

Grace and peace to you from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

“Truly this man was God’s Son!”

Here we are on Good Friday.

To use ‘good’ to describe this day is paradoxical.

If you are against capital punishment,

there is an irony that we celebrate death by capital punishment as good.

If you are a person that holds closely to truth and ethics,

this day of swirling lies, distortions and manipulations

is certainly enough to test your commitment on this ‘good’ day.

Good Friday *is* hard because it has pain and humiliation;

it has fear and control, manipulation and scheming;

it has loss and desertion;

it has rejection and death.

After our 40-day Lenten journey,

we are ready, oh so very ready for Easter.

Throughout Lent we have laid our sins on the cross of Jesus,
asked forgiveness and repented.

We are ready for Easter.

And, we are on the verge.

Yet this night is like a chasm that must be breached.

On this night we come face to face with the consequences of sin –
suffering and death.

And, we are asked to sit with it, take it all in.

On Palm Sunday, I asked the question:

What does it mean for us that truly human,

truly divine God in Jesus died on the cross on Good Friday?

On Sunday, I talked about Jesus’ body shutting down and,
finally, giving up it’s final breath, final heartbeat.

Before that, Jesus cries out,

“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

In that moment, for the first time in all of eternity,

Jesus was alone.
The Father and the Spirit were no longer with him.
He was utterly alone.
He was abandoned.

Abandonment is a part of our human predicament.
Some are abandoned by one or both parents,
abandoned by a partner who is an addict,
abandoned within a lonely, silent marriage,
abandoned by a friend when you need them the most.
Abandonment. Desertion. Neglect.
Stranding. Jilted. Betrayed.
This is what Jesus experienced.
His body died and he was utterly alone,
entirely cut off from God.
He experienced death across the fullness of everything
he was and is as both divine and human.

In his final moments, Jesus was human enough to
cry out to the God who had withdrawn from him.
He foretold of this in the gospels,
and yet he was human enough to shriek the question on so
many people's lips: Why? Why have you forsaken me?
And, there was no answer.

And then the centurion said,
"Truly this man was God's son."
Never before had Jesus looked less divine,
yet somehow it was also at that same moment
that he revealed his true nature.
The centurion saw it.
Even as Jesus gave his life up,
the centurion saw Jesus as a life-giver.

In Jesus, death entered the divine heart,

and once there, death died.
God is stronger than death.
Death could not withstand God's life and love.
Standing before the One who had been the Word of God from the very beginning,
death is not the last word.
The Word of God has the last word now,
and the last word of God is the same as
was the first:
Let there be light!
Let there be life!

God in Jesus shows us that it's ok to ask "Why?" when
death comes for a loved one or any of us.
It's our human selves that ask why, just as Jesus did.
But, we are promised something more.
We are promised more than this life.
Jesus leads the way into God's kingdom.
The door that once only opened one way,
now swings both ways.
And even as we ask why,
God welcomes us through death
to life eternal.
Thanks be to God.
Amen.