

A Sermon for Good Friday

Today is a truly solemn day. We gathered in silence, and we will leave in silence. Today we recall the death of Jesus Christ upon the Cross, for the sake of humankind. We face the awful truth of his betrayal and condemnation, the injustice which led to his crucifixion, and his painful and violent death.

Throughout all this, Jesus remains the same as he ever was. He does not deny who he is when questioned in the garden. He will not tolerate violent resistance when the soldiers make moves to arrest him. He goes willingly, making sure that none of his disciples are also arrested.

Before the High Priest, Jesus speaks plainly and truthfully. "I have said nothing in secret". Similarly, when he is interrogated by Pilate, Jesus is honest and open. Pilate tries his best to release Jesus, stating multiple times that he finds no case against Jesus, but he cannot placate the crowd. They are determined, and Pilate cannot risk the political and social upheaval that releasing Jesus might cause.

Then Jesus is sentenced to death, and taken away to be crucified. It is an awful scene. It should frighten and disturb us. The very notion of someone, let alone the Son of God, the incarnation of God's own self, dying in such a manner, is horrific.

Yet even in the midst of his pain and suffering, Jesus performs a final act of compassion. He sees his mother in the crowd. One can only imagine the pain she was feeling as she saw what was happening to her son. And Jesus sees the disciple whom he loves and trusts. With the words 'Here is your son' and 'Here is your mother' he ensures his mother's safety and comfort from that moment on. He will soon be dead, but she will be cared for.

Jesus dies. His body is taken down from the cross, and some brave and faithful disciples ask for permission to bury him. They prepare his body for burial, with herbs and spices to embalm it, and a shroud to cover it, and place him in the tomb in the garden. Jesus' death was an injustice, and his disciples could not save him, but they will offer him the decency of a proper burial, and the dignity of a quiet resting place. That they can provide, and they do so, with love.

This is the place where we are left today. There is no glimpse of what will happen next. We cannot rush through this waiting time and begin the next chapter yet. We

need to sit here, feeling all that we are feeling in this moment and throughout this day.

We should be struck by the immensity of what happened. We should feel a sense of grief and loss. We should take time to think, pray and reflect. That is the purpose, and the core, of Good Friday.

Yet there is this also, to consider: Jesus' death on the Cross is a cause for hope. He died that we might be reconciled to God. He died as an atonement for the sins of humanity. Through this great and profound sacrifice, we begin to understand the depth of God's love for us. God is a God of love, and God speaks to us through acts of love and grace. Jesus' death on the Cross, because it can be interpreted an act of sacrificial love, is something in which we can rejoice and be thankful, even as we are shocked by its violence.

Today, amid everything else that we are feeling, we should also feel comforted by the love of God, and the compassion of Jesus, and allow them to surround and encompass us today. We should allow them to uplift us, and to foster in us a sense of gratitude and thanksgiving, because that is the meaning of this day, and the meaning of the Cross. It is a symbol of death, but also love. It is a symbol of suffering, but also grace.

So let us stay here awhile this Good Friday, looking to that seemingly conflicting symbol of the Cross, and let us give thanks that we are people who have been redeemed by that Cross and all that happened upon it.

Rev. Dr Emily Fraser
All Saints, South Hobart and St Raphael's, Fern Tree
Good Friday 2025
18 April 2025