



**Take notice and act**  
**Good Friday**  
**14 April 2017**  
**Revd Jenny Wilkens**  
*John 18:1-19:42*



[http://www.stlukesinthecity.org.nz/sermons\\_pid\\_22.html](http://www.stlukesinthecity.org.nz/sermons_pid_22.html)

Last evening at our Holy Thursday service, I mentioned 2 words which the Mental Health Foundation encourage us to take to heart and put into practice for our well-being. Those 2 words were to **connect** and to **give**, and I tried to show how I believe Jesus on that first Holy Thursday evening, at a time of deep distress and storm-tossed conflict for him, yet chose to **connect** deeply with his disciples in their last meal together, and showed loving care for them in washing their feet. Jesus also chose to **give** himself to his disciples and all who would follow them, proclaiming the bread and wine his body and blood which would be broken and shed on the cross for us and for our salvation.

Today as we come to Good Friday, we have heard the account of the Passion according to John.

I want to use 2 more words from that list of words that promote well-being, because I believe that the work wrought by Christ on the cross for us today was for our ultimate wellbeing, our healing, our wholeness, our shalom.

The first phrase is this: **take notice**, and I want to encourage us to **take notice** of some people whom John highlights in the Passion narrative.

**Notice** Pilate – his contempt for Jesus which means he has him flogged, and lets the Roman soldiers mock him and dress him in purple robe and crown of thorns. Pilate declares he has no case against Jesus, he seems fascinated by him and almost tries to defend him or is he just playing with him, like cat and mouse? Pilate prevaricates, he is afraid, he protests his own innocence, looks to his own self-interest and finally hands Jesus over to be crucified.

**Notice** how John refers to those with whom Pilate engages about Jesus' fate – sometimes John refers to 'the Jews', sometimes to 'the chief priests of the Jews'. The word in Greek Ἰουδαῖοι (*Ioudaioi*), translated as 'Jews' in our NRSV Bible, could refer to (i) members of the tribe of Judah; or (ii) Judeans (contrasting them with Galileans or Samaritans); or (iii) Jews (contrasting them with followers of other religions). Perhaps it would be better to use the word 'The Judeans' (or 'The Judean leaders') to translate Ἰουδαῖοι in John's Passion narrative, rather than 'The Jews'. [see <http://liturgy.co.nz/jews-and-holy-week>]

And we need to acknowledge too that ‘The Judeans’ applies in this context to particular individuals turning against Jesus rather than the whole Jewish people. It is perhaps a reminder to us that insofar as we ourselves turn against Christ, and are complicit with the sin and evil in this world, we too are responsible for his death, not just ‘the Romans’ or ‘the Jews’.

**Notice** those who were also there at the cross: Jesus’ mother Mary, his mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. And also the disciple Jesus loved – traditionally John, but others consider this may be Lazarus.

The other word I want to highlight today is **Act** – and **do what you can**. Jesus’ words in John’s Passion narrative are few but act for him in great power. First Jesus conveys to Pilate the source of his own authority and the limits of Pilate’s authority: ‘you would have no power over me unless it had been given you from above’ (19:11).

Then from the place of such weakness on the cross, we see Jesus’ great act of care and love shown to his mother and to the disciple Jesus loved: “Woman, here is your son” and “Here is your mother” (19:26, 27). What selfless devotion!

Then the words “I am thirsty” (19:26) which show such humanity but also the willingness to drink the cup of suffering to the bitter end.

And finally that great cry “it is finished” (19:30), it is completed and accomplished, all that Jesus had come to do for the redemption of the world, and so Jesus can now give up his spirit and entrust himself to God.

But that is not the end of John’s Passion narrative, for I love the final acts of mercy and love that we see done by the secret disciples Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus. Joseph bravely asking Pilate for permission to take away Jesus’ body for burial, not usually something granted for those who’d been crucified. And then the tender ministrations, showing love and care for Jesus’ body, and laying him in the tomb.

Joseph and Nicodemus give me courage when I think like them I’m so often a secret disciple. Joseph and Nicodemus give me encouragement to do what I can for Jesus, and to act with the love and care they showed their beloved friend.

So as we come to the cross this Good Friday, **take notice** of what Jesus has done for us and for our salvation, and may we **act and do what we can** to show our love and care in return to Jesus, to the body of Christ and to all with whom we share our lives in the world God loves so much. Amen.