

## 7<sup>TH</sup> SCRIPTURAL STATION - JESUS TAKES UP HIS CROSS

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(Mt 27 v 31. MK 15 v 20. Jn 19 v 16-18)

### A Carpenter's Tale:

There is a timeless beauty in wood.

In life it is wedded to the earth yet ever reaching for the sky.

It cleanses the very air, fruits in its bounty, houses a world of creatures, gives shade and respite from the pitiless sun.

In death it transforms into objects of utility and ease. Durable, elegant, practical, the record of its life etched deep in the grain.

I grew up surrounded by wood. The old man in his shop, sawing, jointing, carving, staining, transforming great beams into the stuff of life.

I remember well the first day I was entrusted with just such a great timber.

'My boy, this is yours. Make of it what you will and make me proud to have nourished a real craftsman, an apprentice of the fraternity of the forest.'

And so I took this mighty offering and dreamed of all the things it now could be

A chair for ease and rest and rumination. A chair to pull up by the fire and forget the winter chill. A table for the fellowship of family and friends. A table for a feast. A door to welcome by. A door to close against the dark.

A window frame to let the light in. A window frame to gaze upon the world.

A doll to be your companion in the battle of the years. A doll wherein to learn a mother's love, a secret bond no torturer can break. A toy to while away the lonely hours of an only child. A manger for the cattle feeding, a Manger for a new -born refugee.

I dreamed of all the trees of Eden. I saw the taboo tree rummaged by the first man and his wife.

I saw the Tree of Life hidden in full view where Man had missed his mark.

I saw the exile from Eden, the shuddering shutting of the Gates, the way back barred, defended by the flaming swords.

I saw Abram standing at the Oaks of Mamre, Sara laughing at the impossibility of what the angels said.

I saw the mind of Man create things of destruction, a stick to beat a dog.

His infinite capacity for hubris and for harm.

He cleaves the wood and makes a spear.

He splits the atom, makes a bomb. Such is his intense perversity.

And so they gave me again this piece of wood to haul to its destiny and mine. Roughhewn, a festival of splinters, unseasoned, heavy with its recent dying, inert, yet calling for its new shape, its new body to be defined.

So many centuries ago, before this was, before this city dreamed itself a royal seat of kings, another only son moved slow but sure along this hill. His father bore the fire and knife for sacrifice. The son, the promised one, the gift of laughter to his mother's heart, bore the wood on which the sacrifice would burn. And there, upon this ancient mound, heart stopping moment of a father's agony, lay down and was bound for death, all future sacrificed, the Father's broken heart, the Mother's desolation. And there, on Mount Moriah, God spared the Son of Man, restored the promise made so long ago under the star bejewelled and frozen desert sky.

I take up this wood, this crossbeam of the immolation, and walk the self-same hill, Moriah reborn Golgotha. Await the moment of reprieve which will not come. Walk steadily towards the new creation. Walk uncertainly towards my destiny. Walk burdened by the unbearable weight of the world that has long since fallen in the forest of my love. Walk slow, bedraggled by the cruelty of men.

On this bleak hill, so near and yet an agony away, this rough hewn unlovely crossbeam will become wedded to its upright companion and form the crossroads of Man's history and the engine of his demonic cruelty to man.

Out of this conjunction of the fallen world, the dead wood will bear me hence to Hell and back, to shatter its doom dark doors.

From this perverted union of the natural world's cross-purposed frame, a new manger will be carved. The child of God will be reborn the other side of the captive destiny of death and feed the world with the mystery of the House of Bread and cleanse it with the Lamb's Blood – which badged upon the lintel of your hearts will turn away the judgement messenger of disobedient hearts, Death's Angel in full, fearsome and avenging flight.

And so, sweet carpenter, guardian, dreamer, gone before, I take this wood and, by my Passion, return it now to Eden undisguised.