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Good Friday  
April 19, 2019

Lectionary Year C:  
Isaiah 52:13-53:12  
Psalm 22  
Hebrews 4:14-16; 5:7-9  
John 18:1-19:42

### Obedient unto death

We call it “Good Friday.”

It is a weird name. It doesn’t feel very “good.” It feels bad. It feels really bad. It’s a day that we hear the entire passion story from the gospel of John, which is a story of injustice, betrayal, abandonment, torture, and death. And we know that it’s a story about us. “I am not his disciple,” Peter said. We say. “We choose him to die,” the crowd said. We say. “Crucify him, crucify him.” “We have no king but the emperor.” “Crucify him.” John’s passion story is a mirror and the reflection we see looks really bad.

But the story is not primarily about us. We are the objects of the story, but we are not its subject. Its subject, its protagonist, and its author is Jesus.

“Here is your king,” Pontius Pilate said to the crowd. And they watched him taken away, on that day that we call Good Friday.



“In the beginning was the Word.” That’s how John’s gospel begins. “And the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” And “what came into being in [the Word] was life ... the light of all people.” In the fullness of time, from the hiddenness of eternity, “the Word was made flesh,” in time and space. Some three decades before the events that John narrates, the Word was made flesh. Shakespeare’s Hamlet referred to his own “too too solid flesh,” and presumably ours also, but he was wrong about that. The passion of Christ shows us that flesh isn’t very solid at all.

But to such a life of fragile flesh, the Word had been called; to his people he had been sent; and to the Father he was obedient. So, from the heights of heaven, from the place of perpetual light, endless praise, and eternal joy, the Word had lowered himself down; and he kept on going down; to wash his disciples’ feet, he knelt down; “crushed for our iniquities,” he went down. Down and down, until there was no farther to go.

Jesus, the subject of this story. Its protagonist, its author, its victim. God himself wrapped in too, too fragile flesh.

John tells us: “They took Jesus; and ... he went out to ... Golgotha. There they crucified him.” There, our brothers and sisters crucified him. There, we crucified him.

On the eve of the Passover, in view of the world, our great high priest was on the cross; the King of kings, on the cross; the Lord of lords, on the cross; the savior of the world, on the cross; the promised Messiah, the Son of God, the creator of all that is, the Word made flesh, on the cross. God himself on the cross. God himself bleeding on the cross. God himself dying on the cross.

Because he had been called, and he had been sent, and he was obedient. We call it Good Friday.



It was his vocation, and his alone, to take on the sin and the guilt of the world; to become sin who knew no sin; to become guilty, who had no guilt. Every sin ever committed, every betrayal, every act of indifference, every instance of cruelty or hate, the sin of Adam, the sins of Israel, primitive sins, contemporary sins, individual sin, the sins of society, every society, Pilate's sins, Barabbas' sins, the sins of those priests, the sins of these priests, the sins of the chanting crowd, our sins, every single one of them, accrued over every lifetime, all of them without remainder were heaped onto him, because he had been called, and he had been sent, and he was obedient. And now he was damned. For all that, he was damned to hell. We call it Good Friday.



It was good.

It was the day, a Friday, on the eve of Passover, among people of no great importance, in a place outside the city of no great importance, when all of the guilt of all of the world was judged, and the perpetrators condemned ... and then the judge himself paid the penalty. It was the day that the judge accepted the punishment and paid the price. It was the day that God's wrath, God's damnation, was suffered by God himself, so that, by grace, it would never be suffered by us.

It was the day that all debts were paid off. All shackles were unloosed. All stains washed away by the blood and water that flowed from his side. Drink it. Drink it at the altar, because it tastes like forgiveness, absolute and total forgiveness. After that one single day, the guilty are now free—we are now free—having been made innocent. The day the guilty became innocent. The day we became innocent. On that cross, on that day, the sin of the world—yours, mine, everybody's—all of it was burned up, cancelled, and overcome.

The guilt of the world was nailed to the cross that day, never to be seen again. On that Friday that we call good.