

Hebrews 10:16-25 ¹⁶ "This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my laws on their hearts, and write them on their minds," ¹⁷ then he adds, "I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more." ¹⁸ Where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for sin. ¹⁹ Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, ²⁰ by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, ²¹ and since we have a great priest over the house of God, ²² let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. ²³ Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. ²⁴ And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, ²⁵ not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

“There Is Something Good about This Day”

As we have heard and reflected here upon Jesus' last hours we have done so focusing to a large extent on ourselves and what we do or leave undone with respect Jesus that led or leads to our crucifying him. If Jesus were merely a man, albeit a man of impeccable character, the fact that human beings would reject such a man, hate such a man, and kill such a man whom they should rather strive to be like exposes that we human beings have an essential problem in a very nature. We can play holier than thou and say, "I wasn't there and if I was I wouldn't have done that. I would have been like Joseph of Arimathea who protested and then cared for what was left." Nevertheless we all know we deny him and all but hate the demands put upon us because of him, because of his commandment to love. We cannot step back and say we had nothing to do with that death.

Well, this whole thing gets murkier when we discover that Jesus is more than merely a man. He is God the Son become human and our crucifixion of him reveals that our essential problem in our very nature is with God. We are so alienated from God that we can't recognize him. We rather reject him, hate him, and violently kill him. There is a terrible perversion in our relationship to the one who in love made us to bare his image within his creation. There is a horrible rift, an uncrossable chasm between us and God. Once a year on this day, Good Friday, we intentionally lay this out bare naked in shame before ourselves. And we must wonder why this day is called "Good".

We call this good first because of an accidental play on words. A long time ago the English word for God was pronounced Gud which sounds like good. At some point the language changed enough and people became illiterate enough to mix the two up so that what used to be called God's Friday was renamed/respelled Good Friday and for good reason the change stuck. This is God's Friday because it is all about what God has done for humanity, truly the whole of his Creation, the outcome of which is unimaginably good. This is God's Friday. It is the day God himself put sin, evil, and even death to death. We often ask why God doesn't do something about this evil mess of a world in which we live. Is he just winking an eye at it? God's Friday was the day he did. Of course, it's not what we would expect God to do. This day God exposed our evil, passed judgment on us, and carried out the sentence. We would have expected that on that Friday God would have destroyed us. That's imaginable to us. Hollywood has given us a multitude of images of the cataclysmic destruction of humanity. What's unimaginable to us is that God would take our humanity into his self, created matter into himself, our perverted relational alienation from him into his very self by means of God the Son becoming human as Jesus of Nazareth, the Messiah and having lived the perfect life of faith and obedience to the will of the Father, he bore the judgment and the penalty of our sin in our place once and for all. God even took death into his very self. God the Father and God the Holy Spirit experienced the death of God the Son. Somehow, unimaginably, we must say their dance of unending giving of themselves to one another in love was broken, ended with death and grief and mourning. Yet, in that moment the cessation of existence which is death ceased to exist. I admit that in this moment I am trying to conceive and explain what is inconceivable for us. God is God.

God does not dole out vengeful judgment upon us, giving us what we deserve. Though he does render verdict and judge against our sin because he is God and in order to be God he must, the Judgment he renders is redemptive judgment, an act of salvation which heals even the most heinous of victimizers. It heals us. You see, God did something new when God the Holy Spirit overshadowed Mary and she conceived and bore a child, God's child, the Son of God become human. In Jesus' very self God and humanity are reconciled. That uncrossable chasm was not simply bridged by the cross. It was annihilated in Jesus very being. He himself was, is, and evermore shall be the reconciliation of God and humanity. That moment of death which lasted for a Sabbath (I'm not even going to try to wrap my head around the richness of that) became the moment of the beginning of a New Creation in Jesus' Resurrection. The Father and the Spirit raised him in his human flesh now made new. The reconciliation between God and humanity that he is in himself is now free of the perversion of sin.

We call this day Good because that reconciliation and freedom is also once and for all and extended to all in the gift of the Holy Spirit. In Christ, that reconciliation is available to all. There is nothing that can separate us from the love of God in Christ. The day will come that we too will be raised from death and made new and knowing the God and his great love without the hindrances of our broken selves trying to distort our perception of our relationship with God. God does not seek to condemn us he seeks to heal and free us. God is with us and we are utterly forgiven even of the sinning that we continue to do. The difference now is that he is in us working to heal what will ultimately be healed in resurrection. There is nothing we have done or left undone, even our continual desertion, denial, and even attempting to crucify Jesus again can separate us from the love of God in Christ. Let us not take that for granted but faithfully and gratefully forget what is behind and strain toward what is ahead pressing on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called us upward in Christ Jesus. Amen.