

***Hinde Street Methodist Church***

*Friday 19th April 2019 – Good Friday Service*

*Rev Peter Cornick*

***It is finished.***

The twentieth century Cistercian monk, Thomas Merton, wrote a poem entitled, 'When in the Soul of the Serene Disciple.' It describes, how, in order to gain everything, to gain God, one has to give away everything. We often hear this phrase and feel we just can't give away everything; our job, our house, our family. Merton, in his poem, concentrates rather on giving away our pretensions about ourselves; the plans and programmes we make; the masks we put on to betray others. When we shed our protective shell, and offer to God who we really are, we gain everything.

Merton describes this state of having given everything away:

*There are no ways,  
No methods to admire,  
Where poverty is no achievement.  
His God lives in his emptiness like an affliction.*

Emptiness; nothing. Being honest before God and others. Few of us will reach this state. Yet it is an exposed place to be, because our securities, our fronts, our titles, are gone. And we like to hide behind our securities, our fronts and titles. No wonder, Merton suggests, God lives in this emptiness, 'like an affliction.' Affliction is uncomfortable.

*It is finished.*

Jesus has avoided titles.

In John, chapter 10, the discourse on the Good Shepherd, A crowd, ask him:

*'How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Messiah, tell us plainly.'*

Jesus replies:

*'I have told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father's name testify to me; ... but you do not believe, because you do not belong to my sheep. My sheep hear my voice. I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. ... The Father and I are one.'*

It's an enigma. Jesus is aware of himself but does not wish to build any security around a title or facade.

This aggravates the crowd; their response is a precursor to the cross:  
*The Jews took up stones again to stone him.*

Jesus was very aware of the ambiguity of this proximity: the Father and I are one. Aware of how it played to his audience. Aware of where it would lead.

They accuse him, as a human being, of making himself God.

Jesus tells them:

*'the Father is in me and I am in the Father.'*  
*Then they tried to arrest him again,*  
*but he escaped from their hands.*

Here, on the cross, there is no escape.

*His God lives in his emptiness like an affliction.*

*It is finished.*

On the cross, Jesus has nothing left. It is – finished.

Paul writes, Jesus:

*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.*

It is finished, is, on the one hand, both human agony and final defiance; it is also emptiness; nothing;

*His God lives in his emptiness like an affliction.*

*It is finished.*

The shedding of title – Messiah; Christ; Son of God; king of the Jews; leaves us observing all that is left ... God.

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