

GOOD FRIDAY MEDITATION, YEAR B, APRIL 15, 2022

For many of us, after two years of the pandemic, we would prefer to skip over Good Friday and go right to Easter. After all haven't we been living Good Friday every day, over and over for the past two plus years? But the reality is we need Good Friday to put our sorrows, our pain, our griefs into perspective. Because without Good Friday there would be no joy and celebration and most of all hope for Easter.

Good Friday offers us the opportunity to make some space to grieve all those who have died this past year from the pandemic, violence, other illnesses and the senseless deaths that are happening in Ukraine. Good Friday asks us to stop and dwell in the pain, and the tragedy not only of Jesus' crucifixion but all that we witness. Good Friday is, in part, a reminder that grief is something we must go through, that it isn't something we can go around or avoid.

So today, the cross demands that we sit with the pain, agony and death not only of Jesus but our own. We need to do that because the cross teaches us that we worship a God who is not aloof and distant from the realities of human life. The cross teaches us that we worship a God who knows what pain is, who knows what loss is, who has experienced violence, who has suffered in the ways that we suffer. Today is when we take all of our pain, grief, sadness, worry and exhaustion to the cross.

We take it all to the cross and we place it at the foot of the cross, because suffering understands suffering. Jesus understands our pain. It can be too much to carry and we have to put it down somewhere. Today Jesus takes all of it upon himself. Every bit of death, disease, every bit of violence, killing, hatred, selfishness, pride, envy, greed, you name it. He bears all of it and he dies with it.

This is the ultimate act of love on Jesus' part. However, this act of love doesn't remove or erase our pain, or grief for it isn't that simple. What it does reveal to us that we worship a suffering God who can show us the way who will help us bear our burdens. Only a suffering God wounded and shamed can draw us to the hope that dwells in darkness and teach us how to love.

As Teri Daily, an Episcopal priest, writes, "As we look at Jesus on the cross, we see that God doesn't take one look at the risky brokenness of the world and run away from it. Instead, God runs toward us and gathers up all our weakness and pain, traversing any boundary to do so. Our violence toward one another, our insecurities, our broken relationships, our false searches for truth and power, our failures, our lost dreams and hopes, our grief, and even our death – God is present with us in all of these. As we look at the cross, we see that none of these things can separate us from God. Maybe seeing this truth is part of what salvation's all about. It is at least more than enough reason for us to call this painful, difficult day 'good'."

Here resides the essence of the Christian faith. As Dean Hollerith of the National Cathedral said, "On Golgotha God took the cross, an instrument of death, and made it the most powerful symbol of life. God picked up the shattered pieces of a human life in Jesus and made something holy out of them. The good news for you and me is that our Lord is still doing the same thing for all of us. Because of Jesus on the cross, our shattered lives can also be made into something holy. Because of Jesus on the cross, the greatest suffering we will ever know has already been known. Because of Jesus on the cross, our sins are forgiven, and all those who have died are not lost. On this day, Christ the crucified

takes the full weight of the world upon his shoulders, to hang there, bleed there, and breathe his last there. All for us. All for the sake of love.” Amen.