

PASSION WEEK — “AND IT PLEASED THE LORD TO CRUSH HIM”

“WHY THE LAMB MUST DIE”

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Reflecting on His Work and the Storyline of the Bible

Read: Mark 15:1-47

(cf. Gen. 2:16, 17; 3:15, 21; Rom. 6:23; Isa. 53:12-15; Phil. 2:1-11; Heb. 9:15-28)

Prayer:

*Almighty God, we beseech you graciously to behold this your family, for whom our Lord Jesus Christ was contented to be betrayed, and given into the hands of sinners, and to suffer death upon the cross; who now lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.*¹

“To make of his story something that could neither startle, nor shock, nor terrify, nor excite, nor inspire a living soul is to crucify the Son of God afresh.”²

In Passion Week we call the day of the cross, “Good Friday;” but why? Listen to the following explanation.

Calling the day of the Crucifixion ‘Good’ Friday is a designation that is peculiar to the English language. In German, for example, it is called *Karfreitag*. The *Kar* part is an obsolete word, the ancestor of the English word *care* in the sense of *cares and woes*, and it meant *mourning*. **So in German, it is Mourning Friday.** And that is what the disciples did on that day – they mourned. They thought all was lost.

I’ve read that the word *good* used to have a secondary meaning of *holy*, but I can’t trace that back in my etymological dictionary. There are a number of cases in set phrases where the words *God* and *good* got switched around because of their similarity. One case was the phrase *God be with you*, which today is just *good-bye*. So perhaps *Good Friday* was originally *God’s Friday*. **But I think we call it Good Friday because, in pious retrospect, all that tragedy brought about the greatest good there could be.**

I can see virtue in either terminology. If we call it Mourning Friday, as in German, we are facing reality head on, taking up the cross if you will, fully conscious that the Christian walk is seldom a walk in the park. But if we call it Good Friday, as in English, we are confessing the Christian hope that no tragedy – not even death – can overwhelm God’s providence, love, and grace.³

Now let us consider this moment in its larger literary context. Within the Story of God, He granted to mankind an unbridled opportunity to enjoy all that He is and the innumerable blessings that flow from His person. They rejected God and His provision and sought their own means. This led to their ruin and destruction. God, however, rich in mercy and grace, provided a way for His people to be restored into His family. Those who appropriate the

provision through repentance and faith will once more enjoy all that He is and the innumerable blessings flowing from His person.

Because the sin of the rebel is against God and Him alone an enormous imbalance took place that humanity could neither correct nor rectify. The sure and certain end of their action would be death; both physical and spiritual death (Gen. 2:16, 17; Rom. 6:23). He would have to seek His Creator as both Savior and Lord.

“The LORD God commanded the man, saying, ‘From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; 17 but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, **for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die**’” (Gen. 2:16).

“For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom. 6:23).

The narrative speaks of the woman’s seed crushing the head of the serpent and his seed bruising the heel of the woman’s (Gen. 3:15). Somehow in the bruising of heel, the Father is pleased (Isa. 53:10). Somehow in being bruised the woman’s seed finds joy, thus enduring (Heb. 12:2). He voluntarily and freely submits to His Father’s will (Matt. 26:39).

Yet the means required the offering to be from humanity (Heb. 2:17) thus necessitating the adding of human nature to the divine and resulting in the taking on of human “flesh” (i.e. incarnation [Phil. 2:1-11]).

“Therefore, **He had to be made like His brethren in all things,** so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people” (Heb. 2:17).

⁷ “but emptied Himself, **taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men.** ⁸ **Being found in appearance as a man,** He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross” (Phil. 2:7, 8).

It is the justice of God demanding payment and needing placation. And it is the mercy and grace of God moving Him to provide a perfect and sufficient way. **What Law demands Grace provides.** So, what are we to hear and believe?

First, somehow in ways we cannot comprehend the idea of creation and transgression are a part of God’s One Story. In the wisdom of God’s internal and eternal counsel He/They determined that a rebellion would in some way accent and celebrate the immeasurable nature of His justice, mercy, love and grace. From this very dark backdrop and horrific act and consequence, God would receive praise and glory. Isaiah tells us that it “pleased the LORD to crush Him” (Isa. 53:10). All that Jesus said and did was in response to the mission He fulfilled of the Father (John 4:34; 9:4). When praying in the Garden, He begged for reprieve but heard none (Matt. 26:39, 42). There is deep and moving anguish when on the cross He cries out, “My God, My God, why have you forsaken me” (Matt. 27:46). All of this forms the content of the

mystery, and it is only as we place each of the various pieces into their proper position within the Story that His people will find rest.

Second, the person and work of Jesus Christ is in direct response to the person and work of His people. Although the fall of His people is not the reason for the incarnation, it is a reason and this reason is real. They sinned against Him and thus their person/essence (i.e. **in Adam**) and work (i.e. **sin**) cry out for resolution and restoration. It is because of whom we are that God becomes “in-fleshed” and dies as a vicarious (i.e. “in behalf, in place of”), voluntary and victorious offering. Whatever else His death is, it is at least this. You cannot make His death anything less than atonement for sin.

Third, because of who He is and what He does, the offering corresponds exactly to the need. It is in the offering of the one offered that sin’s debt is paid, its alienation is reconciled, its animosity is removed, its sentence of guilt is pardoned, its rebellion is put down, His justice is satisfied and His wrath is appeased. Not only does His person and work correspond exactly to the need, but because both the offering and the one who offers are infinite, it fully answers all charges raised by God’s justice. There never can be another charge raised against His people (Rom. 8:33).

³³ **“Who will bring a charge against God's elect?”** God is the one who justifies; ³⁴ **who is the one who condemns?** Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us” (Rom. 8:33, 34).

Fourth, the condition for God’s pardon of sinners and adoption as sons flows only from the person and work of Jesus Christ. Only those who appropriate the provision by repentance and faith can lay claim to the inheritance (**John 1:1-13** [READ]). Because of His abundance all of humanity benefits from God’s lavish provision, but only for His people will it prove effectual for the saving of soul.

There is impossibility to the task of remembering all that Christ is in His person and work. Yet we do well to think on these things. It is for this reason we mark this day. We need to always be retelling the Story so that we might remember and in remembering reconnect with the Story.

Many Christian churches celebrate Good Friday with a subdued service, usually in the evening, in which Christ’s death is remembered with solemn hymns, prayers of thanksgiving, a message centered on Christ suffering for our sakes, and observance of the Lord's Supper. Whether or not Christians choose to “celebrate” Good Friday, the events of that day should be ever on our minds because the death of Christ on the cross is the paramount event of the Christian faith. ⁴

Yet let us never remove the marking of this day from the larger Story. If we simply note His suffering, we will be consumed with a darkness of soul that is depressing and destruction. Thus we must always place this piece in its proper position within the Story. From this death does indeed come life, but before we get to the fullness of the gospel Story let us pause and

remember His death and the silence that follows. May we even now bow our head and knee in reverent awe and gratitude.

¹ <http://www.bcponline.org/>

² Dorothy Sayers, "The Crucified," Kahlil Gibran in *Bread and Wine*, 131.

³ <http://www.kencollins.com/question-11.htm>

⁴ <http://www.gotquestions.org/Good-Friday.html>