

Monday 11 April 2022
Monday of Holy Week
Worcester

Isaiah 63.1-3a,7-9

‘Who is this that comes from Edom, his garments stained crimson?’

The kingdom of Edom was Israel’s neighbour to the south and east. At the height of Israel’s power, Edom was its vassal, but as Judah grew weaker so Edom became independent.

In the year 587, Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon destroyed Jerusalem and sent the Jewish people into exile, aided and abetted by the Edomites who themselves took control of much of the land of Judah.

And so, in the biblical prophecies of this period, Edom stands as a representative of all the enemies of the people of God.

Isaiah imagines a watchman seeing a mighty warrior striding back to Jerusalem from the city of Bozrah in Edom.

Who is this, he asks, coming from Edom, his garments stained crimson? Who is this in glorious apparel, marching forth in strength?

And the answer comes – It is I, says the Lord. I, who have fought for the cause of righteousness. I, who is mighty to save. I, who has won the day.

And again, the watchman asks – why are you robed in crimson? Why are your garments all red?

The answer comes back again – I have trodden the winepress. I have crushed my foes. I have trampled them in my wrath.

The crimson of the warrior’s garments – covered not in the juice of the grapes, but the blood of his enemies.

It’s a vivid and violent image – a prophecy of God’s total victory and of the utter defeat of his enemies.



Which is why the prophecy continues – I will recount the deeds of the Lord, who redeems his people. By God’s love and pity he lifts them up and becomes their Saviour.

So it’s not surprising that later generations found in Isaiah’s prophecy not just a prediction of the defeat of Edom, but a foretelling of the victory of Jesus over the powers of death and hell.

For example, the book of Revelation describes a warrior-judge, Faithful and True, the Word of God, King of Kings and Lord of Lords, who treads the winepress of the wrath of God, and whose robe is dipped in blood.

This is Jesus Christ who, at his Passion, has trodden the winepress, who has crushed his enemy, who because of his love and pity for us has poured out his own lifeblood to redeem his people.

And this reminds us, of course, of the eucharist, of our *anamnesis* or remembrance of Christ’s passion, holy communion with his body and blood.

Not for nothing do we, when we celebrate this sacrifice in this season of the Passion, clothe ourselves in priestly garments stained crimson, such as the chasuble you have in the picture before you.

As Christ treads the grapes, his blood pours forth from his wounded side, flowing freely and filling up our eucharistic cup, the cup of our salvation.

Here, cries the watchman, here is the Lord, who has lifted us up and redeemed us by his love and pity, who has trodden the winepress, who is mighty to save.

Jesus Christ comes from Edom, his garments stained crimson, in glorious apparel, marching in the greatness of his strength.

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