**Holy Week: Day 4 Wednesday The Mysterious Silence**

From time to time everyone needs a ‘rest day’, a time to pause and refresh body and soul.

It is clear from the Gospels account of the last week of Jesus' life that he also needed a "rest day" and this particular day in Holy Week seems to be the one. It must have felt like the calm before the storm. With the busy events of the previous days now past, Jesus naturally must have needed a day to reflect, rest and converse with God before the intense days and hours to come.

The Gospels do not tell us what Jesus did on Day 4 of his last week. Mark's gospel has one statement:

*"Now the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread were only two days away…”*

*(Mark 14:1)*

So that would be Tuesday, and then:

*"On the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread..." (Mark 14:12)*

would be Thursday from 6 p.m. onwards.

It is doubtful whether Mark would have omitted a day and naturally we would like to know what happened.  Jesus had been very busy during those previous days, raising Lazarus, attending the ceremonial cleansing time, riding into Jerusalem to shouts of Hosanna,

turning over tables in the temple precinct, the public debate and the foreshadowing prophecy, so what happened next? The Gospel story is strangely silent. This raises the question as to whether Jesus had a rest day.

This is the last week and climax of Jesus' life, so the Gospel writers are most diligent in trying to recall and record everything he said and did. Almost every phrase and nuance has been written down and it appears the account of this part of Jesus' life is the most complete; a third of the total biblical record about Jesus centres on his last week.   Other parts of his life are not recorded so diligently, partly because the Gospel writers’ sources are relying on the memories of remaining witnesses, and they are writing many years after Jesus’ death. Yet the events of Holy Week were so intense, so full of high emotion, that their recollections were ‘burned’ into their memory bank. Note also that St John closes his account of Jesus' life by stating:

*"Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written."*

*(John 21:25)*

The gospel writers did not intentionally omit key details of the last week of Jesus' life, so it appears that Jesus had a day of preparation and prayer for the following days and his imminent death.

Often in Anglican worship a service includes antiphonal psalms and prayers, a form of dialogue.  For example, in a psalm the cantor sings or speaks one verse and the choir or congregation respond with the next. This form echoes the principal that God speaks, and humans listen.  Then, humans respond, and God listens.  What if this antiphonal dialogue is rooted in Holy Week?  Maybe Jesus "took a day off" because he was listening to his Father and also listening to see humankinds’ response to what he had done the day before. (Teaching in the temple and on the Mount of Olives.)

Is it possible that Jesus was resting, preparing himself and listening to God and his people?
In his Gospel, John provides little indications as to what may have happened to the missing day, because just before his record of the Passover he wrote:

*"Even after Jesus had done all these miraculous signs in their presence,*

*they still would not believe in him."*  *(John 12:37)*

Almost John is asking:  "Jesus has spoken.  What's your response?"  It is antiphonal!

It is important to listen! Often, we spend more time talking than listening, especially during events like these recent lockdowns when many people have been on their own without the opportunity for conversation. With hardly anyone to talk to it is natural to feel we have to ‘catch up’, so when the opportunity arises to meet, talking takes over. Is it like that when prayers are offered to our Heavenly Father? Prayer can inform, request and express gratitude but it is possible to busily tell God what He already knows, with hardly any opportunity for silence for listening. Should everyone not follow the example set by Jesus and spend more time listening? We should spend twice as much time listening as we do speaking: after all, we have one mouth and two ears!

I suspect this is what Jesus was doing on the missing day, praying and listening in preparation for the coming days.

*Reflection:  "Do I believe in Jesus?  He's performed miracles, spoken his words of life:  do I believe him? Jesus is waiting for me to listen and respond to him now.  How canI listen?"*

 *Prayer:  "Lord Jesus, you have worked miracles.  You have shown yourself to be God.  I believe in you.  I respond to you in faith and I follow you. Help me to listen for when you speak".***Digging Deeper**
Try reading John's gospel account on this "silent day": John 12:37-50