

Good Friday Day 45

And when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that in this way he breathed his last, he said, "Truly this man was the Son of God." 15.33-41

This is the third revelation of Jesus' sonship in Mark's Gospel. The first came from heaven - the voice of God the Father speaking to Jesus at his baptism: "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased." The second was on the high mountain of the transfiguration. Again it was the voice of the Father, but this time from a cloud which had descended from heaven and addressed to Peter, James and John: "This is my beloved Son; listen to him."



That the third utterance comes from the lips of a Gentile, to whom Jesus' cry from Psalm 2 and the bystanders' reference to Elijah would have made no sense, and in the absence of any visible sign of God's glory in Jesus' mutilated person, makes it all the more remarkable. Doubtless the centurion was awed by the three hour eclipse, but Mark specifically says that it is the way in which Jesus breathes his last which inspires his profession of faith.

Mark adds a further detail: the centurion stood facing Jesus. His words are, therefore, a testimony to what he has witnessed with his eyes. The only evidence he has of who Jesus is is what he has seen of his arrest, trial, flogging, crucifixion and death. Yet, on the basis of that witness alone, he is confident to proclaim Jesus as the Son of God. That the centurion's faith derives from seeing Jesus' agony on the cross underscores the perfidy of the chief priests' and scribes' call for Jesus to "come down now from the cross that we may see and believe." Their blindness is caused by eyes veiled with envy (15.10). His are the open eyes of faith; his insight is from the Holy Spirit.

? What do you see, feel and believe as you face the crucified Christ today?



Crucified Lord Jesus, I thank you for your sacrifice for my sake. When others mock, give me the faith and courage to proclaim your victory over sin and evil, for your name's sake. Amen.