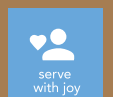


SURPRISED BY GENEROSITY



SESSION 6
THE POWER
OF THE CROSS

DIOCESE
OF EXETER
THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND
IN DEVON



PRAYER

Lord, our hearts are filled with thanksgiving as we reflect on the sacrifice that you made for us on the cross.

ACTIVITY/ICE BREAKER

How does the cross speak to you today?

VIDEO

For session 6: Watch video 6: The power of the cross

READ

Luke 23: 26-43 (NIV) As the soldiers led him away, they seized Simon from Cyrene, who was on his way in from the country, and put the cross on him and made him carry it behind Jesus. A large number of people followed him, including women who mourned and wailed for him. Jesus turned and said to them, “Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me; weep for yourselves and for your children. For the time will come when you will say, ‘Blessed are the childless women, the wombs that never bore and the breasts that never nursed!’ Then “they will say to the mountains, “Fall on us!” and to the hills, “Cover us! ””For if people do these things when the tree is green, what will happen when it is dry?” Two other men, both criminals, were also led out with him to be executed. When they came to the place called the Skull, they crucified him there, along with the criminals—one on his right, the other on his left. Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.” And they divided up his clothes by casting lots. The people stood watching, and the rulers even sneered at him. They said, “He saved others; let him save himself if he is God’s Messiah, the Chosen One.” The soldiers also came up and mocked him. They offered him wine vinegar and said, “If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself.” There was a written notice above him, which read: THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS. One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: “Aren’t you the Messiah? Save yourself and us!” But the other criminal rebuked him. “Don’t you fear God,” he said, “since you are under the same sentence? We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong.” Then he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.” Jesus answered him, “Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise.”

REFLECTIONS

The transformation and meaning and love expressed in the death of Jesus on a Roman cross cannot be summed up in a few words, indeed, it cannot be expressed in all the words in all the world if you ask me. We can only catch glimpses of this universe-changing expression of God's love. On the way to the cross Jesus encounters various people. Pilate finds no fault with him and says so. He meets King Herod who sees Jesus as little more than a miracle performing novelty, but Jesus will not merely perform to satisfy his ego. When he does do miracles, it is because he cares for those in need. He then meets a group of local women who weep over this desperate situation, and the corrupt powers who control their lives. And he shares in their pain. And lastly, he meets a criminal close to death and suffering alongside him. In all of these encounters Jesus acts with courage, restraint and generosity. He never responds with anger or bitterness or attempts to justify himself. He responds to each person with attention and care, even though he is in great pain. His most telling conversation is perhaps with the criminal dying beside him. The man actually offers Jesus encouragement, recognising that this is not the end for this man from Nazareth, he is not merely a carpenter wrongly condemned, but a king with an eternal future, and this criminal can see that and asks for help. And so Jesus turns to him, gives him his full attention and offers him what he offers us all, a new start, a clean slate, and the promise of a whole new life.

QUESTIONS

1. When listening to Dawn's story; what stood out for you?
2. In which way does the passage we read today speak to you?
3. What does this 'promise of a whole new life' look like for you today?
4. How can you be attentive to the people (and their needs) around you?

PRAYER

Lord, our hearts are filled with thanksgiving as we reflect on the sacrifice that you made for us on the cross.