

39. Good Friday: Lament



This small painting by the Oxfordshire artist Nick Mynheer tells three stories...

In the distance (left) hangs a story of self-sacrificial love. Fearful religious authorities, a weak Roman governor and the baying mob of humanity at large have brought Jesus to Calvary. Nailed on a 'tree' between two criminals, he is beaten at last by exhaustion and asphyxiation.

In the distance (right) hangs a story of betrayal and regret. Sick to the stomach at the outcome of his kiss in the garden, Judas has strung himself up in the branches of another tree, alone and longing for oblivion.

In the foreground is set a story of lament. Even before we recognise these women, they move us with their unambiguous solidarity. They are both mothers mourning beloved sons. They each feel 'forsaken' and ask in anguish why God is "so far from my salvation, from the words of my distress" (Psalm 22.1). Their howls of grief and protest are absorbed by each other's bodies as they cling with fierce and loving intensity. This is Mynheer's depiction in paper and oils of Norma Farber's simple poem:

*In Mary's house the mourners gather
Sorrow pierces them like a nail.
Where's Mary herself meanwhile?
Gone to comfort Judas' mother.*

Sin and death have done their worst but already it's clear that Love is stronger.

Today...

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

Amen