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Friday 10 April, 2020

## REFLECTION

The extent to which three powers<sup>1</sup> manoeuvred and jockeyed to get the other to pass a death sentence on Jesus, was tragic and despicable, but not without a touch of hilarity!

The elite Temple Guard arrested Jesus in the dead of night. They took him to the High Priest Caiaphas who together with his father-in-law Annas questioned Jesus until daybreak. Jesus was then taken to the Roman Governor, Pontus Pilate who initially wanted nothing to do with Jesus, ultimately bowed to mob hysteria declaring, *Take Him yourselves and crucify Him. I find Him not guilty!* (John 19:6).

But tucked into this painful narrative is the plan of God being realised.

Jesus asks God to **Forgive** (*His executioners*) *for they do not know what they do!* The soldiers were only following orders, not from their natural authority, but from the crowd!

Jesus offers the repentant thief on the cross, **The Assurance of Salvation** when he asks Jesus to be merciful to him when comes into His Kingdom, and Jesus assures him, *Today you will be with me in Paradise.*

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<sup>1</sup> The Roman Governor (Pontus Pilate), the Temple leadership headed by the Chief Priest and Herod the temporal power.

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It is very poignant, when at noon, darkness fell across the land for three hours, an earthquake jolts the land, and the massive, heavy metal curtain which separated the Holy of Holies from the rest of the Temple is torn with great force from top to bottom, at that very time, a man hanging on the cross for several hours, whose physical body is beaten and broken, summons one last gulp of air to shout so loud, it has been recorded in history, *Father! I entrust my spirit into your hands.*

With that, Jesus' life on earth as a human being ended, the sacrifice of His life was complete, but His Spirit was safe in His Father's care! This is what Jesus meant when at His last Passover meal he said, *When you break bread during your mealtimes, let it remind you of My broken body.*

What an assurance for us, that our Spirit is safe in our Father's care, for those who know Him as Father, and His Son as their Saviour.

Finally, it is God's plan that **the Gospel is open to anyone who believes Jesus was the Son of God**, sent to save us for God's eternal Kingdom. The first *convert* to the Gospel was the Roman centurion overseeing the crucifixion who declared *Surely this man was innocent*, and worshipped God (Luke 23:47)!

It took another 35 years for Temple worship to cease altogether, but on this Friday, the High Priest sadly lost his credibility to confess the sins of his people before God.

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Despite the horror of Jesus' crucifixion, God's plan was on track!

At this time in our nation's history, the horror of an uncontrolled virus has left 7,978 families grieving, and another 65,077 families wondering what the future holds.

You and I are called to reach people for whom joy, hope and meaning of life are sucked out of their lives, but the message of Easter is that death does not have the last word. The empty cross and the empty tomb remind us that through death comes life, rich in experiencing God's presence, rich in living by God's grace, and abundant in God's blessings.

Our challenge is to prayerfully find ways of communicating this message to those who need to hear it, and then let the Holy Spirit do His work.

## **PRAYER**

Father! Each one of us knows what it is to be crushed, and each one of us has grieved at least once up until now.

Teach us how to rebuild our faith in You, that our hope in the future Christ worked to achieve will be real to us. Comfort us with Your presence and Your Word, we pray.

In the Name of Your Son, who suffered shame and ridicule that we might be restored into your eternal fellowship.

**AMEN.**