

Meditation for Good Friday
Friday, March 29, 2024

Text: Psalm 22; John 18:1 – 19:42

I speak to you in the name of the one true God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

We have listened to and reflected upon the solemn collects. We have heard the story of the Passion of our Lord according to St. John. The events we have experienced and will yet experience today speak for themselves, so this afternoon, I'm simply going to offer short reflection.

This week as I have been preparing my thoughts about the week, the fresh perspective that I see is that the events of Holy Week and Easter defy expectations and they take us to places where we either don't want to be or didn't expect to end up. Good Friday is certainly one of those places. Good Friday takes us out of our comfort zone to a place that we don't want to go. It makes us confront the human reality of pain, suffering, tragedy, and loss.

Each and every one of us has experienced suffering, pain, tragedy, and loss, whether in our past or right now. It is inevitable for all of us and none of us can escape it, and to wonder why it can't be stopped is futile, because it cannot. Good Friday makes pain and suffering real.

But Good Friday defies our expectations. It's not one of us hanging on a Cross, it's Jesus. God-incarnate. How strange! Gods aren't supposed to be made to suffer. Deities aren't supposed to be nailed helplessly to crosses. God is supposed to be the one who saves *us*! What's he doing nailed to a cross? But Good Friday defies our expectations. God's love for his human creation here on earth was so great that he let him self endure the worst things that a human experience. Humans of that time expected their deities to be remote beings, removed from normal human experiences, but Jesus defied expectation. And even more importantly, he walked alongside us humans in our pain and suffering to experience what we go through.

We often can't explain where our suffering comes from, or why, or why bad things happen to good people, or why disaster strikes, or why people do evil things to other people, when bridges collapse or police officers are killed, but these things do happen. They always have, and they always will. Tragedy, loss, disaster, and pain will always befall us. But, Psalm 22 reassures us in verse 27 that God is indeed faithful, that "kingship belongs to the Lord; he rules over the nations." In the end, all power belongs to God. The suffering that we endure today will be met with victory tomorrow. But while that suffering is still part of our present reality, Good Friday reminds us that Christ's passion and death are testimonies of God's presence, even in the midst of deep sorrow; and whenever we feel like all has been lost, this moment reassures us that even from the Cross God never loses his power.