

“Good Friday”
 (Four accomplishments of the cross)
 March 29, 2001
 Dr. Jerry Nelson
www.soundliving.org

It sounds like an oxymoron – “Good Friday”

We feel the same way about those who speak of euthanasia; meaning “good death”.

Can there be such a thing?

We know that “Good Friday” speaks of the death of Jesus.

How can that be good?

It is called “Good” Friday because on that ONE day,

- out of his own heart
- and by his own will
- and from his own resources

God accomplished our salvation.

It is called “good” because of all that was accomplished for us.

Listen to the Scriptures:

2 Corinthians 5:21 “God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”

Or

1 Peter 2:24 “He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.”

Tonight I want to remind you of some of what makes Christ’s death so “good” for us - to think again of what Jesus accomplished on the cross!

You might think that is too obvious to be of much interest to you.

After all, didn’t he die for our sins?

What more do we need to think about?

I would contend that it is important to be quite sharp about what the cross means because imprecise thinking leads to imprecise theology, which is not good news.

Let me illustrate: It is quite easy to reduce the death of Christ to the idea that it is all about love.

In other words, what Jesus did on the cross was most of all an example for us to follow – when we think of how selfless he was, when we think of how much he loved us, we will be drawn to love him in return.

While it is definitely true that the cross is about love, it would be much too imprecise to not define that love.

To say it is only about feelings of love and a reciprocating gratitude is to leave too much out.

In such thinking we might be tempted to blur the other doctrines of Scripture – doctrines about God’s holiness and justice for example.

We might even go so far as to say that since Jesus loves everyone so much that he would die for them, surely he will overlook their mistakes, their humanness.

Jesus loves everyone and everyone should just love Jesus.

It sounds right but it is weak, too subjective, and lacking the muscle, the content, that God gives it.

If this vague idea of love is all “Good Friday” is about, why was death necessary at all?

Couldn’t God have found another way to dramatically demonstrate his love?

Why a cross?

The necessity of the cross is seen in the simple words of Romans 3:23 “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”

Whether it was Isaiah, Daniel, John or Paul, when they came into the presence of God, they fell to their faces and cried out in total humility – “woe is me”.

They understood that in comparison to the holiness of God, they were incomplete, unacceptable, and undone.

Sin in any form is a contradiction of God.

Any sin means we fall short of the glory, the perfection, the holiness of God.

And furthermore any sin must be met with divine judgment.

Some things don't allow for degree.

No one can be a little pregnant or slightly dead, or almost holy.

That which is not holy is unholy.

The Apostle Paul wrote, "The wages of sin is death."

Nahum wrote, "The LORD will not leave the guilty unpunished."

- God's law is unbendable,
- His holiness is unchangeable,
- And his justice is undeterred.

And the truth of the human condition is that we have without question broken God's laws and defiled his holiness and therefore we stand condemned simply awaiting the execution of the sentence – eternal death.

That is bad news!

But that is truth and it is that truth that makes the "good news" so good.

It is that hard truth that makes "Good Friday" good.

Something had to happen or we would be without hope.

The better we understand the justly inflexible demands of holiness and justice, the more marvelous become the love of God and his provision of his Son.

So what did Jesus accomplish on the cross?

Let me give you four words that begin to get at the significance of his death.

The first is “substitution”- Jesus became our substitute

Again from 2 Corinthians 5:21 “God made him who had no sin to be sin for us...”

Or 1 Peter 3:18 “For Christ died ... the righteous for the unrighteous,

In the OT God initiated a practice whereby the penalty for the sins of the people was placed on a substitute – a sacrificial lamb.

The OT worshipper would bring a sacrifice, a substitute, to the altar and would place his hands on the head of the sacrifice.

This act symbolized the transfer of the worshipper’s sin to the sacrifice.

And the penalty of that sin was taken from the worshipper and transferred to the sacrifice.

Everything hinged on the transaction.

The substitute bore the penalty for the worshipper.

The OT makes it clear and the NT makes it clearer that the OT practice was a pattern, a symbolic action looking forward to the real substitute – Jesus.

The Son of God offered himself to the Father, in our place.

To him were transferred all the sins of his people and he bore the just penalty for those sins.

Because our sins were transferred to our substitute, he died, he suffered the consequences of our sin.

- The just died for the unjust,
- The righteous for the unrighteous,
- The sinless for the sinner.

Hebrews 10:3-12”But those sacrifices are an annual reminder of sins, because it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. Therefore, when Christ came into the world, he said: "Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body you prepared for me;with burnt offerings and sin offerings you were not pleased. Then I said, `Here I am--it is written about me in the scroll--I have come to do your will, O God.' " First he said,

"Sacrifices and offerings, burnt offerings and sin offerings you did not desire, nor were you pleased with them" (although the law required them to be made). Then he said, "Here I am, I have come to do your will." He sets aside the first to establish the second. And by that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God."

Jesus is our substitute!

The second word is "redeemer"

In Matthew 20:28 Jesus said he came "To give his life as a ransom for many."

In Hebrews 9:15 we read that "he has died as a ransom".

A redeemer is one who purchases a helpless other out of slavery.

The Bible is filled with such language.

A person is in slavery to someone else and another, a redeemer, comes and pays for their release.

Jesus claims that his death paid the ransom for our deliverance from slavery.

We were slaves to the law and to sin.

Let me explain ever so briefly:

Without Christ we were slaves to the law in that only by keeping the law could we have a right relationship with God.

But Jesus came and fulfilled all the demands of the law so that by being in him we are declared righteous.

We were also slaves to the law in that the law's curse fell on us – we were sinners deserving of death and there was no way of escaping it – we were slaves to the penalty of the law.

But Jesus came taking the law's curse on himself and freeing us from it.

We were also slaves to sin:

Slaves to the guilt of sin – just as in slaves to the curse of the law.

But Jesus freed us from the guilt by taking our guilt on himself in our place.

And we were slaves to the power of sin – totally dominated by sin, unable to do anything pleasing to the Father.

But in Jesus we are freed from the power of sin to dominate us and we can live a new life.

Jesus redeemed us from slavery to the law and to sin.

On the cross he became my redeemer.

The third word is Savior – Jesus is my savior.

The 25cent word for it is “propitiation”.

And that word means to cover, to pacify, to appease, to placate.

Our sin evokes the holy displeasure of God.

Vengeance is the proper reaction of God against sin.

What God did was turn his wrath on himself.

- He took the brunt of his own holy indignation,
- his own holy wrath,
- his own righteous judgment.

I John 4:10 God “loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice (propitiation for our sins.”

The wrath of God against sin could not be overlooked, it had to be appeased.

Because of his love for us he decided to appease his wrath by unleashing it on himself.

Jesus saves us from the wrath of God.

He is my Savior.

Lastly, on the cross Jesus became my Peacemaker.

The word for that is reconciliation.

By saving us from the wrath of God through propitiation,
Jesus becomes the Peacemaker.

We usually first think of our need to be accept God.

But to be more accurate we must first think of God needing to
accept us.

To understand that we need to back to the beginning.

When God first made man and woman, God and people were friends.

By their sin, humans turned their backs on God.

And God in his holiness and justice turned his back on us.

And if God had not done something that is how it would have ended.

But Christ in his death satisfied the divine judgment against sin
(that was propitiation) thus enabling God to turn back toward
people.

Jesus death reconciled God to us.

He makes peace between God and me.

And now we are begged to turn back to God –
to be reconciled to God.

Nothing more has to be done to reconcile us to God.

It has all been done by Jesus

We do not need to add anything to make God look on us
with favor.

Jesus is my Peacemaker.

Jesus is my Savior

Jesus is my Redeemer

Jesus is my Substitute.

Listen to the words of a 150-year-old song:

“He was wounded for our transgressions,

He bore our sins in his body on the tree;

For our guilt he gave us peace,

From our bondage gave release,
And with his stripes our souls are healed.”

“He was numbered among transgressors,
We did esteem him forsaken by his God;
As our sacrifice he died,
That the law be satisfied,
And all our sins were laid on him”