

Pastor Jon's Good Friday Sermon 2022 based on the Passion of John

“Why do we call this day good?”

My mom recently told me that she did not want to attend Good Friday services this year. “Why” I asked. She said, “They are too dark and dreary. They make me sad... then I am sad the whole day.”

So why do we call this day “good” Friday? After all, the passion of the Christ is filled with loss upon loss, grief upon grief. It is sad.

I look at our Good Friday world today, especially in Ukraine, and see senseless destruction, death, and evil on the part of put Putin's abuse of power and greed. Even though there are little victories for Ukraine's people along the way, it is hard to find hope when someone is bent on destruction toward a people and a land.

And yet, in this passion story we must remember that Jesus was fully human... and fully divine. Jesus, in his humanity, experienced real suffering, loss, abandonment, and grief that week. Because of his cross and passion, we believe that God isn't absent when we or the world suffers, but that God journeys with us in our pain. God weeps when we weep.

And keep in mind that Jesus predicted his passion... he told his disciples that after he is handed over and crucified... in 3 days he will rise again. We call this day “good” because the powers of this world and violence don't have the final answer over Jesus. Easter will have something to say about this.

In John's version of the passion, did you catch that Jesus was arrested in a garden? The gospel writer tells us that this garden is a place Jesus frequented with his disciples. When I think of a garden, I think of new life. I think of hope, and food, and abundance. I think of the wonder and awe of creation.

Knowing Jesus love for this garden, Judas brought the roman soldiers, police, and the chief priests to arrest Jesus... and they did.

In the next scene as Simon Peter, one of Jesus' A students, is hanging around on the fringes outside the courtyard of the high priest after following Jesus. He is questioned if he knows Jesus. Peter denies

knowing Jesus 3 times... and just as Jesus predicted... the cock crowed. So far Jesus is betrayed and denied by his own people and arrested... a bad day.

In the next scene, Jesus is brought to Pilate who comes out and said, "I find no case against this man." He is innocent. But there was a tradition that on Passover, Pilate would release one prisoner for the Jews. In order to keep the peace and please his constituents, Pilate asked the crowd who to release. The King of the Jews or Barrabas? Barrabas! They shouted. Jesus is wrongly accused.

Jesus is then flogged, mocked, hit in the face, and dressed in a purple robe. The charge against him... telling others about his kingdom that is breaking in. That his kingdom is not from this world. The kingdom of the emperor, Pilate, and the chief priests is built on power, violence, and fear. Jesus' kingdom is grounded in God's love for the world. If Jesus has a kingdom, they thought, then he must be saying that he is a king. Then they shouted crucify him... there is no king but the emperor.

Pilate still wanted to release Jesus, but again caved to the pressure of the chief priests... as they shouted away with him. Crucify him.

In the next scene Jesus is carrying his cross by himself. When the soldiers crucified Jesus, they cast lots for his clothes.

On the cross Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing beside her, and Jesus redefines family. Jesus said to his mom, "Woman here is your son." Then he said to his disciple, "Here is your mother." And from then on the disciple took her into his home. Our Christian family is our true family as well... we are to care for each other.

Jesus then breathed his last. One of the soldiers pierced Jesus' side and water and blood came out.

Then Jesus' body is taken off the cross by Joseph of Arimethea, a secret disciple of Jesus, along with the Pharisee Nicodemus, who earlier came to Jesus by night. They abundantly anointed Jesus body and prepared it for burial.

John tells us that there was a garden in that place and in the garden there was a tomb in which no one had ever been laid. They buried Jesus in this garden tomb.

Did you catch that? Jesus' arrest, crucifixion, burial and resurrection all take place in a garden in John's Gospel. On Easter, Mary Magdalene will mistake Jesus for the gardener. All this garden talk should take us back to Genesis and the Garden of Eden. God is doing a new thing in Jesus' death and resurrection. If anyone is in Christ, they are a new creation.

Wait three days for the rest of the story. Amen