

**GOOD FRIDAY, APRIL 3, 2026      “Grounded, Growing and Faithful- Until Death?”**

This is Good Friday-- only a few days ago we shouted and sang Hosanna! as we remembered that day when Jesus was feted with palm branches, and smiles, and cries of hope for what he was going to do. After all, Jesus was the promised Messiah and as he rode the borrowed donkey into the city of Jerusalem the people had such high hope for him as the Son of Man, the Son of God, and the promised one.

Yet only a few days later Jesus walked the road to the cross-- known as the Via Dolorosa (the way of Suffering). It is a narrow, stone covered street a narrow road which accommodated those condemned to die, their crosses, the soldiers that accompanied the, and the mobs who wanted to watch and be somewhat entertained by what was to happen.

But what took place in the hours before this walk to the cross?

About 14 hours before, Jesus shared the Last Supper with his disciples in the Upper Room. After which, he went to the Garden to pray asking the disciples to keep watch. He is then arrested having been betrayed by Judas. He is lead to stand trial before Pilate.

Jesus is physically beaten, battered and bleeding. He is in terrible condition which Isaiah the prophet stated that people who not look upon him. The weapons which instilled pain- clubs, fists, and thorns have done their work. Emotionally he has suffered betrayal by one disciple, denial by another, and left alone. Spiritually the agony of it all has increased His suffering. And the trial is now over- Pilate has declared that he would die on a cross. And he is now preparing himself for the walk down the road to Calvary.

Jesus is suffering and we must realize that this is a voluntary sacrifice. IN John 10: 17-18 Jesus said, “For this reason, the Father Loves ME, because I lay down My life so that I may take it again. No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on my own initiative.”

Right from the beginning Jesus knew his life’s purpose- to teach, heal, love, forgive; and to die. He also knew that God’s plan for redemption for all people would be to rise to new life. Yet as Jesus walks, he stumbles and his body is unable to carry the cross. A Roman soldiers calls upon Simon from Cyrene to serve and help him. Simon was forced to carry the cross and expedites the walk to the cross. He would have been embarrassed to be seen in this situation and who was this man who was sentenced to death?

And as Jesus walked the way to the cross there were many others there- women whom Jesus honoured and cherished. And now they are crying for him. And what does he do? He stops and speaks: “Stop weeping for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children...” Jesus wants them to believe and have faith that he is going to die, but for them. They needed to understand that

he is suffering, in order to rescue them and the entire world from ever needing to face God's judgment. He is suffering punishment so that they and we will never have to suffer it. Jesus is still loving, warning and caring for others in the midst of pain as he gets closer to Golgotha.

We really have no way of fully understanding the depth of Jesus' suffering- for us. Yet here Jesus was listening to the women cry, hearing the shouts of the crowd, and staring off up to the hill that surrounded this narrow street. A place known to be the place for convicted criminals of all types to die a public death.

What is growing in these moments? The anticipation of what will happen when this man is put on the cross. Jesus was 'born to die that man might live' according to a favourite Christmas hymn. Yet when we sing this song about his birth we might have mixed emotions when we sit together remembering his actual death.

Jesus is nailed to a cross and lifted up for everyone to see.-- just like Moses lifted up the bronze serpent for people to be healed. Yet how can Jesus bring healing as he is in agony and pain and dying. The sky grows dark when it should have been the brightest part of the day. This is because the messiah is now engulfed in sinfulness. And all creation groans-- earth quakes, rocks split, the Spirit moves and causes the veil which separates the people from the Holy of Holies, to rip in the temple and uncertainty of what is to occur happens.

Jesus cries out, "My God, My God why have you forsaken me?" He is rejected by people and he is separated from His Father. He is suspended between heaven and earth and yet rejected by both. But Jesus also knows that his death was his life's purpose--to live to die be rejected by all alone.

Yet there is something about Jesus' death that leaves us wondering about our own life and the lives of the ones we love. Jesus died, in order that we would live. Many people in our world cannot face of loved ones because they are uncertain of what really happens. Our society doesn't like to talk about natural death-- yet when there are murders it is headlines.

Jesus' death was neither- natural or murder-- it was him being punished not for something he did-- but because of sin in the world. Jesus death was the only way to save people and this is why we are here today on this GOOD FRIDAY. To remember, to mourn and to offer thanks to God for His gift of Jesus. We need only to believe in the One who is on the cross for our sake.

Jesus died. He was buried according to tradition and customs of the Jewish faith in a tomb that was borrowed. People wept and a guard was placed outside. People mourned and grief overtook his closest disciples and friends. We too are asked to remember and mourn-- that in all the good God did, it came to Him sacrificing his Son to redeem and save us. This is what grounds

us in faith, challenges us to grow in understanding and calls us to renewed hope and faith. This is our faith. So we wait, mourn, remember because we believe in God's gift to us all as the Saviour of the world. And we wait in hope and anticipation of God's promise to us. Thanks be to God.

#### PRAYER

As Jesus was placed in the tomb after death, we remember all that was done- you said, "It is finished". And now we wait knowing the story does not end there. But our memory is triggered anew to have faith. Hear our prayers O God and ground us and enable us to grow in our knowledge of Jesus our Saviour. Amen.