

36. Holy Tuesday: Fear



“The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom then shall I fear?” asks the psalmist with joyful confidence in a psalm set for today (27.1). That confidence is not shared by this anxious line-up of *Night People* (1986) painted by Evelyn Williams. Wide-eyed with what-ifs, they cannot settle or sleep. Their haunted faces stare out unblinkingly. Williams does not say who they are or why they are afraid but perhaps their huge, disturbing eyes are a mirror in which we can see our own fear reflected back, the fear that’s part of our human condition.

In the days before Jesus’ death, it seems everyone in Jerusalem was frightened. The religious authorities plot against Jesus “for they were afraid of the people” (Lk 22.2); Pilate also is keen to appease the crowd (Mk 15.15); the crowd were so threatened by Jesus that they bayed for his blood (Mk 15.14); the disciples shrank from the fear-full authorities (Mk 14.50), fear being hostility’s cradle.

Yet injunctions not to fear come thick and fast in the Bible. Perhaps most poignantly of all, as he prepares them for his death, Jesus urges his disciples not to let their hearts be troubled, nor be afraid (Jn 14.27). Knowing that fear cripples and distorts, he was hoping that love would fill them instead, would drive out their fear (1 Jn 4.18).

Today...

...take our fears, Lord Jesus,
and replace them with love.

Amen