

“Gallows and Grave: The Word of God Made Silent”

The Gospel of John begins: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it” (1:1-5). A few verses later he continues to talk about the light which is the light that gives us the ability to see and understand God as a ‘he’ meaning Jesus: “The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. He came to his own home, and his own people did not accept him. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God (9-13).” Then he sums it all up saying, “The Word became flesh and dwelt among us (14)”, actually the Greek says that he pitched his tent among us. The Word came to his own home, the temple, but was rejected by his own people so he became flesh and pitched his tent like a nomad elsewhere in the wilderness among all humanity to shine the Light of Life.

Anyway, Jesus the Word, the Light that gives Life, the one through whom all things came into being, this Jesus, our Jesus, is God’s only self-revelation and The Word made God known in such a way that we could understand. He became human flesh. He became just like us so that we can know God and the result is that he has made it so that we can become children of God.

Put simply, the Word which God spoke on the days of Creation through which everything came into being and has life became human flesh, became one of us that we might truly know God Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The creating Word through which the Father spoke all things into being and gave it life became human flesh and lived among us.

Today is Good Friday. The Day we gather together to remember the crucifixion and death of Jesus, God the Son, the Creating Word, the Light, the Life-giving Word of God become flesh, God’s own self-revelation. In classic Eeyore fashion, we may say, “If it is a good morning which I doubt.” But, this morning I will try to say why we call it Good Friday. So...Today we remember what would seem to be the inconceivable: by the gallows and the grave the Word was made silent. The creating Word of God, the life-giving Word of God, the revealing Word of God was made silent in death. This is staggering stuff, if you’ll let yourself see it. In the death of Jesus, the Word, God the Son, God’s creating ceased to be, God’s life giving ceased to be, and God’s revealing of himself ceased to be. By the gallows and the grave the Word of God was made silent. That can’t be good, can it?

Well, silence is a very powerful thing. (Every husband knows this.) No matter what the relationship when one or both parties go silent, the silence can be anything from peaceful to “deathening”. For example, there are moments when friends or lovers come to the point of having nothing more to say with words and they sit in silence as the bonds grow deeper. But on the other hand, when relationships are broken and people are so hurt that they cannot even say hurtful words to one another, they have to entrust the relationship to silence

“Gallows and Grave: The Word of God Made Silent”

hoping it will do its thing. Then, there's the dark side. If you have been with someone at the time of their death, you may have met silence in its ultimate capacity. The silence of death is a great mystery both peaceful and brutal. Oftentimes, it is a moment in which the people gathered around know quite literally that God is with them and that there is nothing one can do but trust in the steadfast love and faithfulness of God. It is a peaceful silence like the eye of a hurricane. Death comes so brutally, broken relationships come brutally, and after the silence bereavement and grief are just as brutal while getting on with life.

So often it is the case that when life brings silence God comes into the midst of that silence and awakens faith. If there is any reason that we can call Good Friday good it is because somehow in the midst of the Word of God being made silent in death, God comes and awakens faith in the most bleak of moments. When God's creating Word was made silent God began to create a new creation which we see now in faith and hope and will know at our resurrection, but until then we must learn to trust God's steadfast love and faithfulness in the midst of silence. When the life giving Word of God was made silent, God began to create new life which we experience now so often in silence as a foretaste of the life to come by the gift of the Holy Spirit. When God's self-revealing Word was made silent we saw that God is self-giving, self-emptying, self-sacrificing love whose power is weakness.

The Word of God is a peaceful silence that assures us of God's steadfast love. It makes us look towards new creation in faith and hope. It brings with it the life-giving power which makes us to become children of God. I hope that at one point or another the Word made silent has broken into your life so that you know the peace of Christ, the Spirit of Adoption. But let's not leave it as a one time thing. The Word of God made silent is present, silently at work in each of us bringing about faith and hope until the day of resurrection and new creation.

Yet, if you are like me the silent Word once and always heard can be so easily drowned out in our lives by the never ceasing multi-track player of our hearts and minds. If you are like me you have certain hurts, fears, worries, grudges, regrets, prides, false saviors, twisted desires, and selfish motives that you continually play over and over and over again to yourself like an addiction to brokenness and self-destruction. And, there seems to be no way you can turn them off. They just keep coming back. They take us over and affect how we relate to others in ways hurtful to others and to ourselves. My friends, here is something good about Good Friday...the gift of prayer in silence. In prayer we can return to God and hear the Word made silent. His silence silences the multi-track recorder with the peace of Christ. In the prayer of silence the creating Word made silent gives us a new multi-track that plays love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. In the prayer of silence the Word made silent sires new life in us so that we really do know the love of God and truly want to live for him because we know we are his children. In the prayer of silence the Word made silent changes us so that in the love we share God is revealed. Often what is missing from our prayer lives is our just being silent and listening for God. We think of prayer as having to be filled with words, but healing prayer is when we sit before God and turn down the volume of

“Gallows and Grave: The Word of God Made Silent”

our multi-tracks so that we can hear the silence of the new multi-track beginning to play. Good Friday comes to us not just on this day, but so very often through our lives when we have come to a point where prayer without words is all we have. It's at those times that God begins to create anew, begins to give new life, begins to reveal his love for us more deeply. The Good news of Good Friday is that we have been given the gift of wordless prayer in which we hear the Word made silent and the Word brings forth new life out of brokenness. Amen.