

In these last Gospels of Lent we find ourselves pitched between death and life, between the intention of stoning and crucifying, and the anguished words of Jesus, as he pleads for our hearts to be turned from death to life. And the form of life that is offered to us is a simple one: *believe in me*.

If we are to experience Easter in our depths, we have to see things in that sharp colliding reality: either believe in him, or give ourselves over to death. Because all who call for his crucifixion on Good Friday have given themselves over to death. They are choosing a deathbound world, in which the Gospel of life invites a kind of communal murder. I think great crimes like the Jewish Holocaust give us tremendous insight into Good Friday. In that holocaust a whole nation became implicated in murder; by allowing it to happen, by keeping silence, all hands were stained with the great crime, no-one was innocent except the victims. In the same way, Good Friday is a day of judgment for us all; there are only two places to stand - with him, or against him. If we stand against him, it will be by denying the divine destiny to the children of Eve, damning them to eternity by our indifference and despair. If we stand with him, it will be to insist on the divine meaning of every last one of us, telling the worst of humanity that its future is safe in the hand of God, who holds out the power to become children of God.

So today let us hold in our minds the truth that when we are throwing ourselves on the ground before the Cross of Jesus a week today, there will be thousands in the streets of Lincoln who are taking no notice, who are comparing the prices in the shops and plotting the night-club or the bank holiday trip, indifferent to the tremendous moment by which their fate and ours is decided in time and eternity. Let us echo the words of Jesus:

*For their sake I consecrate myself,
so that they too may be consecrated in truth.*