HYMN: On a hill far away (the old rugged cross)

Mark 15

As soon as it was morning, the Chief Priests held a consultation with the leaders and scribes and the whole council. They bound Jesus, led him away, and handed him over to Pilate.

 Pilate asked him ” Are you the King of the Jews”

He answered, “You say so” .

Then the chief priests accused him of many things.

Eventually, Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowds, released Barabbas, and after flogging Jesus, he handed him over to be crucified.

The soldiers clothed him in a purple cloak, twisted thorns into a crown and placed it on his head, all the while taunting him, spitting on him and kneeling in mock homage. After stripping him of the cloak, they put on his own clothes, and led him out to crucify him.

Let us pray

***Lord, you accepted your cross and began your final journey……it had to be done.***

***May we accept the cross that we have to bear, whether it be hard or easy, understanding that our journey cannot be made without it.***

Can you imagine the scene as Jesus sets off on his walk to Calvary. Emerging into the street it must have been a shocking sight that lay before him….hundreds of people waiting to see the man known as Jesus being led to his death, many out of morbid curiosity, some there to stir the people up and cause trouble .

But what a sight the crowd themselves were witness to…….a man staggering against the weight of a cross, covered in blood and bruises, hardly able to walk, weak and no doubt feeling faint and nauseus.

 At least some must have turned away upset and sickened by the evident brutality that He had undergone. Shocked at the cruelty that had evidently been inflicted upon him.

 Many in that crowd would have had wonderful experiences at the hands of Jesus’s, gentle, healing hands. Everyone would have been stunned by the sight of him, whether they were for or against him, and what he stood for.

***The gospel account continues,:-***

It was nine o’clock in the morning when they crucified him.

When it was noon, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon.

Jesus cried out in a loud voice, ”My God, my God. Why have you forsaken me?”

Some of the bystanders thought he was calling for Elijah, whilst one filled a sponge with sour wine and offered it to him, saying “Wait and see whether Elijah will come to take him down…..”

But then Jesus gave a loud cry, and breathed his last.

The curtain in the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom.

Now, when the centurion who stood facing him, saw that in this way he breathed his last, he said,

“ Truly this man ***was*** God’s Son.”

Let us pray

Lord, we cannot imagine what it was like being present as the drama came to its climax. When we let Jesus down by our thoughtless actions, our indifference to the gospel message, remind us of the price that was paid. Help us to see those kindly arms stretched out and painfully nailed to the cross, and give us the strength, the desire, to serve you better, so that His sacrifice may not have been in vain. AMEN

HYMN: Man of sorrows