

Good Friday C, 2010

Text: Luke 22:39-23:49

Title: How can death be a good thing?

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How can death be a good thing?

We call this day “Good Friday,” but it looks anything but good.

Here we see the almighty, perfect, sinless Son of God beaten, bloody, and dying all alone. And yet we call this day “Good.”

You have all seen death- your parents or grandparents, your husband or wife, your friends and neighbors. Someone in your life has died.

And all of you will die one day. Your heart will stop, your friends will cry, and you will be laid to rest.

How can death be a good thing? How can the pain and suffering, the grief and the mourning be a good thing?

Sometimes people will say that death is a good thing, especially when the person who dies has been suffering. Many of us would prefer death to pain.

Sometimes people will say that death is a good thing when a person is old and all alone, and all of their close friends and family have already died. Many of us would prefer death to loneliness.

But Jesus experienced all these things. Jesus suffered in every way possible. He did not die after a long illness. He did not die peacefully in His sleep. He did not die after a long and full life. Jesus was in the prime of His life when He was cruelly put to death. He experienced all the pain and suffering you could imagine.

Jesus was abandoned by His friends, condemned unjustly, mocked, beaten, tortured, and nailed to a cross.

How can death be a good thing? How can Jesus’ death be a good thing? How can this dark Friday be good?

First, Jesus’ death was good because it was God’s will. Jesus prayed, “Not my will, but yours be done.”

God’s will is always good. We may not see it. We may not understand it. But it is not for us to judge God.

Jesus entrusted Himself to God and to His good and gracious will. Even though He was the Son of God, He submitted to His Father's will. He was obedient even unto death. Jesus' death was good because it was God's will.

Second, Jesus' death was good because God worked good through it.

Jesus' death is good for you, because He died for you. He died in your place, so that you will never die.

Now wait a minute, you say, I thought we were all going to die. How can you say that we will never die?

There are two kinds of death.

First is the big death. This is eternal death. Hell is another word for this death- being cut off forever from God and His life. Because of sin, we have all earned the big death. That is the punishment we all deserve. This is the big death.

Second is the little death. This is temporary death. This is when your heart stops breathing and you stop breathing and your soul is separated from your body. This is the little death.

On the cross, Jesus dies the big death. He is cut off God and from His life. He is in Hell.

But why does Jesus die this death? He had no sin of His own. No, He had all of your sin, and the sin of the world. He is the Lamb of God who bears the sin of the whole world. Jesus was the worst sinner who ever lived.

Jesus dies the big death for you and me and all the other sinners out there for all of time. You no longer need worry about Hell, because Jesus has died that death for you.

Not only that, when the day comes for you to die the little death, Jesus will be there with you. He has died that one, too. He knows what it's like.

On that day there may be friends and family, doctors and nurses and perhaps a pastor by your side, offering words of comfort. But none of them know what it's like to die. Jesus does. And that's another good thing (at least number three, if you're counting.)

You have a God who knows what it's like to die. And He will be there with you when your last hour comes. Only He can point you through the pain and suffering, through the loneliness and the fear, to shepherd you safely home.

So Jesus' death is a good thing.

Jesus' death is good in that it teaches us obedience to our Father's will, to trust in Him even in the face of death.

Jesus' death is good in that it saves us from eternal death.

Jesus' death is good in that it gives us comfort in our own little death.

And Jesus' death is good in that it teaches us how to die. Jesus' last words were, "Father, into Your hands I commit my spirit."

Jesus entrusted His spirit into His Father's hands. He let go of His own life and placed it in the Father's care.

Those words are our words, too. Whether we are dying or living, our life is in God's hands.

And on Sunday morning we will see what the Father does when our lives are in His hands.

Have a good Friday.