

April 2 2021

Good Friday

Luke 23:32-47

Good Friday is the most bizarre and unusual day in the church calendar. Without the joy of Easter it is a dark and depressing day. Nothing is as it should be or appears to be. Everything is turned upside down. Truly chaos rules this day. However we know that God works His best in the midst of chaos. That out of chaos comes a fantastic new reality and creation. A monumental shift in human history.

Zechariah the prophet wrote during the Babylonian Captivity and he wrote some interesting verses about this day. He tells of the mourning in Jerusalem and the death of the one they have pierced. Zech 12-10," And I will pour out a spirit of compassion and supplication on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that, when they look on the one the, whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child and weeps bitterly over him as one weeps over a first born. On that day the mourning in Jerusalem will be as great as the mourning for Hadid rimmon in the plains of Megiddo."

From written accounts of this day we know that the Roman Centurion, Longenious, pierced Our Lord's side with his spear. Upon seeing the blood and water flow from His side, he confesses that Jesus was the Son of God. Only the Virgin Mary could cry bitterly over the death of her first born Son and only child. Her future is very uncertain at the

death of her Son. We sometimes forget the pain and suffering she endured while watching the Our Lord's crucifixion. I can only imagine the flood of thoughts and emotion that must have washed over her as she stood by the cross of her Son. Mary gives us a great example of true discipleship. She stayed with her boy and did not abandon Him as His disciples did.

Zech 12:12, "The land shall mourn." The land did mourn the death of Jesus by shaking violently. There was an earthquake at the moment He breathed His last. Prior to that, the sun hid its rays and it was dark for three hours. Zechariah goes on to write that the houses of David, Nathan and Levi would mourn His death. It seems only fitting that His earthly families would mourn Him. The houses of Nathan and Levi represent the royal and priestly families that Jesus descended from. Both sides of His earthly families would mourn His death.

Within the realm of human possibilities, Our Lord's death should never had happened. Pilate and Herod both declared Jesus innocent three times. These declarations appear in Luke 23: 4, 14, 22. The professions of Jesus's innocence continued even on Golgotha. The criminal on His right declared Him undeserving of His sentence in verse 41. The Roman Centurion declares Him righteous in verse 48. Even the temple mourns Our Lord's death when the curtain was rent in two.

In spite of recognizing Jesus's innocence, Pilate still condemns Him to death. There is no evidence to support a verdict of crucifixion. So what is really going on here? There seems to be a hidden powerful force directing the actors in this drama. Well there is. God seems to be at work here in spite of our best human efforts. His Son must die in order

to bring salvation to humanity. Even in spite of our best efforts to see human justice take place and save the life of Jesus of Nazareth.

Things get stranger still as the day moves forward. We have just witnessed how God's justice is very different from our understanding of it. God's justice does not seek punishment to ensure peace through violence and the abuse of power. As the Jews and Romans have come to understand it. The Jews were willing to sacrifice one so they could keep their power in Roman Palestine. The cross which was the Roman symbol of justice becomes the ultimate paradox. It becomes divine power displayed through weakness. It will become justice achieved through an innocent victims willingness to suffer, so that through His death new life could illumine our dark world. This was a powerful example that was set for us today. Modeled by the Messiah and the great teacher Jesus Christ. Mind you it requires a unique individual to internalize this and to live according to it. This is the challenge of our life with Christ. It requires a shift in our thinking from the earthly concepts of justice to God's concepts of it. We are being called to act according to our divine nature. Trust in God's grace and love to help us act accordingly. Pastor D