

GF April 2, 2021

Crucified for Us

Good Friday is a statutory holiday in Canada but for many people in our multi cultural multi faith country the significance of this holy day is lost. During Holy Week Christians gather to remember the One who was put on the cross for the sake of all people. But he simply wasn't just 'put on' there; he was beaten, whipped, mocked, spat upon, and humiliated. Then with nails driven into his hands and feet he was lifted up high on the hill called Calvary where he overlooked the city and its people. And everyone in the city of Jerusalem would also see this man, condemned to death along with two others. But why?

As believing Christians, it is because Jesus being God's Son was fulfilling his life's purpose to be the bridge of love between God and his creation. What separated us from God was the sin that began when the first people disobeyed God and caused the break between what God had made and his creation. So Jesus was sent to the world to be the bridge, the mediator and the way in which God could renew his relationship with all his creation.

But why crucifixion? This was the means by which people who had sinned against the state or were convicted of a crime and were sentenced to die. It was the form of capital punishment which had been used in different areas but banned in others. But in Jerusalem at that time, this was the way those condemned and convicted of crimes were killed. By lifting those condemned to die high on wooden beams, they were seen by all and this was to be a deterrent for others to live according to the established and acceptable.

Yet Pontius Pilate did not want to do what the crowd shouted at him to do. Pilate rejected Jesus' own confession of who He was. He had asked, "Are you the King of the Jews?" Jesus said, "It is as you say". But Pilate took it no further. He also rejected evidence against him and found that Jesus was innocent finding that He had committed no crime. Pilate realized that the only reason Jesus was on trial was the envy and hatred of the religious leaders whom he asked, "what evil has He done?" He knew the truth but rejected it. He gave in to pressure of the crowd. He knew that if he did nothing, a riot was pending. Pilate was compelled to sentence an innocent man to death because of the crowd. He feared the wrath of the crowd rather than fearing God. He knew the implications of what he had done. He had condemned an innocent man to death. Pilate "washed his hands before the crowd, saying, "I am innocent of this man's blood, ...and then said, see to it yourselves." He then proclaimed the guilt of Jesus' death on the crowd.

Today we remember the story of Jesus' arrest, trial, and his walk to Calvary's hill. We might also wonder why do we get this Good Friday off of regular routines? What does it mean for us? Greeting card companies, flower greenhouses and gift guides do not express anything about Good Friday because it would be a tough sell to even invite others to share on this holy day filled with grief and wonder. But we have to remember that we do not leave Jesus on the cross for he died and was taken down and given a traditional Jewish burial – washed, wrapped

and prepared for burial. His body was entombed which was also the way people in that area were buried. But what does Jesus' death mean if this is where we leave him? Nothing.

Jesus was crucified because God said he wanted all people to be in relationship with him. But not everyone wants this—even to day. Maybe people hear the story of God's unconditional love for them, as well as the story of Christ's death and promise of hope. But they do not want to respond to what God has done. The question of what's in it for me is asked over again—why should I care that Jesus died?

Why? Because he died for you- for me- for all people. So that we might be forgiven and grow in relationship with the One who made us. Jesus did not want to die; he even asked God to stop everything- but he did die and through his death we have been offered the gift hope and promise of eternal life. Had he not died? We would still be looking for the One who was to save us. Yet after 2000 years- Jesus' story is still being told!

Jesus was crucified for us = so that we might live eternally. This is why today is Good Friday. A day to remember what Christ did for us. Are we willing to listen, learn, pray and wonder about how much God really loves us? There is no doubt because Christ's story is still needing to be shared so that others will know who He is and can be in their lives.

Jesus was crucified for us. How does this cause you to feel and how do you respond? With trust, faith and hope we live; let us rejoice in this even as we remember the day Christ died for us. Amen.