

Good Friday Sermon



It was Dad's Birthday. I had wanted to get him a Gift, even make him a Gift if I could, but all to no avail. I had spent all my money on myself, and now there was not enough left to buy him anything; and whatever I tried to make either broke or collapsed. I had no talent, and no time. It was his Birthday, and I had no gift for Dad.

It was different with my brother—he was older, with enormous talent, and had started early. Using his skill, he had carved a beautiful piece of artwork for our dad. He had saved his money for the materials and had not wasted his time. It was perfect.

And then, my elder brother did what I could not do—he showed me his Gift for Dad and invited me to join him in giving this beautiful Gift to Dad—we would do it together. “Put your signature on the Gift Card, along with mine,” he said, “and Dad will know it came from both of us.”

So, on his Birthday, Dad accepted our Gift, and hugged us both. He knew who had made the Gift, but it didn't matter—it was a Mutual Gift, made by my elder brother, but given by both of us—and he loved us both equally.

On this Good Friday, we come to Jesus, our elder brother, and He knows we have nothing to offer to our Heavenly Father. And so He goes to the Cross, to complete His Perfect Life, to make His Perfect Gift for our Father, to do what we cannot do, His Father's Perfect Will.

In the garden of Gethsemane, that we remembered last night, Jesus struggles with what the Father asks. And that struggle ends with “Not my Will, Father, but Your Will be done.” God's love for humanity is so great that He is willing to suffer and die to claim us as His own. That's the key to understanding Good Friday—it is not the wrath of an angry God that must be appeased—it is the Love of a Holy God that will stop at nothing to bring us home. And so, the Son of God goes to His painful Death on a wooden cross to redeem us, to bring us home.

Someone once said: “If God had been there, He would have stopped it happening.” But that's just the point—God was there—nailed to the Cross—letting it all happen to Himself—because of His great Love for us sinners. And even then, rather than thinking of Himself, and His pain, he prays for the soldiers who crucified Him, promises Paradise to the Thief hanging beside Him, and cares for His Blessed Mother below Him. The crucifix is the greatest symbol of **LOVE** that the world has ever seen. It shouts to the world: God Cares and God Loves.

- Jesus goes to His Death in painful Suffering. He knows that suffering is the end result of sin, and is a part of human life, that all of us will sin and bring suffering into the world, some more than others. But Jesus takes that sin with its ultimate

suffering into Himself on the Cross, and lets it kill him. He takes our pain too and gives us His grace to endure it and overcome it. The cross is no bed of roses—it is God loving us by joining us in pain and death. With His Grace, we can overcome, because He has been our pioneer in suffering. “Oh, Good Jesus hear me, within Thy wounds hide me, suffer me not to be separated from Thee.”

- Jesus goes to His Death to bring about the Reconciliation of people to God. He is not buying off the wrath of an angry God, but by taking on the suffering of sin Himself and letting it kill Him. It is God’s Love that reaches out to bring Reconciliation. What we could not do ourselves, He did, at immense cost, simply because of Love. He absorbs the sin and pain into Himself, though it killed Him to do it. And in so doing, He broke down any barriers that had divided us. We are free to claim His Love and His Presence right now. The Work of Reconciliation has been done—we only have to Claim the result and begin to walk with Jesus.
- Jesus goes to His Death to open to us the Gate of Life. By offering His Perfect Life completed on the Cross, Jesus now stands in Heaven as our Representative before the Father. “Look Father not on our sin, but His Life Blood shed for us.” Through His stripes, we are healed. By His grace, we can now become fully alive.

Back in my student days, I was an assistant at St. Monica’s Church in Toronto. From where I knelt week after week in the chancel, I could clearly see a stained-glass window of the crucifixion. At the foot of that cross knelt a person, with arms outstretched, wrapped around the cross. That person could have been me then, and it remains me now. And perhaps, the person in that window can be everyone here, each of us kneeling at the foot of the cross, holding on tight to the sign and covenant of God’s Love—the Death of Jesus our Redeemer.

Amen