

One of the difficulties about a night like tonight is that we come to an event like this and many of us are bringing a week's worth of distractions. I imagine some of us had long days at work. Others probably had to wrestle a few socks and shoes on toddlers. So, I think it would be good for us if we paused for a moment and asked the Lord to help us. To help us let go and to ask him to do a work in our hearts tonight.

PRAYER

I want to challenge us tonight. I want us to think about Good Friday in a way that maybe we have not before. I know many of us are here for different reasons and backgrounds, but all of us need to examine what it is that Good Friday means. Not just for the Easter holiday, but every other day in the year, and every other day of your life. I want to do that tonight by asking a question.

Has Good Friday changed your life?
Has it changed you?

I want you to know that the scripture is aiming at this question tonight, and it is aiming at it in your own heart.

Our passage this evening is in the middle of a major discourse where Paul is demonstrating the good news he plans to preach to the church in Rome. He tells us that all people are deeply corrupted by our family line, namely our sinfulness which has been passed to us- parent to child all the way back to Adam, and the sinful actions that it produces. In the same way that Adam had deeply offended God in the garden with his disobedience, we too have all failed to honor and love God as he should, and instead, we have bowed our knee in allegiance to our own pleasure.

However, this would not stop God from pursuing his people. No, he says that at the right time, he sent his Son Christ Jesus to die. To pay for sin as a sacrifice and provide love and grace to those who have only ever known rebellion. He would die for his enemies. He would give grace to those who did not even know they needed it. In all of this, the great culmination of the first five chapters are summed up "where sin increased grace abounded all the more"

As the shock and awe of that statement hovers over the audience, Paul continues:

6.1 What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? 2 By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? 3 Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 4 We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. 5 For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. 6 We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. 7 For one who has died has been set free from sin. 8 Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. 9 We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. 10 For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. 11 So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

There is no doubt, that there is much to be mined from this passage. Tonight, though I want us to look at how we can know Good Friday has changed us. According the Apostle Paul it certainly has.

1 What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? 2 By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?

Now it is fair to hear Paul's question here and to role your eyes. It is fair, but it is not considerate of what he is saying. We can often hear a text like this and assume we know what is going on – all the while completely overlooking it. You see the assumption of such a question, is that how you answer it determines how you understand God's grace. How you understand what it took to give you that grace. After all, if someone is only ever going to see the grace of God as a free pass to continue sinning this makes sense. However, if you don't see it that way – if you are changed – the equation is completely different. The variables are not the same. While it does makes sense that grace increasing would give room for sin to continue without repercussion, it is simply unfathomable for those who have actually received it. Those whom have actually been changed.

That change comes in how we are to relate to sin – it understands that grace does abound and outdo our sin, but it is in no way cheap – it is was costly. So, the one who has been changed by Good Friday knows our relationship to sin is not the same. Yes, and the means to this change in found in the death of Christ. In Good Friday.

There are three ways demonstrated in the Death of Christ:

1) The Death of Christ is shared:

3 Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 4 We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

Do you see how he does not appeal to the law here? Do you see that what are inclination would be is not assumed – no – he says we died to it. We. That is, he follows, the death of Christ is our own death.

The text is screaming to us from all places in history and is demonstrating that something happened on that cross two thousand years ago that was profound and amazing. Christ the Son of God suffered and died, but Paul shows us that we, his people, were right there with him. Not just all of the stuff that we had done, not just all nasty remarks or the selfish thoughts, the murders, the lies, the theft, but Myriad and myriads of his people over from every tribe and tongue and nation as far as the eye could see, there with him as the God of all creation hung in underserved pain, he bore all of the wrath for them for us. Each us. And he did it because we are his. Because we are his people and we are united to him – we are united to him forever. As many of us who have called him ours – so he in a pool of his own blood called us his own – and he held us there. Sins destroyed, debts repaid, and wrath satisfied – but being there we did not feel the lumber our backs, or the puncture of the nails, or the humiliation of nakedness, no we didn't feel it at all. But according to this text here, we can know it was our death he died – it was ours he suffered – not just as some theological concept, but in real terms.

It is said well by the early church:

He Himself took on Him the burden of our iniquities! He gave His own Son as a ransom for us,
the holy One for transgressors,
the blameless One for the wicked,
the righteous One for the unrighteous,
the incorruptible One for the corruptible,
the immortal One for them that are mortal.

For what other thing was capable of covering our sins than His righteousness? By what other one was it possible that we, the wicked and ungodly, could be justified, then by the only Son of God?

O sweet exchange! O unsearchable operation! O benefits surpassing all expectation! that the wickedness of many should be hid in a single righteous One, and that the righteousness of One should justify many transgressors!

-The Epistle to Diognetus c 130 A.D.

So, has Good Friday changed you? It should, because it is yours in Christ.

2) The death of Christ is liberating

5 For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. 6 We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. 7 For

one who has died has been set free from sin. 8 Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him.

The Apostle reminds us that this is not all that is implied in our union with Christ. We are not only unified in his suffering and death, but we are also found with him in his victorious resurrection. But what does this mean? How does this propel us to understand that we have been changed by Good Friday?

His death is not a death wasted, it is a death that satisfies the consequences of sin and in doing so it liberates – his death free us from that common ancestor who we all bear – whom we all have sworn allegiance to from our first breath. That desire in ourselves to do things our own way. To serve ourselves, the stuff that fuels every rebellious act, both the ones seen and those hidden deep within.

The text tells us that in the death of Christ our “old self” was crucified with him. We know this then that the old self, the part of us that was born according to our natural desires, born according to Adam who had passed his sinful nature onto us, was left on the cross with Christ, and as he died it was too was destroyed – *in order that the body if sin might be brought to nothing – that we would no longer enslaved to sin.*

Our union with Christ his death and resurrection has freed us from this old man. We have been liberated. So that those who are in Christ can look at every temptation square in the eye and know it has no dominion over us. You can know that you are no longer in bondage to your mouse, or to any habit, or to any foul thought. If you are in Christ you can know with confidence of iron that you are not a product of your surroundings, but a product of the Risen Christ. You see sin in your life and cut it out without fear. You can flee from its grasp and not grovel back – You are free – it is not your master. For you have died in Christ, and his death was effective. You are Free because he is alive and we can know we will live with him.

Has Good Friday changed you? It should, because in Christ you are free

3) The death of Christ requires a response

9 We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. 10 For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. 11 So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

The cross of Christ for many people has many meanings. We were them, we draw them. We put them on our buildings, or cars, so on and so on. As we consider our last point it is important for us to understand why these last three verses are here.

Christ was not the first or the last to be killed on a Roman cross. During the Roman period, the cross of Rome was in many ways a banner or a sign post. For the ground that it was placed in, was now Rome's, and those who resist her might would simply end as the one fixed to it. So no matter where you would go in the Roman world, if Rome was there so where signs of her rule -

signs of her might. Signs that she would not hesitate to exercise her ability to end life with out consequence.

So what does it mean to have the creator of all things hang and die on a Roman cross? It means that the lord of all creation maker of heaven and earth to the best blow, that any power could ever deliver – he died.

And unlike any before, he demonstrated that the best blow the world could offer, and the wrath required to pay for the entire sum of sin across time and space was not enough to keep him. All that we could throw at him was not enough, he dried it up, exhausted it, he ran circles around all that we had – and he Rose up from the grave. Why did he do this, to show all history and foes that death has no dominion over him or his people.

All their efforts are in vein. He has died once and for all. And in this might announcement we are told the answer to our question

So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

If you are here tonight and you are united to Christ, have you been changed by Good Friday? You have, so live your life as dead to sin and alive to Christ. Good Friday is yours, and you are free.

If you are here tonight and you want to be united to Christ, have you been changed by Good Friday?

You can too can be united to him. You can be share in his death and resurrection. Trust him, and cling to him. He is far better than the old man. You can be free.

No matter what which you are, the death of Christ requires a response. It is the change that the text is assuming. Has Good Friday changed you?

One of the realities of our union with Christ is that we share that union with other Christians. We can know the ways that Christ has changed us, has rescued us and we look at our brothers and sisters and know without hesitation that he has done this for them too. This is a humbling reality too. After all, we tend to want others to see us in the best light, and we are often tempted to not extend that same desire them. While we pretend to have our stuff in order, we are short tempered. In so many ways we forget that the same grace we have experienced in Good Friday is extended to all of his people. I want you to think of that person you struggle to forgive – think about who it is, and consider what lengths the Son of God went to hold you as he suffered on your behalf – now know you are no more deserving of that forgiveness than they are. Not one bit more are they less worthy than you.

Good Friday has changed everything!

COMMUNION

One of the ways we demonstrate being one with Christ and with each other is through the Lord's Supper. Through Communion. Tonight, as we consider what Christ has done for us, I would challenge us to respond by taking communion together. If you are a Christian, and call Jesus your Lord, we would invite you to join us in this. If you are not a Christian, please observe this time as and if you have any questions I would love to meet up with you hear them.

Around the auditorium are tables with the elements

As you grab them please feel free to group up and pray considering what has been done for us. As you feel led, take the bread reminding us of his body broken for us. Taking the cup, remembering the promise of the new covenant – the promise to be his people – purchased by his blood. Remember that in doing this we are proclaiming together the death of Christ until he returns.

As Frank starts to play, you can get up and grab the elements and form into groups as you are comfortable, and finish by singing together.