, 6.2 – qu Brown, "*Death*", p.980]

"It is ironical that perhaps the most beautiful sentence in the PN should be textually dubious. The sentiment behind it is the essence of responding to hostility in what came to be thought of as a Christian manner. This word of Jesus would surely have been a prime factor leading to Dante's judgement on Luke as 'the scribe of the gentleness of Christ'...Alas, too often not the absence of this prayer from the text, but the failure to incorporate it into one's heart has been the real problem." [Brown, "*Death*", p.980].

Luke has three sets of mockery as Jesus hangs on the cross, though he omits the passers-by (the first group in Mk/Mt). As the people watch, the leaders scoff: "He saved others, let him save himself if he is the Messiah of God, his chosen one," echoing the question of the High Priest concerning Jesus' identity as Messiah/Christ. The soldiers then offer Jesus sour wine and taunt: ""If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself," echoing Pilate's concern for his identity as a political figure. We now hear of the charge posted above Jesus - "This is the King of the Jews".

Luke's delicate touch is revealed in the third taunt and its aftermath. One of the criminals, hanging beside him jeers, "Are you not the Messiah, save yourself and us!" Luke alone has the other criminal speak up for Jesus. He rebukes his fellow malefactor, "Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed have been condemned justly, for we are getting what we deserve for our deeds, but this man has done nothing wrong." How does he know Jesus is innocent? Like Pilate (and Herod) to whom Jesus said nothing, he just does.

He then adds, speaking to Jesus, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your

kingdom.” His audacity is breathtaking. He is the only person in the Gospels to call Jesus by his personal name, without qualification, as a man might call out to a friend. And he gains heaven as a consequence. “Truly (Amen) I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise”. Jesus had taught, “Ask and it will be given” (Lk 11,9)

Jesus' first words in public in his ministry as he pronounced his manifesto were, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to bring release to the captives... to let the oppressed go free.” (Lk. 4,18), his final words to another human being fulfil that prophesy. The themes of innocence and healing/reconciliation/forgiveness are continued.

Brown hears an echo here of the story of Joseph during his imprisonment (as an innocent). He interprets correctly the dreams of the chief butler (to return to Pharaoh's court) and the chief baker (to be hanged on a tree). Joseph asks the butler, “Remember me... when it will be well with you and act mercifully towards me”. A story which is concerned with the ultimate reconciliation of Joseph and his brothers.

Luke quickly moves on, noting the time at noon and darkness coming over the whole land until three o'clock. Then the veil of the temple is torn in two. “Jesus, crying out in a loud voice, said, 'Father, into your hands I commend my spirit'. Having said this, he breathed his last.”

Unlike Mark, Luke does not have Jesus scream but rather he 'cries out'. He does not use Aramaic; he has consistently omitted Mark's Aramaic throughout the Gospel. He transfers both apocalyptic signs, darkness and temple veil, to before Jesus' death. Finally he looks to the Psalter to find Jesus' final words, but Mark's Ps 22,2 is too appalling for Luke and he selects Ps 31,6 (LXX), adding “Father”. Luke has consistently had this word on Jesus' lips, in ministry and Passion. Both psalms deal with the theme of deliverance from hostile enemies but with such a different tone.

The “spirit” is “the living self or life power that goes beyond death. In Jesus' case, however, 'spirit' goes beyond the usual anthropological definitions, for he was conceived by the Spirit that came upon Mary (1,35), and at his baptism the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form (3,22), so that he was full of the Holy Spirit (4,1) and moved about Palestine in the power of the Spirit (4,14). When Jesus 'places over' his spirit to the Father, he is bringing round to its place of origin his life and mission.” [Brown, “*Death*”, p.1068].

Luke, with great artistry has made the crucifixion the centre of a triptych, with three supporting responses prior to the cross and three following. The three preceding are : Simon of Cyrene, an anonymous group who seem neutral and the daughters of Jerusalem; those after are: the centurion, an anonymous group who beat their breasts and those who look on from afar including the women.

The centurion who saw what had taken place glorifies God just as the shepherds, having seen Jesus in the manger went home glorifying God. This has been a consistent response to Jesus revelation of God's power throughout his ministry (5,25-26; 7,16, 13,13; 17,15-by a Samaritan; 18,43). Mark's centurion has acknowledged the dead Jesus to be 'truly the Son of God'; Luke's centurion him as 'innocent', though the translation of '*dikaios*' must include notions of just, righteous, upright as well as innocence.

Why does Luke change Mark's full confession of faith on the lips of a gentile to the milder '*dikaios*'? This was Mark's last chance to have a Gentile profess faith in God's Son (Mark has no resurrection appearance stories but the tradition was already fixed (1Cor 15, 5-8), whereas Luke has a second volume to show how Gentiles (and Roman centurions – see Acts 10,34-48) came to complete faith in Christ. Luke therefore can develop another theological message here. Ps 31, which is on the lips of Jesus as he dies also proclaims, “Let the lying lips be struck dumb which speak insolently of the just one” (v19; see also Wis 2-30. '*Dikaios*' was used in the early Church as a Christological title, developing what is found in the OT (Is 53,11) and Luke will take up the title in Acts 3,14 and 7,52. But this also serves as a summary/conclusion of the theme running through Luke's passion story – Jesus is not guilty of the charges made against him. Thus a passer-by (Simon) before the crucifixion; a criminal hanging alongside Jesus at his dying and a Roman soldier after his death all instantly recognise Jesus and become followers of him. None give him regal/divine titles but serve him through personal attachment. Thus has Jesus become what Simeon prophesied he would be, “A light to enlighten the Gentiles” ((2,32).

The crowds, having observed like the centurion, return striking their breasts. They have also undergone a change from being neutral onlookers to being sympathetic, in mourning, forming a parallel with lamenting daughters but now contrition for the death of an innocent is added to the lamentation. (The gesture is that of the publican in the Temple who goes home justified with God in 18, 9-14).

We now hear of “all his acquaintances” (including the non-fleeing disciples?) with women from Galilee stood at a distance. The women are not named, but Luke has previously identified them (8,1-3). Luke is wholly positive about the women who will gather with the apostles in prayer awaiting the coming of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1,13-14).

Joseph of Arimathea now appears. He is a good and righteous man” - such folk have passed through the Gospel since Zechariah and Elizabeth. We learn that he did not agree with the council's plan and action. He asked for the body from Pilate and buried Jesus in a rock-hewn tomb where no body had been laid. The women from Galilee followed saw the place of the tomb and returned to prepare spices and ointments.”On

the Sabbath they rested according to the commandments”.