



Raquette Lake Chapel

April 7, 2023 – Good Friday

“The Dream of the Rood” – The Story of the Cross

“Each year when we read the story of the crucifixion of Christ, we read it already knowing the end. We know the outcome of what is going on, but that doesn’t make it any less emotionally connecting and spiritually powerful.” [from Celtic Lent by David Cole, The Bible Reading Fellowship, Oxford, 2018]

Good Friday is a hard day for many Christians. Many of us remember attending three-hour noontime services of silence, and where I grew up, the heat was already oppressive on Good Fridays. Bright sun beating down, no refreshing breeze, just unmoving heat watching over us as we recalled the last hours of Jesus’ life.

For Good Friday we look at the Crucifixion from a different perspective. These sections of the 8th century Poem “The Dream of the Rood,” the earliest poem written in what we’d call “English,” describe the Crucifixion of Jesus Christ from the perspective of the “rood” or the cross. The rood speaks about how it was cut down and moved from its root by strong enemies who made it hold criminals on a hill. It gives us a unique description of Jesus we don’t often hear on Good Friday: “a young warrior” who gladly embraces the cross to join in the ultimate battle of life and death for all humanity across eternity, a battle from which he emerges victorious. The poem ends with the rood saying now people honor it far and wide on earth: “I opened the right way of life for men.”

From “The Dream of the Rood”

“It was long past – I still remember it –
That I was cut down at the copse’s end,
Moved from my root. Strong enemies there took me,
Told me to hold aloft their criminals,
Made me a spectacle. Men carried me
Upon their shoulders, set me on a hill,
A host of enemies there fastened me.

“And then I saw the Lord of all mankind
Hasten with eager zeal that He might mount
Upon me. I durst not against God’s word
Bend down or break, when I saw tremble all
The surface of the earth. Although I might
Have struck down all the foes, yet stood I fast.

“Then the young hero (who was God almighty) got
ready, resolute and strong in heart. He climbed onto
the lofty gallows-tree, bold in the sight of many
watching men, when he intended to redeem mankind.
I trembled as the warrior embraced me. But still I
dared not bend down to the earth, fall to the ground,
upright I had to stand.

“Now you may understand, dear warrior,
That I have suffered deeds of wicked men
And grievous sorrows.
Now the time has come
That far and wide on earth men honor me,

And all this great and glorious creation,
And to this beacon offers prayers.
On me the Son of God once suffered;
Therefore now I tower mighty underneath the heavens,
And I may heal all those in awe of me.
Once I became the cruelest of tortures,
Most hateful to all nations, till the time
I opened the right way of life for men.



Prayer Box

Please keep in our prayers healing for Robin, Mark, Gloria, Lucy, Andy, and Joyce; hope for those affected by recent storms; the soul of Fr. John and comfort for Wes and Gail. Lord, hear our prayers!