

THE 5TH GOSPEL - GOOD FRIDAY MATTHEW 27:11-26; ISAIAH 53

Though the day is known as Good Friday, **you never hear anyone say**, “Happy Good Friday”. It’s a day when Christians all over the world reflect on what happened to Jesus; that He was nailed to a cross and was crucified. More than that, He was crucified because of us. **It is you and I who sent Him there**. So, there is no levity of heart. And **if you are able to get your head and heart back to that day**, there was no known Easter Sunday on that first “Good Friday”. It was bleak. It was without hope. It was devastating.

Let’s open with singing or saying our Worship song: Lamb of God:

¹ Your only Son no sin to hide, but You have sent Him from Your side.

To walk upon this guilty sod, and to become the Lamb of God.

² Your gift of love they crucified; they laughed and scorned Him as He died.

The humble King they named a fraud and sacrificed the Lamb of God.

Ch Oh Lamb of God, Sweet Lamb of God, I love the Holy Lamb of God

Oh wash me in His precious Blood, My Jesus Christ the Lamb of God.

³ I was so lost I should have died, but You have brought me to Your side,

To be led by Your staff and rod and to be called a lamb of God.

Ch Oh Lamb of God, Sweet Lamb of God, I love the Holy Lamb of God.

Oh wash me in His precious blood, my Jesus Christ the Lamb of God.

Oh wash me in Your precious blood, my Jesus Christ the Lamb of God.

The previous night had been indelibly inscribed into the disciples’ memories. Jesus had washed their feet, each of them. That must have taken some time. It would have been inconceivable that the Lord—God—would do that. But He did. And at the Passover supper Jesus said that He had longed for that occasion. It was the last time He would sup with them until they did it again in the kingdom of heaven. But a mood that would have already been apprehensive got way more tense when He said that one of them would betray Him. Though He had said it before in more general terms, on that Thursday night it took real root. They subsequently ate the Passover meal, but even this was not the same; when Jesus took the bread, He didn’t just bless it. He broke it and said, “This is My body—for you”. Then He took the wine and said, “This is the new covenant in My blood shed for the forgiveness of sins. Do this in remembrance of Me.”

That was riveting. But that was just the beginning. Judas, with Jesus’ full awareness, went off to betray Jesus. The remaining disciples went to the Mount of Olives after singing some hymns. Jesus separated Himself a bit from Peter and John and James and prayed so intensely that He sweated drops of blood—a real body response that’s been witnessed in others in times of enormous duress. It’s not a figure of speech. **He asked God the Father, if it was possible, to take this cup from Him—“but not My will; rather Your will be done.** And then things moved in rapid action as maybe as many as 200 soldiers, temple guards and religious leaders came and arrested Him. I want to stress, on top of the Mount of Olives, they would have been very visible

coming up the mountain. They came carrying torches. They couldn't sneak up on Him. Jesus wasn't running away in fear, though He had plenty of time to get away had He chosen to do so.

Then, **you know the incidents from there**; the mockery of trials—plural—before the Sanhedrin with the high priest and the false witnesses. A trial at night in itself was illegal. Add to that the trumped up charge of blasphemy when Jesus said, in response to the question from the chief priest that He was—“as you say”—the Son of God. He never said it Himself.

The sham continued. He was taken to Pilate to be tried, but Pilate could find no basis for any charge against Him. When Pilate discovered Jesus was from Galilee he sent Him to Herod who dressed Him up and mocked Him because He wouldn't do any miraculous signs for him. Herod sent Jesus back to Pilate and more ludicrous stuff. Let's zero in on Jesus before Pilate: No basis for any charge. He repeated that three times.

*“Meanwhile, Jesus stood before the governor and the governor asked Him, “Are you the king of the Jews?” “Yes, it is as you say,” Jesus replied. When He was accused by the chief priests and the elders, He gave no answer. Then Pilate asked Him, “Don't You hear the testimony they are bringing against You?” But Jesus made no reply, not even to a single charge—to the great amazement of the governor. Now it was the governor's custom at the Feast to release a prisoner chosen by the crowd. At that time they had a notorious prisoner, called Barabbas. So when the crowd had gathered, Pilate asked them, “Which one do you want me to release to you: Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ?” For he knew it was out of envy that they had handed Jesus over to him. While Pilate was sitting on the judge's seat, his wife sent him this message: “Don't have anything to do with that innocent man, for I have suffered a great deal today in a dream because of Him.” But the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowd to ask for Barabbas and have Jesus executed. “Which of the 2 do you want me to release to you?” asked the governor. “Barabbas,” they answered. “**What shall I do, then, with Jesus who is called Christ?**” Pilate asked. **They all answered, “Crucify Him!”** “Why? What crime has He committed?” asked Pilate. But they shouted all the louder, “Crucify Him!” When Pilate saw that he was getting nowhere, but that instead an uproar was starting, he took water and washed his hands in front of the crowd. “I am innocent of this man's blood,” he said. “It is your responsibility!” All the people answered, “**Let His blood be on us and on our children!**” Then he released Barabbas to them. But he had Jesus flogged, and handed Him over to be crucified.” (Mt. 27:11-26)*

Isn't it absolutely amazing the truths revealed in how this unfolded? Pilate is astounded that Jesus didn't make any effort to defend Himself. I bet in all of Pilate's judgments, that had never happened before. It didn't matter that all the accusations were false or how deeply offensive they were. Jesus just absorbed them. Pilate knew that Jesus was innocent. Even Pilate's wife is touched into the story by God. Essentially, she has nothing to do with the judgment, but God acted on her spirit, enough to cause her to tell her husband to “*have nothing to do with that innocent man*”. In the midst of all this mayhem, God and His work were very present. Pilate knew that it was out of envy that the chief priests and elders were pushing their side of a concoct

ted story. The crowd, incited by the religious leaders demanded Jesus' crucifixion. Pilate offered to free Jesus—as was done for 1 prisoner at Passover each year. But the crowd instead asked for Barabbas, a murderer and insurrectionist. Barabbas became the 1st person saved by Jesus' crucifixion.

Pilate asked the question: “What then, shall I do with the one who is called Christ?” it's the same question every human on the planet must ask of her/himself. Will you accept Him or reject Him? Your answer has life and eternity-altering consequences. And most prophetically, **the people all answered, “Let His blood be on us and on our children.” And it is so.** To this very day, and until the end of time, we are all covered by the blood of Jesus—though our sins are red as crimson, He has washed us whiter than snow! (Isaiah 1:18)

Subsequently, **the soldiers** mocked Him and beat Him and spit on Him. He carried His own cross as far as He could. The crowd gathered around Him, including the soldiers responsible for the day and one of the thieves beside Him being crucified as well continued to mock Him—**“If You are the Christ, come down from the cross and save Yourself; then we will believe in You.”** But He didn't. He hung in there, He hung there on the cross—for us, even asking God the Father to forgive us, “for they don't have any idea what they're doing.” And so He died. There's no question He died. A soldier, sent to break His leg so that He would die and not be left hanging on the cross through the Passover found Him dead already. To make sure, He speared Him in the side. A flow of blood and plasma followed—a sure sign of death.

Isaiah is referred to by some as the 5th Gospel. It contains so many prophecies about Christ. But here's Isaiah 53 (it actually starts at 52:13.)

“See, My servant will act wisely; He will be raised and lifted up and highly exalted. Just as there were many who were appalled at Him—His appearance was so disfigured beyond that of any man and His form marred beyond human likeness—so will He sprinkle many nations, and kings will shut their mouths because of Him...

*Who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? He grew up before Him like a tender shoot and like a root out of dry ground He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to Him, nothing in His appearance that we should desire Him. He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces, He was despised, and we esteemed Him not. Surely He took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered Him stricken by God, smitten by Him, and afflicted. **But He was pierced for our transgression, He was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon Him, and by His wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.** He was oppressed and afflicted, yet He did not open His mouth; He was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so He did not open His mouth. By oppression and judgment He was taken away. And who can speak of His descendants? For He was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of my people He was stricken. He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in His death, though He had done no violence, nor was any deceit in His mouth. Yet it was the Lord's will to*

crush Him and cause Him to suffer, and though the Lord makes His life a guilt offering, He will see His offspring and prolong His days, and the will of the Lord will prosper in His hand. After the suffering of His soul, He will see the light of life and be satisfied; by His knowledge My righteous servant will justify many, and He will bear their iniquities. Therefore I will give Him a portion among the great, and He will divide the spoils with the strong, because He poured out His life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors. For He bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.”

The cross is at the crossroads of every book, chapter and verse in the Bible. Seven Hundred fifty years before it happened, Isaiah 53 gives us an advance look at the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. But it’s not just history. This passage explains the purpose of what happened. At Christmas, we hear that “Jesus is the reason for the season”. But on Good Friday **we are the reason Jesus was pierced and crushed and punished and wounded. His death redeemed us.** “Because of our transgression...because of our iniquities...for our peace...we are healed.” The cross wasn’t a random event. *“We all went astray like sheep; we all have turned to our own way; and the Lord has punished Him for the iniquity of us all.”*(verse 6). Jesus set out resolutely for Jerusalem...for the cross.

In one great chapter we learn about Jesus’ birth and early years (verses 1-2a), His appearance (verse 2b), His rejection by men (verse 3), being forsaken by God the Father (verse 4), His scourging and piercing (verse 5), His silence before His accusers (verse 7), His imprisonment and death (verse 8), His burial (verse 9), His resurrection (verse 10), His work after His resurrection (verse 10, 11), and being exalted and glorified (verse 12). (I encourage you to memorize verses 5 and 6 in bold print).

And so **we’re given answers to great questions:** “Why was Jesus born? Why did He come from the root of David? Why did He grow up an ordinary looking man? Why did He suffer rejection, arrest, scourging and crucifixion?”...**because of us.**

The hymn most associated with Good Friday is “Were You There?”

¹ *“ Were you there when they crucified my Lord?
Were you there when they crucified my Lord?
Oh! Sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.
Were you there when they crucified my Lord?*

² *Were you there when they nailed Him to the tree?
Were you there when they nailed Him to the tree?
Oh! Sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.*

³ *Were you there when they nailed Him to the tree?
Were you there when they pierced Him in the side?
Were you there when they pierced Him in the side?
Oh! Sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.*

⁴ *Were you there when they pierced Him in the side?*

Were you there when the sun refused to shine?

Were you there when the sun refused to shine?

Oh! Sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.

⁵ *Were you there when the sun refused to shine?*

Were you there when they laid Him in the tomb? Were you there when they laid Him in the tomb? Oh! Sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.

Were you there when they laid Him in the tomb?"

The 6th verse is, "Were you there when He rose up from the dead?", but we'll save that story for Sunday!

Another favourite for Good Friday—or any day for that matter—is When I Survey the Wondrous Cross.

¹ *When I survey the wondrous cross*

On which the Prince of glory died,

My richest gain I count but loss,

And pour contempt on all my pride.

² *Forbid it Lord, that I should boast,*

Save the death of Christ my God;

All the vain things that charm me most,

I sacrifice them to His blood.

³ *See from His head, His hands, His feet,*

Sorrow and love flow mingled down!

Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,

Or thorns compose so rich a crown?

⁴ *Were the whole realm of nature mine,*

That were an offering far too small;

Love so amazing, so divine,

Demands my soul, my life, my all.

So pause, reflect and share with others this phenomenal truth. Jesus willingly died for you—while you were yet a sinner—so that you might be saved from your life of sin. That's true for me. It's true for everyone. Jesus has a higher purpose for every one of us. **Will you respond to His call, His invitation?** The stakes couldn't be higher. Live Passion Week passionately for Jesus!