

**Friday 10 April 2020 - online worship from Knox Church, Dunedin, New Zealand
preached by Kerry Enright – for Good Friday**

It can be accessed from the Knox Church YouTube Channel

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCYksSjG0If00NeogNIGs7A>.

or from the Knox Church website – <https://knoxchurch.net/>

“Isolation and connection” a sermon based on John chapter 19

I want to speak about isolation and connection, in relation to our experiences at present, and in relation to the gospel we heard read. I imagine that like me you have been keeping your distance from those outside your bubble. I was especially conscious of this when I went to get my flu injection. I opened the door to the medical centre without touching the door handle. I stayed away from others in the waiting room. And the only significant touch came from the needle itself. Then I left as quickly as I could and sat in my car. We are reminded of that isolation – when the phone network goes down for a time, when the groceries we need don't turn up. And more. Family who wonder if we are safe, and we wonder if they are safe. People in hospital unable to be visited. And what happens when someone dies.

Physical isolation. But something else is happening - connection. The phone calls and zoom meetings and text conversations have ramped up. And one of our people has said that she has found herself having deeper conversations with people because without the distractions physical proximity brings, she has been able to attend to the person. There are inventive ways of connecting. At Knox we have our phone tree so that everyone who wishes to have a phone call, can do so. Isolation and connection.

It is here in the story of the death of Jesus. Notice first the self-isolating of the disciples. Judas Iscariot, the most isolated of all, the one who though he ate at the same table as Jesus had not really connected it seemed. Peter, he self-isolated, three times, three times he denied being a disciple of Jesus, and then the cock crowed. In Matthew's gospel there is a poignant sentence – Then all the disciples deserted him and fled. But Jesus too self-isolated, because he was so committed to the way of God, that it seemed that at this final moment he did not need others to come with him. There was a singleness of purpose because he was so captivated by what God wanted for the world. The authorities didn't help him. The disciples fled. And more so, in Mark, Jesus cries out – Eloi, Eloi, sabachthani – my god, my god, why have you forsaken me? The terror of feeling isolated from God. This was Isolation at its most

fearful. We know that about death. We leave this world one at a time. Even if many die with us, we still must make that journey alone. How much more for Jesus, who died so violently.

But there is something else here. From the cross Jesus looks down, and there in front of him is his mother, his aunt, Mary Magdalene and the beloved disciple. Speaking to his mother he says of the beloved disciple - "Woman, here is your son." And to the disciple he says "Here is your mother." Then John records "And from that hour the disciple took her into his own home." How remarkable. At moments before dying, Jesus connects people with each other. With almost his final breath, he speaks of hospitality and care. And so we have this sentence - The disciple took the mother of Jesus into his own home. It's thought that the beloved disciple influenced the writing of the gospel of John and the letters of John, the letters in which we find the words "God is love. After Jesus dies, Joseph of Arimathea carefully removes his body. Then, Nicodemus, the Pharisee who came to Jesus in the dead of night, and who asked how an old man could be born again, he came bringing a mixture of spices. Joseph and Nicodemus wrapped the body with spices in linen cloths. John includes these words, "according to the burial custom of the Jews".

At present, people are not able to perform their usual rituals. But we are seeing, what we see in the gospel, that love is inventive, and there are ways, even in the toughest of times, to treat the dead with respect. Have we not seen that amid isolation, people are finding ways to connect. So the almost last words of Jesus still speak - "Woman here is your son. And here is your mother."

Why is this called good Friday when it is so bad? Because the man who died was good. His life and death incited people to hospitality and care, to love, and to treat those who die with the utmost respect. And don't we sense that when we live that way, this is who we most truly are, people made for connection.

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made known in Jesus, given in grace*



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