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FAITH FOCUS - confronted with the love of God that goes deeper than our cruelty

The Archbishop of Canterbury gave this 'Thought for the Day' on Radio 4's Today Programme on Good Friday, the day on which Christians remember the death of Jesus on the cross.

Good morning. For me one of the best and most challenging parts of Canterbury Cathedral is the number of memorials to past Archbishops. There are saints and, to be honest, villains; the brilliant and the dull. Some were heroes, doing the right thing for the right reason; others acted cruelly and brutally, or in T S Eliot's great sentence, put into Becket's mouth in his play *Murder in the Cathedral*, "They were tempted to the greatest treason: doing the right thing for the wrong reason." All had mixed motives and characters.

Good Friday, the day on which Christians remember the death of Jesus on the Cross, challenges all our reasons for everything we do, all the motivations we claim for any action. Good Friday has that healthy and necessary aspect that is found in many faiths, of a time for self-examination.

In the week of the attacks in Belgium - and of recalling the horrors and crimes of the Balkan Civil War, with the conviction of Radovan Karadžić - I am struck by the savagery and bitterness, the utterly perverted reasons, of the attackers and perpetrators, carrying out not right deeds but the most deeply wrong ones that could be imagined, and the contrast with the sacrifice of Jesus. He was the one person in history Christians believe to have had only pure motives for all he did, and for me he sets the standard for both actions and reasons.

The nature of hatred is that it is infectious. Terror wins when it causes others to fear or hate. On Good Friday terror and oppression are met by love, with Jesus praying for the forgiveness of those who caused his death. Christians, considering the Cross, see God crucified because of human cruelty and sin.

The mystery of the immense savagery of human beings, of our desire to use power to harm not heal, is one that confounds all attempts to explain it away. The depth of the grip on us held by lust for power and the desire to dominate others is judged by the Crucifixion. Before it, we are confronted with our wrong reasons and actions.

But I find myself also confronted with the love of God that goes deeper than our cruelty, of God's reaching out to us that goes beyond our pride and power seeking. One of the messages chalked on a Brussels pavement this week was "hope is our resistance". It is compellingly true. Even on this day, even in this week, I find hope because for me at the end of all things God is over all.

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