CONFRONTATION

JESUS IS NOW ON THE WAY FROM HIS TRIAL BEFORE PILATE. HE IS MOVING TOWARD THE SITE OF HIS EXECUTION & FINALLY HIS GRAVE. THE CROSS IS SLAMMED AGAINST HIS BLEEDING SHOULDERS. HE STUMBLES UNDER THE WEIGHT OF IT -- & THEN A PASSER-BY, SIMON OF CYRENE, IS COMPELLED TO CARRY IT THE REST OF THE WAY FOR HIM. ON THE WAY JESUS IS CONFRONTED BY A LARGE NUMBER OF PEOPLE & WOMEN WHO MOURNED & WAILED FOR HIM. TRADITION HAS JESUS MEETING A WOMAN NAME VERONICA WHO WIPED HIS FACE WITH A KERCHIEF WHICH FOREVER AFTERWARDS HAS BORN THE IMPRINT OF HIS FACE ON IT.... THE POINT IS THAT JESUS STOPPED TO CONFRONT & COMFORT THESE WOMEN WHO WERE WEEPING SO UNCONTROLLABLY.

I THINK ABOUT THAT & MY HEART WELLS UP. WE LIVE IN A VERY CRUEL & HEARTLESS WORLD – A VERY CALLUSED & UNFEELING SOCIETY. IT'S HUMAN NATURE TO TRY TO RUN AWAY & AVOID PAIN & AGONY..... PETER WEPT WHEN THE ROOSTER CROWED & HE REMEMBERED HIS SIN OF DENIAL: I NEVER KNEW THE MAN!. BUT EXCEPT FOR THE WOMEN, THAT WAS ABOUT THE EXTENT OF IT.... NO ONE WEPT FOR JESUS IN THE HIGH PRIEST'S COURTYARD. IN CONTEMPTUOUS SADISM THEY SLAPPED HIM & MOCKED HIM! IN PONTIUS PILATE'S COURTROOM THEY CRIED OUT FOR HIS BLOOD! CERTAINLY THE HARDENED SOLDIERS WERE NOT GOING TO SHED ANY TEARS. THEY WIELDED THEIR WHIPS & POUNDED THE THORNS INTO HIS SKULL. THEY LAUGHED & MOCKED HIM: HAIL, KING OF THE JEWS!.... DOES THAT BOTHER YOU! DOES IT MOVE YOU TO TEARS? OR HAVE WE HEARD IT SO OFTEN THAT YOU & I HAVE BECOME INDIFFERENT? HAVE WE FOUND REASONS & EXCUSES TO IGNORE LENT & JUST LEAP RIGHT TO EASTER?

WHETHER THE LEGEND IS TRUE OR NOT, MY HEART LEAPS OUT TO VERONICA WHO REACHES OUT TO WIPE THE FACE OF THE SUFFERING SAVIOR -- & ONLY LATER ON DISCOVERS THAT OUR LORD'S FACE WAS IMPRINTED ON THAT CLOTH. THE POINT IS THAT JESUS MAKES AN IMPRESSION! AND SO MANY CHRISTIANS TODAY SEEM SO UNIMPRESSED. AND THAT'S THE WHOLE POINT OF WHAT JESUS SAYS TO THESE WOMEN THAT DAY: IF THEY DO THESE THINGS WHEN THE TREE IS GREEN – WHILE HE IS STILL HERE – WHAT WILL HAPPEN WHEN IT IS DRY? -- WHEN ALL WE HAVE IS THE BIBLE'S WORD FOR IT. YES, IT IS STILL POSSIBLE HEAR JESUS' WORDS & BY THE SPIRIT'S POWER HAVE HIM MAKE AN IMPRESSION ON YOU EVEN WHEN THE WOOD IS DRY. BUT IT IS ALSO POSSIBLE JUST TO LOOK THE OTHER WAY.... THIS IS GOD'S SON, AFTER ALL – ONCE WRAPPED IN SWADDLING CLOTHES. THIS IS GOD'S SON – ABOUT TO BE WRAPPED IN GRAVE CLOTHES. THIS IS GOD'S OWN SON ON THE WAY TO THE DEATH THE BELONGS TO US. HAVE WE HARDENED OUR HEARTS? DO WE CARE?... PERHAPS WE ALL CAN LEARN FROM VERONICA'S KERCHIEF – THAT JESUS REALLY DOES MAKE AN IMPRESSION. AT LEAST WE SHOULD!

'AKING, WANTING, FOCUSED SINGLE-MINDEDLY – GRASPING TILL.

VOULD YOUR JESUS HAVE GRASPED SO?

LET CAESAR HAVE WHAT BELONGS TO HIM" JESUS SAID.

ND PILATE KNEW THAT WAS HIS ATTITUDE!

UT PILATE WANTED MORE. IS THAT THE HUMAN PROBLEM? THE NE THAT GOES ALL THE WAY BACK TO THE GARDEN OF EDEN? HAT EXPRESSED ITSELF IN THE INSATIABLE CONQUESTS OF OME? THAT DRIVES TODAY'S ECONOMIES AND MOTIVATES ITS RIME SPREES?

REMEMBER, YOU ARE ONLY HUMAN."

ILATE *IS* REMEMBERED, OF COURSE. IT IS AN IRONY OF HISTORY HAT OF ALL THE MIGHTY ROMANS WHO EVER LIVED, OF ALL THE IGHTY VICTORIES THEY ACHIEVED AND ALL THE GREAT THINGS HEY ACCOMPLISHED, THE ONE ROMAN WHOSE NAME WAS POKEN MORE OFTEN THAN ANY OTHER FOR THE LAST TWENTY ENTURIES WAS NOT A CONQUERING HERO.

.....SUFFERED UNDER PONTIUS PILATE."

ONTIUS PILATE IS REMEMBERED NOT FOR HIS OWN CCOMPLISHMENTS, BUT ONLY BECAUSE OF HIS RELATIONSHIP O JESUS CHRIST. HIS OWN CROWN WAS BUT A FADING ONE, OOMED TO DISAPPEAR. ---- THERE IS A LESSON HERE! LIKE ONTIUS PILATE, OUR FUTURE TOO DEPENDS NOT ON OUR CCOMPLISHMENTS, HOWEVER GREAT OR SIGNIFICANT THEY AY BE – BUT ON OUR RELATIONSHIP TO JESUS CHRIST! "NO ONE OMES TO THE FATHER BUT BY ME," HE SAID.

CROWNS AND THRONES MAY PERISH, KINGDOMS RISE AND WANE; BUT THE HURCH OF JESUS CONSTANT SHALL REMAIN."

ON CHRIST, THE SOLID ROCK, I STAND. ALL OTHER GROUND IS INKING SAND."