

A sermon for Ascensiontide Part 1: Jesus brings humanity home to the Father

**In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.
And the Word was made flesh and made his home among us.**

And he knew the pain of hunger and pain, though he could articulate it only with a scream. And he knew the joy of being tenderly held and fed, though he could articulate it only with a gurgle of pleasure. He sensed the fearful urgency in Mary and Joseph as they made preparations to flee a cruel king.

Many years later he felt the terrible wonder of being possessed by the Spirit of God. He went into the wilderness and knew again what it meant to hunger and thirst and fear. He knew the desire for comfort and wealth, power and status, fame and glory. And he said to the tempter, "away with you".

And he went out into world without a home, armed only with his faith in God and the power of love.

He looked on the fishermen and saw in them a beautiful trust. The same trust he sensed in the haemorrhaging woman who touched his cloak in a crowd.

He looked on the sores of the lepers and the self-inflicted wounds of the man possessed by demons. He saw the desperation of grief in the eye of Jairus; and in the eyes of his friends Mary - and he wept.

He looked into the eyes of the prostitutes and publicans, the tax collectors and sinners, those believed to be possessed, of blind Bartimaeus and Mary of Magdala and the woman caught in adultery; and he saw their pain and their fear, their need to be told that they were loveable and loved, that God loved them, that they might have hope and healing and human company; and he had compassion for them.

And he looked at the need and the desperate hope and the hunger in the eyes of the crowd and he had compassion for them, for they were like sheep without a shepherd.

He looked also into the eyes of the Pharisees and saw in them fear, the fear of contamination, the fear of being less than good in the sight of God. He looked too into the eyes of the rich young man and saw in him the fear of losing everything, of the contamination of poverty.

He saw the incomprehension in the eyes of his friends. He felt deeply the desire just to be left alone.

He saw the desperate grief in the eyes of his mother and of Mary Magdalene; in the eyes of Caiaphas and Pilate the fear of loss of control; in the crowd a fear and rage surging violently from a subconscious place. He saw the bitter regret in the eyes of Peter and of Judas. And he said, 'Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing'.

He felt the agony of pain, the mental pain of hatred and rejection, the fear of death. He knew what it felt to be abandoned by God. And he commended his spirit to his heavenly Father.

He saw the fear and doubt - and the amazement - in the eyes of his friends when he rose again. And he said, 'Peace be with you'.

And after forty days he returned to the bosom of our Father, to the heart of love which is God. And he showed his Father the wounds in his hands and side. And he said, 'here is humanity. It's not always a pretty sight - it's loving and brave and hopeful, it's cruel and heartless, it's fearful and sorrowful, it's beautiful and terrible, troubled and confused. Here is humanity: and I'm bringing it home to you for the salving of its wounds and for the healing of its hurts; for the righting of its wrongs and the transformation of its life by the power of love.'

No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known.

Rob Hall