

Good Friday

Today is Good Friday. It is the day, above any other day, when we remember the terrible price that Jesus paid in pain and suffering on the cross for our sins. It is a solemn day. It is a serious day. It is a sad day, too.

And yet, we call it "Good" Friday. Because, in addition to the terrible horror of the cross, the crucifixion of Jesus also put into motion the events that lead to His Resurrection and victory. The fact is, without His death, there would be no resurrection.

His pain...His suffering....the horror of the cross...was the route - the passageway - to His great victory

And so, right before we celebrate Resurrection Sunday - a day of new beginnings, great hope, great joy - when the power of death is blown away by the unstoppable power of the God of Life

we experience Good Friday - a day of betrayal, loneliness, torture, brutality, injustice and death.

What an enigma. What a paradox. What a bittersweet irony.

The irony of the cross tells a lot about the human condition we all face.

It is a lesson to us about how to hold on when things are difficult. Every single one of us goes through difficulties. We have times when we think it is all falling apart and lost. There are plenty of days when the power of God is not very obvious at all.

But Good Friday teaches us in a way more eloquently than words, that God has made us to experience glorious victory in spite of our miserable failures and most painful defeats. In the Lord, pain and suffering are never the final word. In the Lord, the cross leads to Resurrection.

The power of God is just as real on bad days as it is on good days. This allows us, in faith and in grace, to hang on for Easter Sunday when we are having experiencing our own Calvary sufferings.

And, the cross tells us a lot about God.

We often complain about His plan. We wonder why God doesn't stop wars and wicked people. Why doesn't He end sickness and evil that produces so much human tragedy?

But the cross tells us that God uses His power another way. He meets man where he is - in man's world. He suffers everything that sin brings to the world with us, even though it may break His heart.

A short poem by William Stidge tells us that the cross us what God is really like:

Good Friday

"I saw God bare his soul one day...where all the earth might see...The stark and naked heart of Him...on lonely Calvary...There was a crimson sky of blood...and overhead a storm...when lightning slit the clouds... and light engulfed His form...But, beyond the storm a rainbow lent... a light to every cloud,...For on that cross mine eyes beheld...the naked soul of God."

Jesus was God's solution to an otherwise unsolvable problem. His perfect justice demanded death to our race because of our sins. To satisfy that demand and yet also satisfy His desire for perfect Mercy, He decided to pay that price for us Himself. And yet, God could not die!!

God became a man, named Jesus, so that He could die - for us.

St. Augustine explained it this way:

He said that God did not have the power to die - and we did not have the power to live. God became a man so that God and man could exchange these powers. In Jesus, God received the ability to die, if He would accept - and humans received the ability to live eternally, in HIM, if we accept. What a deal! Only Divine love and mercy could conceive of such a wondrous exchange.

No other act of God - not even the Incarnation or the Resurrection - show us the incredible love of God for us like His death on that cross. Because, Jesus took OUR place that day. Remember, it was you and I that belonged on that cross- not Jesus! It was not HIS cross He died upon that day - it was ours. It was our punishment - our lashing - our nails - our suffering that He bore!

He was born to die - and we now die in order to be truly born.

His cross lead to Resurrection so that this earthly life of ours can now lead to eternal life.

He became the Son of Man so that we could become sons and daughters of God.

It is Good Friday. O come, let us adore Him, the crucified Son of God.