

“WHAT’S GOOD ABOUT GOOD FRIDAY?” A Homily delivered by the Reverend Dr. Geoffrey G. Drutchas, St. Paul United Church of Christ, Taylor, April 15, 2022

This noontime we gather for Good Friday. Given the events the day honors and commemorates, the day’s name seems like a misnomer, doesn’t it? What could possibly be good about Good Friday?

It is a day in which our Savior Jesus Christ was tortured almost naked on the cross. In fact, the cross was so brutal and the crucified so generally reviled in ancient days that for whole centuries some of Jesus’ followers wanted to deny that he had bodily suffered in such a way. They actually claimed that Jesus’ suffering was a projected illusion intended only to show sympathy for the human condition which almost inevitably brings with it suffering and pain. In lieu of a cross, the fish was the preferred, less embarrassing symbol of Christian faith. The fish used as a Christian symbol was a throwback to the Old Testament story of Jonah who, swallowed by some monster sea creature, is coughed up a beach after three days and nights in a kind of resurrection. (*Jonah 1:17*) It was not without some intense theological struggle that reality of Jesus’ true experience on Calvary’s cross as proclaimed in all four gospel was fully accepted as undeniable, inescapable truth, affirmed by both the Apostles’ and Nicene Creeds.

I think that what’s good about Good Friday is best appreciated if we understand that the day was originally known as God’s Friday. God used this day and the sacrifice of his own son on the cross to show how much he loved us and cared about the salvation and redemption of humankind. As the Apostle John explains in his gospel: “For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believes in him shall not perish but have everlasting life.” (*John 3:16*)

Jesus added to the goodness of the day by his spiritual courage and fortitude amid his suffering on the cross. Rather than display hatred and call upon to avenge his degradation and agony, he asked God for mercy towards those who persecuting, scourging, and now crucifying him. “Father, forgive them,” he pleaded from the cross on their behalf, “for they know what they do.” Instead of condemning them as palpably evil, he deemed them ignorant—a far less grievous sin. Jesus’ forbearance in judgment provides a good, positive example for us all when we are confronted and assailed by critics and enemies.

Of course, there is one more thing that makes this Good Friday good. Namely, our own presence right here in the sanctuary. We who gather for this honor have

not forgotten God or Jesus. Instead, we honor and reverence them amid all that they make possible for us in this life.

I remember a time when the whole world seemed to observe Good Friday. At least in the afternoon, noon to three, businesses shut down, stores closed, streets emptied, and church filled up with the religiously pious and faithful. No child would have been permitted to play or frolic outdoors. However today, anything goes. And everything goes right on without a pause or a thought about Jesus and all that he makes possible for us.

Except we remember. In our noontime worship we cherish Jesus with all the solemn respect still due him and his sacrifice. Yes, we are a part of the goodness of Good Friday as we humble ourselves before God and express awe at what Jesus has made possible for us. May God bless us as we strive to always cling to the good and right as those who have not forgotten that we are each called to be faithful disciples of the one who died for us that we might all live for abundantly and know in time to come life eternal through his name. **Amen.**