

# Strange Kingdom:

## Meditations on the cross to transform your day-to-day life

By Ken Costa

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I was drawn to this book because the Cross has been important to me since the age of eight when I first sought to understand the death of Jesus, albeit in childlike thoughts. But to quote Richard Holloway “Watching [the crucifixion]...can break our hearts and that can be the beginning”.<sup>1</sup>

*Strange Kingdom* has its origins in, and is based on, services held at Holy Trinity Brompton. Indeed it reminded me of a Three Hours Good Friday devotion. For many, the cross remains a difficult concept and Ken Costa begins here to unravel its meaning, its power and its implications for the Christian life day-to-day.

The ‘liberating message of the cross’ (p.192) is the foundation and strength of the author’s own faith, which emanates throughout these meditations and is an inspiration in itself. We are invited to make the journey with him into the *Strange Kingdom*. Gently we are asked to explore and expand our own understanding of the cross, take a fresh look at our lives in a social and cultural context and change the living out of our faith.

As the title suggests, the shape of this book is one of meditation and reflection, best read one chapter at a time, each concluding with ‘A Time to Meditate’ and suggestions for Music, Reflection and Prayer. As such it would make an excellent choice for Fellowship or Parish groups especially during Lent.

A primary question and starting point is: ‘What does the cross mean for ordinary Christians, for you and me, in our everyday lives – at work, at home, in our communities?’ (p.xv). In the nine chapters, each focusing on different aspects of the Cross, we are encouraged to walk

The extraordinary ‘outpouring of forgiveness’ (p.35) shows us how to change the world by adopting a ‘Spirit-led worldview’ (p.42).

*Finished*, the last words ‘it is finished’ becoming victory and a bridge to hope. Parallels can be found in our lives when the end of a phase, stage or season concludes and we look forward, moving on to a new day.

*Forgiven*, examining betrayal and true forgiveness towards others and ourselves. We are asked ‘When was the last time you searched your soul, ransacked your memory, or probed your motives?’ (p.83)

*Friendship* explores reconciliation and unity to bring healing and wholeness. This encourages us all to be peacemakers and to have ‘grace-healed eyes that see the potential in others’ (p.97) and play our part in revitalising our world.

*Freedom* calls us to surrender to the will of God and change our pattern of behaviour. As visible Christians in the workplace ‘our greatest witness in the world is to draw strength from this new way of living...even at the coalface of a demanding work environment’ (p.115).

*Forlorn* takes us to the tomb, grief and waiting for the new dawn. Although the steadfast foundation of faith supports us through the pain of loss, as the author says, ‘I know of no mature disciple of Christ who has not experienced the deep frustration of waiting for God to act’ (p.140).

consciously with our faith, reassess our relationships and our being in the world. In summary these are:

*Foolishness*, in contrast to today’s power constructs in the world. What appears to be ‘foolishness in the eyes of modern sensibilities’ (p.18) brings a different perspective to ‘the terrible void at the heart of our culture’ (p.3).

*Forsaken*, confronting Jesus’ suffering and spiritual abandonment.

