

Good Friday April 14, 2017

The Cross: Where Hope and Fear Meet

Good Friday is a statutory in Canada where many businesses, schools, and libraries are closed. It is one of the oldest and holiest days of the Christian year. Today we stop doing what we are doing and listen to the Passion story of Jesus as he is arrested, tried, flogged, and crucified. Good Friday is a day many people receive this day as a day off from work without knowing why or not wanting to acknowledge that this is the day we remember Jesus' death on the cross for our sake.

Let us look at this cross and Jesus who was in pain with the nails hammered into his wrists and ankles. What do we witness? A man bleeding from his head, wrists, back, feet, side; a man who is growing weak with each passing hour; a man ignoring the comments from the people below him; a man who speaks to the sky above and ask "My God, why have you forsaken me." How different these words are to what he said in the Garden, praying just a few short hours before. Your will be done, Father. Praying in the garden, he was not in physical pain, he was spiritually one with the Father and acknowledging his purpose. On the cross, he was in agony and pain. In the garden, he pleaded with God—if you could pass this on to someone else. But on the cross it was too late, Jesus was dying, his breathing was slowly and labouring—it became a lot of work to inhale and exhale.

He had spoken from the cross to his mother, the thieves beside him and yet he knew his time had come. There was no option now- he would die. People who loved him were at the foot of the cross—men and women; not those who had traveled with him for the last 3 years out of fear. But those who were there loved him for they knew that Jesus was doing what the Father had planned for him to do, not for the sake of God's need of redemption- but to enable forgiveness of sins to be given by God's grace.

At the cross, Jesus dies. All the hopes and fears of who he was and what a messiah was supposed to do were seemed to be lost. But were these lost when Jesus breathed his last? When the curtain was torn in two did those in the synagogue become frightened, when the sky grew dark even at midday was there fear amongst those who had watched the "king of the Jews" die? All hope was gone or so it seemed; fear of what would happen next seemed to blanket the land. Yet practical matters had to take place- Jesus' body had to be buried and it was done in the traditional manner. Two men who had secretly believed Jesu was the Son of

God claimed his body. Loved ones help to wash the body, cover it in linens and to lay it down to rest in the new tomb. Then the tomb was sealed. All hope was lost. Yet fear remained. Fear not only by the disciples who had not seen any of this, but fear of what might occur next. After all, Jesus claimed he was the messiah. The next day the chief priests and the Pharisees went to Pilate. They told him that they remembered that while Jesus was alive that he had said, "After 3 days I will rise again." They wanted Pilate to order the tomb to be made secure until the third day. This is so that the disciples would not be able to steal the body and tell people he had been raised from death. Pilate agreed to this and so a guard was posted and they sealed the stone.

All hope was gone and there was fear. But thanks be to God that there is no reason to fear because the cross of Jesus Christ is a symbol of hope beyond this life. The cross of Jesus is where we may find glory. We glory in the cross of Christ for it is by the cross that Jesus has redeemed the world. It is at the cross where hope and fear meet. Where hope has dominion beyond our everyday existence and leads us to eternal life is at the cross. But on this Good Friday we pray to our Saviour Jesus, who by the cross and His redeeming love that we may renew our faith and have hope. For in Jesus there is hope eternal. We need not fear that his death and burial was his final action. For we have faith and hope that he fulfilled the promise he made when he said, "I will rise again."

The cross is where hope and fear meet. But what do you see at this cross? Jesus buried forevermore or hope of the resurrection and the gift and promise of new life? This is the message of Good Friday—wait watch pray and anticipate Christ to renew your faith and renew your hope. Amen.