

Good Friday 2022
Meditation - Saint Joseph Parish
Father Craig Looney
Hebrews 10.1-25

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Why do we call today “Good” Friday? There is nothing funny about the crucifixion...a public execution of Jesus like a common criminal. There is no humor in Good Friday...but there is hope!

We find the concise answer to the question...why “Good” Friday...in today’s Epistle from the Letter to the Hebrews...

“...The Law is not a full and faithful model of the real things...only a faint outline of the good things to come... the blood of bulls and goats can never take away sins. Because Jesus did what God wanted him to do, we are all purified from sin by the offering that he made of his own body once and for all.”

God first established a covenant with his people, a covenant sealed in the blood of circumcision. God gave them a set of rules and regulations...the Law...not to make life harder for them...but to make life better. His people would worship him and he would take care of them.

God established the Temple Priesthood to make certain worship was done in a decent and orderly manner according to his wishes. Worship would reinforce his love for them and their love for him.

The sacrifices that took place in the Temple reminded people of their sins and that their sins were forgiven...but their effect wasn’t permanent. They had to be repeated every year.

Hebrews tells us that the offerings and animal sacrifices had turned into a show with the priests calling attention to them selves. They were more concerned about the people praising them than everyone praising God. God himself would now take action...through his Son Jesus...he would establish a new covenant...

“...Christ offered one sacrifice for sins, an offering that is effective forever, and then he sat down at the right side of God. With one sacrifice, then, he has made perfect forever those who are purified from sin.”

Jews and Christians share the belief in a God who gets involved in their lives...either directly or through other human beings commissioned to do his work. God showed his love for the people by sending them kings, prophets and priests to teach and lead and serve them. Some did well...others not so well. The Old Covenant was fractured.

A covenant is different from a contract. In a contract, if one party breaks the contract, the other party is not bound by the terms of contract. It’s not the same in a covenant. If one party breaks the covenant, the other party must still live up to the terms of the covenant.

God made a solemn covenant with his people. The people sinned...they always broke the covenant...but God always kept his part of the deal. He is always ready to show compassion and mercy on us...we do have to admit we need his forgiveness.

Our relationship with God was forever changed on a hill outside of Jerusalem 2021 years ago. God made a New Covenant with use in the blood of his Son Jesus Christ...the

blood of God himself. This was, as the Letter to the Hebrews tells us...

"...a greater and more perfect sacrifice, not made by human hands, but made by God himself."

What Jesus did for us today is what no Temple sacrifice or any other earthly sacrifice can do. He made certain our sins were forgiven, once and for all, for everyone, everywhere, and at all times. The new covenant we have with God assures us that even when we make mistakes and sin, we can always come back to him and receive his forgiveness. The Crucifixion was God's ultimate display of love for us.

Matthew tells us when Jesus died the curtain that separated the Holy of Holies in the Temple from the place where ordinary people worshipped was torn in two from top to bottom. God had made his presence known to the entire world in a dramatic way. Jesus, the Great High Priest, made God available to everyone.

By his death on the Cross, Jesus eliminated the barriers that we set up that kept us from experiencing God's love in the fullest. By his own death on the Cross, Jesus has guaranteed we don't have to fear our own deaths. By his death on the Cross, Jesus has made it possible for us to enjoy everlasting life in heaven with him, in the presence of God the Father. We will see God face to face with our own eyes, and we will rejoice at being in his presence.

Our Lenten journey began on Ash Wednesday. Ashes were placed on our foreheads in the shape of a cross. The ashes remind us that we will all die someday and return to the dust from which we are made. If that were the end of the story...this would be a sad and dark day indeed.

But the ashes are in the shape of a cross to remind us that it is Cross is ultimately about life...not death. Everlasting life begins now, in a renewed relationship to God our Father, made possible by Jesus.

Our Lenten journey continued on Palm Sunday. King Jesus rode into Jerusalem on his donkey. Donkeys symbolize peace, humility and service. We proclaimed Jesus King...the kind of King who is God...who loves us so much he was willing to die on the cross for our salvation.

This year we incorporated into our Lenten Wednesdays a compelling version of Stations of the Cross called *Cross Examinations*. It is in first-person, with Jesus speaking from the heart. The author admits to taking some liberties. But consider what Jesus says to us about our own deaths...

"...I remind you of this not because my Father and I want you to be fearful of your future. Living in fear of death isn't what I want for you. I remind you of your death to help you live fully and freely as my brothers and sisters, as sons and daughters of my Father. In my death and resurrection, you will receive power to do that."

Our Lenten journey continued last night when we commemorated the Institution of the Sacrament of Holy Communion. Maundy Thursday is not a memorial of the Last Supper. Jesus tells us that the shedding of his blood seals the New Testament...the New Covenant...we have with God. Jesus tells us every time we celebrate the Eucharist...we show his death until he comes back.

Our Lenten journey concludes. This is certainly the darkest day in the history of mankind. But there is light after the darkness. There is hope in Good Friday because today is ultimately about life...not death. Saint Paul, in his First Letter to the Corinthians, writes...

"...In Adam all die, but in Jesus all are made alive."

In the Letter to the Hebrews we are told to...

"...Encourage one another all the more, since we see that the Day of the Lord is coming near...Jesus has already come as the High Priest of the good things that are already here."

That's why we can call today "Good" Friday! King Jesus has made it good!

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