

## Reflection for Good Friday, April 15, 2022

### **"24 Hours that Changed the World"**

*Because his witness to love was threatening, those exercising power sought to silence Jesus. He suffered abandonment and betrayal, state-sanctioned torture and execution. He was crucified. In Jesus' life, teaching, and self-offering, God empowers us to live in love. In Jesus' crucifixion, God bears the sin, grief, and suffering of the world. (Song of Faith)*

May the peace of the Crucified Lord be always with you.

Let us pray:

*Creator, the weight of Good Friday is upon us. We share in your grief as the body of your beloved Son is battered, bruised, and buried in the tomb. Not long ago, we shared the joy of Christmas, your gift to us in his birth. Just days ago, we recognized Jesus as our Lord and Saviour as he entered Jerusalem. Today, we mourn with you, Loving Parent, for the death of the physical gift, Jesus of Nazareth, who is now Christ our Lord. Amen.*

Adam Hamilton offers this compelling summary of Jesus's ministry: "Jesus is believed to have died at the age of 33 after a life of approximately 12,000 days. The Gospel writers devoted most of their work to just 1,100 or so of those days, the last 3 years of his life; and their primary interest was in one particular day—the day he was crucified. They believed this 24-hour period changed the world, and each of the Gospels drives toward it."

Beginning Thursday evening after sunset and lasting on through Friday, Jesus would eat the Last Supper with his disciples; pray in the garden of Gethsemane; be betrayed and deserted by his friends; be convicted of blasphemy by the religious authorities; be tried and sentenced for insurrection by Pontius Pilate; be tortured by Roman soldiers; and undergo crucifixion, death, and burial. When the apostle Paul summarized the gospel for the Corinthian Christians, he did so with these words: "I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and him crucified" (1 Corinthians 2:2). The suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ represent the pinnacle of the gospel and the completion of God's saving work through Jesus.

One of my favourite authors, Brian McLaren, author, activist, and theologian, invites his us to join in the spiritual journey of Good Friday to Easter Sunday, the story of the victory of seemingly powerless love over loveless power: *"Let's imagine ourselves with the disciples just before three o'clock on this Friday afternoon. A few of us have come together to talk about what has happened over the last twenty-four hours."*

Recognition of worth. People hear the news, "God's chosen one is close." They spread clothes and branches before Jesus and his friends. Recognition of worth. The shout goes up, "God's holy one is here; God's realm with come." Onlookers spread clothes and branches before Jesus and his friends. Recognition of worth for God's chosen one. Whose worth do we recognize today? Recognition, but then abandonment. Jesus is rejected by the chief priests and teachers

of the law, rejected by the powerful ones and the authority figures. Why was Jesus rejected by them? Whom do we reject? Rejected by one of his own disciples, Judas. Betrayed for a price. How could a close friend be a betrayer? Who is betrayed in the world today? Rejected by this most trusted disciple, Peter. Peter said, "I do not know Jesus, the one you are talking about." Fear that he would be arrested and killed caused Peter to deny he knew Jesus. How could the one Jesus chose to be a leader be the one who denied him? Where does our fear hold us back? Rejected by a politically motivated crowd who cried out, "Crucify him. Crucify him."

Abandoned, Jesus was abandoned, cruelly abandoned. Who is abandoned in the world today?

In the ignominious death of Jesus, we see God's suffering love. The cross is the test case for God's presence in all human experience. It is God's signature on the totality of human experience. Herein lies the paradoxical truth of Christianity. Languishing in a Nazi prison cell awaiting execution, Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote: *"It is good to learn early on that suffering and God are no contradiction, but much more a necessary unity; for me the idea that God himself suffered was always one of the most convincing teachings of Christianity. I think that God is closer to suffering than to happiness, and to find God in this manner gives peace and rest, and a strong and courageous heart. God lets himself be pushed out of the world onto the cross; God is impotent and weak in the world yet specifically and only so that he is with us and helps us."*

There is no easy rhyme or reason to our being and destiny in this world. Life is cruciform (cross-centered); and the important thing is that our being is faithful as it is embodied in life together. The deepest meaning we can derive from Good Friday is that, in some profound sense, God bears and shares our pain and suffering.

*We do not live to ourselves, and we do not die to ourselves. If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord; so then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's. For this this end Christ died and lived again, so that we might be Lord of both the dead and the living. (Romans 14:7-9)*

May it be so. Thanks be to God. Amen.

*Bill Cantelon*