

"'TIS MYSTERY ALL; THE IMMORTAL DIES..."

Good Friday Meditation

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. All things were created through Him, and apart from Him not one thing was created that has been created. In Him was life, and that life was the light of men."

John 1:1-4

Every story has a setting, conflict, rising tension, climax and resolution. Good Friday is full of conflict – but I don't think it's the climax of the story. Satan did. And so did those who were a part of the events that day. I don't blame them. What is more conclusive than death? And what could be more epic than the Word, which was from the beginning, which was God, and in whom was life – consider those words – dies. It is the ultimate tragedy.

*'Tis mystery all, th'immortal dies
Who can explore His strange design?
In vain the firstborn Seraph tries
To sound the depths of love divine!*

He never woke up on Friday morning, but was arrested before he went to sleep in the Garden of Gethsemane, betrayed by the kiss of a friend. He was taken first to Annas' residence to be questioned about his disciples and his teaching. This was not an official trial, but rather evidence gathering to be used against him. None was gathered, however, because he was innocent. He was then taken to Caiaphas, the High Priest, who had prejudged that he should die. He was then sent to Pilate and accused of rebellion against Rome – he had made himself to be King. After a back-and-forth with King Herod, during which Jesus is scourged, beaten, mocked and abused, Pilate releases Barabbas, who was a murderer and a thief, and sentences Jesus to crucifixion. Not believing Jesus to be guilty of anything deserving death, he washes his hands and says "I am innocent of this man's blood", to which the Jews respond "His blood is on us and our children." The huge wooden plank is then placed upon his already-bloodied shoulders, and weary as he is from the beatings and lack of sleep, he carries it to his place of execution outside the city. There they nail his body to the

wood, raise it up for all to see, lower it into the ground, and wait for him to die a slow and painful death.

There are many accounts of how cruel this method of execution is, I don't need to lay down the details here. Many people had been crucified. Granted, his crucifixion was especially cruel given the circumstances surrounding it – lack of sleep, food, the injustice of the trial, the betrayal and abandonment of his friends as they fled into the night. He also endured scourging and gratuitous cheap shots at his various mock-trials. But we miss the point if we focus on the physical pain, as much a part of the story as it is.

No person has ever endured the wrath of God that Jesus endured on the cross that day. Jesus took the cup and drank it to its dregs. "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" is the cry that only Jesus could rightly ask. He who was with the Father from the beginning, in whom was life, would now willingly suffer the full extent of his wrath in his death. The cosmic union that had existed from eternity past was broken as the Father turns his face away. And there is Jesus – alone, naked, beaten, suffering – on the cross of a murderer and a thief.

He took my place.

No, I have never been in danger of a Roman cross, but I am born under the sentence of death for my own rebellion against the God of the Universe. He bore God's wrath to set me free and in so doing, he died that I would live.

There are some truths that are too lofty for me to understand and I would have no basis for believing them, had they not been written in the Bible:

"He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we would die to sin and live to righteousness." 1 Peter 2:24

"For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." 2 Cor 5:21

It is unbelievable that he took my sin in his body on the cross. My mind explodes with the implications that presents; I cannot write them all down. Were it not written that "he made him to be sin who knew no sin", my preconceptions of God would keep me from believing it. But God blows away all our preconceptions on the cross! These verses help to explain why Jesus had to die and what it accomplished.

Friday, April 10, 2020

by: Pastor Grant

*No condemnation now I dread
Jesus and all in him is mine!
Alive in Him my living head
And clothed in righteousness divine!*

But that is a meditation for Sunday. Today ends in a cemetery, where the eternal one, who was with the Father from the beginning, in whom was life, and which life was the light of men... died.

Questions for Contemplation:

Today is a sobering day, as we contemplate the death of Christ. We look forward to the resurrection, but today he lies dead in the grave. I encourage you to drink it in and not to rush past the cross and the grave.

1. The second person of the Trinity, Jesus Christ, stood accused before the Jewish and Roman powers though he had committed no wrong. What did they accuse him of? What specifically do you stand accused of before Almighty God? What defense could you offer in light of his statutes (Rom 6:23)?
2. Barabbas was guilty of stealing and murder, and yet the people asked for him to be released instead of Jesus. Does this give you any insight into the human condition? Barabbas is an example of the substitutionary death that Jesus died for us – the innocent on behalf of the guilty. Does this give you any insight into the love of Christ? How does that shade your consideration of his death on this Good Friday?
3. There is much to celebrate in life, but what story does death tell us? Today, as we consider Christ's death and ours, are you right with God?

In Christ,

Pastor Grant



Hampton Falls
BAPTIST CHURCH