

## Good Friday Sermon 2020

It is finished, Lord. You have done what you set out to do. You have revealed the loving purposes of your Father. You have shown us how to live and how to die. Give us the power to make something wonderful of ourselves. Shape our wills. Fill our minds. Inspire our imaginations. Direct our deeds, so that the lives we live from this day forth be wholly yours. Continue your transforming work within us until, when at last we come before you in glory, you will look at us with pride and joy and shout, "It is finished!" Amen.

Many books have an introduction from the authors. I admit that I often do not read them very carefully and with the full attention that I give to the book itself. As some of you know, I like to read the stories from the series, "Chicken Soup for the Soul". I like to share the shorter ones in my sermons when they seem to fit.

Something caught my eye from the introduction. What struck me was the following paragraph: "Some of the stories you read will move you to share them with a loved one or a friend. When a story really touches you to the depths of your soul, close your eyes ever so briefly and ask yourself, 'Who needs to hear this story right now?' Someone you care about may come to mind. Take time to go to them or call them and share the story with them. You will get something even deeper for yourself from sharing the story with someone you care about...Reading about, telling, and listening to each other's stories can be very transformational. Stories are powerful vehicles that release our unconscious energies to heal, to integrate, to express, and to grow." (end quote).

Every single one of us have stories to tell. You may not think that they are important or significant enough to share, but they are. Some one needs to hear them. Rebecca Falls said; "One of the most valuable things we can do to heal one another is listen to each other's stories." Telling and listening. We should do both.

Holy Week is a week of sharing stories that are vital to healing and life. Good Friday, as **devastating**, as **horrifying**, as **emotional**, as **depressing**, as it may be, is all about hope and love at its best. In the midst of all this sadness is sacrificial love. We know that the apostles were panicking and scared. Hopelessness had not yet set in: Too much adrenaline to think rationally on what was really happening. We saw this in Peter's denial of knowing Jesus three different times. It is hard to organize one's thoughts in times of great stress. How many times have we said something, realizing later, what we should have and wanted to have said.

Someone who has not thought deeply about this chapter of Jesus's story or maybe has never heard this story shared before, might wonder, 'What is good about Good Friday?'. Well, at face value, there doesn't appear to be a lot of good news here.

Jesus was arrested, paraded between Jewish Leaders, Pilate, and Herod. He was spit upon, tortured, stripped naked, humiliated in debasing ways, and crucified.

Horrifying, Yes. Good, Not so much!

Jesus, however, had given the '**Good News**' to the apostles on Thursday night at dinner. After Peter declined to let Jesus wash his feet, Jesus replied; "If I do not wash you, you have no part in me." Jesus was not just talking about clean feet. He was telling Peter and us, that we have to go through his death on the cross to share in his life after. Peter did not understand this at the time, but **we** do. This is why we cannot

go from Jesus's triumphal entry into Jerusalem, straight to the Resurrection, and not tell the story of all that happened in between, as much as we might like to.

It is a story that we must listen to and share. Even this evening, we want to ease the horrific events of this day by talking about the Resurrection, but we are not there yet.

There is a story titled: "Compassion is in the Eyes" by an Anonymous author.

"It was a bitter cold evening in northern Virginia many years ago. The old man's beard was glazed by winter's frost while he waited for a ride across the river. The wait seemed endless. His body became numb and stiff from the frigid north wind. He heard the faint, steady rhythm of approaching hooves galloping along the frozen path. Anxiously, he watched as several horsemen rounded the bend. He let the first one pass by without an effort to get his attention. Then another passed by, and another. Finally, the last rider neared the spot where the old man sat like a snow statue. As this one drew near, the old man caught the rider's eye and said, "Sir, would you mind giving an old man a ride to the other side? There doesn't appear to be a passageway by foot."

Reining his horse, the rider replied, "Sure thing. Hop aboard." Seeing the old man was unable to lift his half frozen body from the ground, the horseman dismounted and helped the old man onto the horse. The horseman took the old man not just across the river, but to his destination, which was just a few miles away.

As they neared the tiny but cozy cottage, the horse man's curiosity caused him to inquire, "Sir, I notice that you let several other riders pass by without making an

effort to secure a ride. Then I came up and you immediately asked me for a ride. I'm curious why, on such a bitter winter night, you would wait and ask the last rider. What if I had refused and left you there?"

The old man lowered himself slowly down from the horse, looked the rider straight in the eyes, and replied, "I've been around these here parts for some time. I reckon I know people pretty good." The old-timer continued, "I looked into the eyes of the other riders and immediately saw there was no concern for my situation. It would have been useless even to ask them for a ride. But when I looked into your eyes, kindness and compassion were evident. I knew, then and there, that your gentle spirit would welcome the opportunity to give me assistance in my time of need." Those heartwarming comments touched the horseman deeply. "I'm most grateful for what you have said," he told the old man. "May I never get too busy in my own affairs that I fail to respond to the needs of others with kindness and compassion." With that, Thomas Jefferson turned his horse around and made his way back to the White House."

(Anonymous From Brian Cavanaugh's The Sower's Seeds)

Is this story fake news? Who knows? What I know is that the news from Good Friday is not fake news.

Compassion and Unconditional Love means everything. I know that Jesus loved us so much that he went through everything that he did. Even while on the cross, he showed his compassion and love when he said, "When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing beside her, he said to his mother, 'Here is your

son.' Then he said to the disciple, 'Here is your mother'. And from that hour the disciple took her into his own home." His mother was now taken care of.

Jesus always seemed to think of others before himself, even to death on a cross. He gave up his life so that we might live. This is indeed 'Good News'. It is a story that we need to hear and to share.

And our individual stories are not yet finished. They are still being written in love.

May we continue to share the love of Jesus with others.

Amen!