

WELCOME 2nd April 2021 – Good Friday '21 B

Mark 14:27 – 15:47

Death. It's the inevitable that we want to avoid.

Anti-aging creams. Attempts at downloading a person's brain so they can continue to live virtually. Cryogenics...freezing & storing bodies/body parts hoping future technology thaw, heal & bring them back to life.

We are obsessed with health fads & crash diets. We love the idea of a pill that will extend our vitality. Many are waiting in anticipation for the vaccination to be rolled out as a protection against death by virus, so life can resume more normally. Shadowed & haunted by death we strive for life...For the flipside of death is life...and that is a far more compelling option.

But there's a problem. For no matter what medical advances are made, no matter how much we try to avoid it, because of sin, death comes. To hopes. To dreams. To plans. To relationships. To families. To you. To me.

But Good Friday reveals the other side where hope is reborn...hearts are renewed & where sin is forgiven death destroyed, evil routed & eternal life given to all.

Jesus' death is life to all who receive it, believe it & live trusting it.

Let's pray...

GOOD FRIDAY '21 B - THE FLIP SIDE...OF DEATH

"Death" - plug that word into your favourite search engine & you'll get nearly 2 billion "hits" or potential explanations, uses & explorations of it. From the latest road fatality on the news wire, to mounting tallies from natural disaster & those killed by others. Casualties of civil unrest...the names of bands & slang uses...pets memorialized on social media...the people we grieve & miss from our own homes & families...& those we know who are in the final stages of their life's journey here on earth...We are inundated by death. The death rate is still what it always has been...100%... We understand no one gets off this earth alive.

Some...know it better than others & perhaps none knew death better than Roman soldiers who lived & were paid to live in "kill or be killed" circumstances. They knew what we know...death is the enormous **FULL STOP** at the end of everything we know of as life. Death is where hope ends. Death is where joy ceases. Death is where promise fails. Death is where love is powerless. Death is where life is exhausted. Death is where tomorrow never comes.

Until Jesus hangs dead on the cross & the last one to have laid hands on the living Jesus knows death has somehow just been overthrown. *"This man truly was the Son of God!"* That is not the idle observation of an dis-interested bystander. That's an eyewitness telling you that death has reached its end. That is the witness of one who knows that death may have claimed **this** life, but **THIS** life has taken death to death.

This was who Jesus had always promised he would be. He was silent before his accusers. He suffered. He died. Jesus steadfastly declined to manipulate the event. He resolutely refused to pull any heavenly strings. He unwaveringly made no effort to coerce or threaten the soldiers, Pilate, the crowd or his disciples into acting any differently. Jesus rejected throwing his weight around...would not protect his own life

Jesus chose to suffer. He chose to endure the worst humankind could imagine for his torture so that the worst you or I might ever experience would reveal his presence TO US. *"This man truly was the Son of God!"*

He chose to endure the worst humankind could imagine for his torture so that the worst you or I might ever experience would reveal his presence WITH US. *"This man truly was the Son of God!"*

He chose to die so that in the worst you or I might ever experience we would experience his dying breath of forgiveness washing over us. He chose to die so that in the worst you or I might ever experience we would experience his life-giving power lifting our hearts from despair. He chose to die so that in the worst you or I

might ever experience we would experience his love comforting our pain, healing our hurt, bringing us new life. *"This man truly was the Son of God!"*

The 4 gospel writers record a range of words...*Father forgive...Into your hands...It is finished...a loud cry* of anguish as Jesus drags death to his grave w/ him so that death would no longer threaten or frighten us...& have no power over us...*"This man truly was the Son of God!"*

Your death is gone to the grave w/ Jesus never again to hold him or you forever

Your sin is left on the blood-stained cross once & for all & forever – washed in the river that flows from his nail & spear pierced body

You striving to carve meaning & purpose out of your life is accomplished in him! You have nothing to prove & therefore nothing to lose. You are God's masterpiece. You are created anew by the very power that brought the universe into existence & raises Jesus Christ from death.

You trying to prove to God & the rest of us what a great person you are is foolishness because Jesus (who was untainted by sin) became our sin so that we might become the righteousness of God...Jesus friend of sinners claims you as one of his very own. Your helplessness/brokenness finds his love in reply.

Your struggle against the sin/evil that constantly dogs you & drags you into places you want never to go again...ends here...greater is He that is w/in you than the one who is in the world

The darkness that would swallow our souls devours only Jesus today...and even that darkness is defeated...*"This man truly was the Son of God!"*

From the cross onward...In Jesus...In His death is the new beginning to everything we imagine life should be...where hope is found...where joy grows...where promise is fulfilled...where love triumphs...life is made new...where tomorrow eternity stands open. *"This man truly was the Son of God!"*