

Good Friday 2023 based on John's Passion Gospel

Every year, I am struck by certain things in the passion reading on Good Friday. This year, it is Jesus' willingness to give up his life for us and for the world.

And John tells us that this out of love for the world according to John 3:16. Jesus' sacrificial love was lifted up last night on Maundy Thursday at our dinner church when Jesus took on the role of a household slave and washed the disciple's feet. We talked about God's agape, God's unconditional love for us even when we don't deserve it. A lot of love was shared last night through good soup and bread and cookies, prayers, and fellowship. I hope we can do this again. There is something about eating together.

Also, I was reminded this week that Good Friday in the Christian tradition is the traditional day in Jewish families as the day of preparation for the Passover feast, when they sacrifice a lamb for the Passover meal. According to Josephus (Jos. Antiq. XVI. vi. 2) the people began to make preparations for the Sabbath well before the sunset with which the observances actually began, suspending normal business and social activity and preparing all food in advance.

On Good Friday, Jesus was the once and for all sacrifice on the cross for our sins. His death put us humans in a right relationship with God. We are liberated from sin, death, and the devil's power over us.

We sing in our communion liturgy most every Sunday, "Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world, have mercy on us".

Jesus knew this day was coming. Throughout the Gospel of John, Jesus was preparing his disciples for the day he would no longer be with them. He said in John 14, "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me." He promised to prepare a place for them and send an advocate, the Holy Spirit to be with them to teach them everything they need to know.

In John 10:11, Jesus says, "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep." 10:18 "No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again."

John 15:13 “No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.”

In John 18 after supper, Jesus knowing he was betrayed by Judas, he went to a garden on the Mount of Olives where he and his disciples hung out often. It was a public place. Jesus knew what was coming.

When Roman soldiers, chief priests, and Pharisees came to arrest Jesus, he willingly gives himself up in John’s Gospel. Jesus says, “Whom are you looking for?” They answered, “Jesus of Nazareth.” Jesus replied, “I am he.”

Notice, there is no kiss by Judas. Jesus willingly gives himself up.

“What wondrous love is this?” What kind of God is this? On such a sad night where Jesus suffers and dies, we still have reason for hope. In our own grief and sorrow, we know Easter is coming.

In John 16:20 Jesus tells his disciples that in a little while you will no longer see me. “Very truly I tell you, you will weep and mourn, but the world will rejoice; you will have pain, but your pain will turn into joy.

Your pain will turn into joy.

This is a promise. Your pain will turn into joy.

Gracious God, in the midst of all the Good Friday-ness in our world, turn our pain into joy. Help us to see glimpses of your goodness and joy, even as we experience cross moments in our life. May your sacrificial love turn us to love one another as you first loved us.
Amen!