

Sermon, Good Friday, Year A, April 10, 2020¹

Bless this sad day of holy memory, that we like Jesus, are willing to accept his death as our salvation and celebrate it in joy. AMEN

So, the day has come, the darkest day when the Son of God dies a horrible death to bring salvation to all of human kind. So, the day comes when we are set free to love and serve our God forever. So, the day comes when an innocent man is condemned to cry out that he has been abandoned by his Father. So, the day has come when his death unites us with him forever.

How do we celebrate a day like this when we cannot be together, separated by a virus that seems bent on destroying all of us? One of the ways we celebrate this day is to stay in touch with each other through worshipping at a Good Friday service together. Of course, this virus won't destroy us because we have marvelous workers who are doing their best, sometimes at the sacrifice of their own lives, to contain this pandemic. Most of us are following the guidelines of

¹ Isaiah 52:13–53:12
Psalm 22
Hebrews 10:16–25
John 18:1–19:42

experts to stay home and if we have to go out, we wear masks and stay at least six feet apart. Thank you, Lord, for the brave warriors who are on the front lines in this battle of virus vs humankind.

And is celebrate the right word? I think so because the greatest victory of all time happens two day later when Jesus defeats death and we know we will be with our Savior forever. As Isaiah 53:4–5 says: “Surely, he has borne our infirmities and carried our diseases; yet we accounted him stricken, struck down by God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, and crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the punishment that made us whole, and by his bruises we are healed.” It is good to remember that Jesus knows what we are experiencing because he too experienced it. Ultimately, he poured out himself to death and was numbered with the transgressors. Yet he bore the sins of many, and made intercession for the transgressors, e.g. you and me. Thus, we celebrate this day in deep gratitude for his selfless sacrifice that we may know eternal life in Him.

Our reading from Hebrews tells us that God “will remember their (our) sins and their (our) lawless deeds no more...and we have the

confidence to enter the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus.” In Jesus’ day only the high priest was the only person allowed to enter the sanctuary once a year on Yom Kippur. Now because the temple curtain was split, and Jesus’ body offered in atonement, we have a great high priest over the house of God. Our hearts are cleansed, God has faithfully promised our access to him. Our response is to provoke one another to love and to good deeds, to be encouraging to one another. Do we celebrate Good Friday? All the evidence points toward the great gift given us through this day.

But this does not mean that the day is joyous like Palm Sunday. We are remembering a painful, sorrowful, devastating event that he went through alone, in great agony, feeling deserted by his father and his friends.

What can we give back to him who suffered so much for us? As Jesus gave his mother to the disciple John to care for her for as long as she lives, are there people we can care for who need us because they can no longer care for themselves? As Jesus cared for the robber on one of the crosses saying “today you will be will be in Paradise. As Jesus fed 5,000 people who had no food can we feed

people especially during the COVID19 crises? It's always a question of can we do more in gratitude for the ultimate gift he gave us – eternal life. This day is a day of ultimate contrasts: of great pain and death; of salvation and eternal life.

There is a hymn which articulates this so well and I would like to read it to you, many of you probably know it. Someday soon we will all sing it together. Lord, in your mercy...

“My song is love unknown,
My Savior's love to me;
Love to the loveless shown,
That they might lovely be.
O who am I,
That for my sake
My Lord should take
Frail flesh, and die?
He came from His blest throne
Salvation to bestow;
But men made strange, and none
The longed-for Christ would know:
But oh, my Friend,
My Friend indeed,
Who at my need
His life did spend.

Sometimes they strew His way,
And His sweet praises sing;
Resounding all the day
Hosannas to their King:
Then "Crucify!"
Is all their breath,
And for His death
They thirst and cry.

They rise, and needs will have
My dear Lord made away;
A murderer they save,
The Prince of life they slay.
Yet cheerful He
To suffering goes,
That He His foes
From thence might free.
In life, no house, no home
My Lord on earth might have;
In death, no friendly tomb,
But what a stranger gave.
What may I say?
Heav'n was His home;
But mine the tomb
Wherein He lay.

Here might I stay and sing,
No story so divine;
Never was love, dear King,
Never was grief like Thine.
This is my Friend,
In whose sweet praise
I all my days
Could gladly spend.”

-Samuel Crossman (1624-1683)

AMEN