

It was nine o'clock in the morning when they crucified him. It seems such an arbitrary time for such a terrible thing to happen.

In Epsom at 11am on Friday morning the 19th of March, a husband and wife were stabbed to death in a murder which police say was a family harm incident. It seems such an arbitrary time for such a terrible thing to happen. Another man was also critically wounded and has since been charged, another sent to hospital. At 1pm Janet and I drove past that address and saw the police cars, the tape and the TV cameras. At 6pm it was on the national news.

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At 11pm also on Friday the 19th of March Tom Phillips published a story in the Guardian saying that the most recent daily Covid 19 figures in Brazil, showed that 2798 people had died and 90, 830 people, had contracted the disease. It seems such an arbitrary time for such terrible news to be heard. People are dying as they wait for beds in intensive care. The countries health infrastructure has collapsed. Over 300,000 people have died. A representative of the President said, "Our situation isn't all that critical. Compared to other countries, it's actually quite comfortable."

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At 1:40pm in Riccarton in Christchurch and then at 1:52 pm in Linwood also in Christchurch, a single gunman carried out two consecutive mass shootings. They seem such arbitrary times for such terrible things to happen. 51 people were murdered and 40 others wounded. They were families, mothers and fathers and children, uncles and aunties, cousins and neighbours. They were a community at prayer.

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These events are all in their own way shocking and horrific, as is the gospel reading for this morning. The world is filled with murder, suffering and injustice. Filled with exploitation. The exploitation of not enough. Not enough understanding or patience or control.

Not enough hospital beds, not enough doctors. Not enough integrity or honesty. Not enough care or compassion.

Not enough empathy or humanity, not enough kindness. Not enough love. Not enough.

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Not enough compassion, or generosity.. Not enough tenderness or open heartedness. Not enough humility or selflessness. Not enough decency. Not enough love of God or neighbour.

The thing with this reading from the gospel, is that it is full of suffering, full of all of this not enoughness, full of anguish, pain and horror, abuse, power imbalances and injustice, lack of care, tenderness or honesty, or simple human decency. Full of the horrors of the things I've mentioned this morning.

But it's also full of something else ...

And it's a strange thing to say when we are talking about suffering ... Mark's story is also full of victory. The agonising victory of light over darkness, as Jesus is enthroned and crowned as the suffering King of the Jews.

Here, Mark points in his gospel and says ...

"This is what God is like.

God suffers with us and for us."

...

As others shout Hosanna and wave Palm branches,
scream for the release of Barabbas ...

Those of us who understand ... bow our heads in silent prayer

... saying nothing.

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Amen.