

*Good Friday Year B  
The Rev. Dr. Paul J. Carling*

*Trinity Episcopal Parish  
March 30, 2018*

***The Good in Good Friday***  
*John 19: 1-37*

According to those who calculate such things, it was probably on April 7, 30AD that Jeshua ben Joseph – Jesus, son of Joseph – an amateur rabbi and a former carpenter, was crucified outside the walls of Jerusalem.<sup>i</sup>

That was Good Friday then, and it is Good Friday now – the day on which we stand in front of the cross with our burning eyes and our dry mouths and look at it, just look at it. There is no figuring it out. There is no explaining it. There is not even much to say about it.

This is the day God was silent all day long, although everyone who knew the Messiah got down on their knees and begged God to speak, to act. Silence was God's answer, and silence marks this day, a day on which we sit or stand or kneel before the cross, most of us knowing what we have been taught to believe about it but feeling something else – trying to reconcile the theological event with the human one – seeing the body of Christ one moment, and the corpse of Jesus the next, like one of those trick mirrors that change as you move them back and forth.

First it's a picture of Christ's triumph on the cross, his victory over sin and death and all the powers that be; but shift it just a little and it's a picture of a beaten man, tortured in body and spirit, and tacked up on a cross to die.<sup>ii</sup>

He's the son of God, and he's also the man who will end his life as a dangerous criminal, bleeding from his pierced side, wrapped in linen cloths, and laid to rest in a garden tomb.

Because Jesus is human, because he could and did die, only he could reveal the fullness of God's love in ways never before possible... In his death he chose to give up what human beings hold most dear – life – and he gave it up for one reason only – for love. Jesus' life became an expression of love, the ultimate gift. And his love, a love unto death, winds up being the only true source of new life.

He allowed his death, not because we weren't good enough to save him, but because we didn't believe we were good enough. Jesus' gift of his life on the cross is the ultimate gift of generosity and grace. It was not required of him, but

offered by him so that we might understand the full extent of God's love for the world.<sup>iii</sup>

And you and me? We have nothing to offer on this day; that is why there's no Eucharist on Good Friday. We're simply here to be reminded again of what has been offered for us. We're here not to celebrate or denigrate anything that we've done, but rather to celebrate what's been done for us. And to understand that it was not because anyone believed him bad, but because so few could believe themselves good, that he was crucified.

Today, we come again to these hours, to these terrible death – dealing, life – saving events. We're only able to be here because we are good, but because God is good. We're called to be here not because we need to be better, but because we are good enough. We're here not because we trust God, but because God trusts us.

We're here because God will not let even this violent death separate us from the love that God feels for us.

The test is over. That we are *here*, that we still exist after murdering God's son, is evidence of the truth Jesus never doubted – that God is love.

My sisters and brothers, we come together to confess that God is good, that we are good, that the world is good, that even this Friday, and the one so long ago it commemorates, are good. We're here to repeat and reaffirm the word first spoken at the birth of all being, God's first word that greeted all creation; when God looked upon all that God had made and said, "It is good. It is all very good."<sup>iv</sup>

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<sup>i</sup> (Barbara Brown Taylor, 1998). *God in Pain* (1998), "*Believing what we cannot understand*," Nashville: Abingdon Press, p. 89.

<sup>ii</sup> (Barbara Brown Taylor, *ibid.*), pp. 90-91.

<sup>iii</sup> (Gail R. O'Day, 1995). "The Gospel of John," in *The New Interpreter's Bible*, Volume IX, Nashville: Abingdon Press, pp. 836-837.

<sup>iv</sup> (Sam Portaro (2001). *Daysprings: Meditations for the Weekdays of Advent, Lent & Easter*, Cambridge, MA: Cowley Publications, pp. 139-140.