

GOOD FRIDAY 2020

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit in me.

Mark 15: 1 - 20

Very early in the morning, the chief priests, with the elders, the teachers of the law and the whole Sanhedrin, made their plans. So they bound Jesus, led him away and handed him over to Pilate.

“Are you the king of the Jews?” asked Pilate.

“You have said so,” Jesus replied.

The chief priests accused him of many things. So again Pilate asked him, “Aren’t you going to answer? See how many things they are accusing you of.”

But Jesus still made no reply, and Pilate was amazed.

Now it was the custom at the festival to release a prisoner whom the people requested. A man called Barabbas was in prison with the insurrectionists who had committed murder in the uprising. The crowd came up and asked Pilate to do for them what he usually did.

“Do you want me to release to you the king of the Jews?” asked Pilate, **10** knowing it was out of self-interest that the chief priests had handed Jesus over to him. **11** But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have Pilate release Barabbas instead.

“What shall I do, then, with the one you call the king of the Jews?” Pilate asked them.

“Crucify him!” they shouted.

“Why? What crime has he committed?” asked Pilate.

But they shouted all the louder, “Crucify him!”

Wanting to satisfy the crowd, Pilate released Barabbas to them. He had Jesus flogged, and handed him over to be crucified.

The soldiers led Jesus away into the palace (that is, the Praetorium) and called together the whole company of soldiers. They put a purple robe on him, then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on him. And they began to call out to him, “Hail, king of the Jews!” Again and again they struck him on the head with a staff and spit on him. Falling on their knees, they paid homage to him. And when they had mocked him, they took off the purple robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him out to crucify him.

It Was On The Friday

It was on the Friday that they ended it all.

Of course they didn’t do it one by one.

They weren’t brave enough.

All the stones at the one time or no stones thrown at all.

They did it in crowds...

In crowds where you can feel safe and lose yourself and shout things you would never shout on your own, and do things you would never do if you felt the camera was watching.

It was a crowd in the church that did it,
And a crowd in the civil service that did it,
And a crowd in the street that did it,
And a crowd on the hill that did it.

And he said nothing.

He took the insults, the bruises, the spit on the face, the thongs on the back, the curses in the ears.
He took the sight of his friends turning away, running away.

And he said nothing.

He let them do their worst until their worst was done, as on Friday they ended it all.....

And would have finished themselves had he not cried,
“Father, forgive them...”
And began the revolution.

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Mark 15: 21 - 39

A certain man from Cyrene, Simon, the father of Alexander and Rufus, was passing by on his way in from the country, and they forced him to carry the cross. They brought Jesus to the place called Golgotha (which means “the place of the skull”). Then they offered him wine mixed with myrrh, but he did not take it. And they crucified him. Dividing up his clothes, they cast lots to see what each would get.

It was nine in the morning when they crucified him. The written notice of the charge against him read: the king of the Jews.

They crucified two rebels with him, one on his right and one on his left. Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads and saying: “So! You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, come down from the cross and save yourself!” In the same way the chief priests and the teachers of the law mocked him among themselves. “He saved others,” they said, “but he can’t save himself! Let this Messiah, this king of Israel, come down now from the cross, that we may see and believe.” Those crucified with him also heaped insults on him.

At noon, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. And at three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice, “*Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?*” (which means “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”).

When some of those standing near heard this, they said, “Listen, he’s calling Elijah.”

Someone ran, filled a sponge with wine vinegar, put it on a staff, and offered it to Jesus to drink. “Now leave him alone. Let’s see if Elijah comes to take him down,” he said.

With a loud cry, Jesus breathed his last.

The curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. And when the centurion, who stood there in front of Jesus, saw how he died, he said, “Surely this man was the Son of God!”

MEDITATION

Some years ago I was asked by the 5 year old son of one of my church members “Why do we call Good Friday good when Jesus died so it wasn’t good?”

This was during the interval of a town Christian event and I had about 5 minutes to answer!

The question is a challenge - what is ‘good’ about Good Friday?

It’s a day when the worst of humanity is shown - betrayal of friendship, betrayal of justice, cowardice, self-interest, brutality.....

How can this possibly be called ‘good’?

Some have said it’s due to changes in language over the centuries and it was originally “God’s Friday”.

Perhaps there’s a grain of truth in both versions of the word.

It is God’s Friday because it was the day when he, in Jesus demonstrated a love beyond measure.

He showed power in a way the world could not, did not understand.

There was an understanding and compassion for those who still experience violence, betrayal and persecution today.

It’s Good Friday because we mark it in the light of Resurrection and we know this wasn’t the end - God would have the final word when he raised Jesus from death in the glory of Easter Sunday.

Today we remember an ending and we should feel both grief and shame for what was done that day. Ours was the sin just as much as those who were present that day.

In “The Lion, The Witch, and the Wardrobe” Aslan is quoted as saying “The Queen knows of the deep magic from the dawn of time, but there is a deeper magic from before the dawn of time of which she does not know”

So, we remember the events of Good Friday but this ending is not the whole story - the last word will be God’s word.

Prayer

O King of the Friday, whose limbs were stretched on the cross,

O Lord who did suffer the bruises, the wounds, the loss.

We stretch ourselves beneath the shield of your might; some fruit from the tree of your passion fall on us this day. Amen

Go in peace