

Hebrews 10:16-24 ⁶ "This is the covenant I will make with them after that time, says the Lord. I will put my laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds." {16 Jer. 31:33} ¹⁷ Then he adds: "Their sins and lawless acts I will remember no more." {17 Jer. 31:34} ¹⁸ And where these have been forgiven, there is no longer any sacrifice for sin. ¹⁹ Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, ²⁰ by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, ²¹ and since we have a great priest over the house of God, ²² let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. ²³ Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. ²⁴ And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds.

"The New and Living Way"

I, like most parents, have a neurotic fear that something bad might happen to William. I could find comfort in saying that life is out of my control and that I just have to trust that the Trinity is looking after my child and that if anything bad happens then there must be a good reason for it. But, then again there's the thinking, rebellious side of me that says there is no reason good enough for anyone to have to suffer the loss of a child. Truly, what kind of a God are we talking about that let's or some would even say causes a child to die for a reason that is according to God's will. Parents aren't supposed to outlive their children no matter how old they are. That's just not the normal order of things and I just can't imagine the wound it deals a person's heart.

I'm not speaking out of line here because this is a type of tragedy that has touched my family. When my father died of cancer at age 60, my 80 year old grandmother was there at his bedside. She didn't say much about it. Yet, my Grandfather had died three years earlier and she was just beginning to get used to life alone and then Dad, who was her only son, wasted away in front of her. It got very difficult for the family to get together after that and she lived only two more years. She died just in time too because two years later my sixteen year old cousin, her youngest and probably most treasured grandchild died in a car wreck. My uncle was driving and happened to fall asleep at the wheel. I have no idea how my aunt and uncle have held it together other than their faith.

When I read of Jesus crucifixion, and come to the point where it says his mother Mary was standing nearby, I think of my Grandmother and my aunt. What I know only as a neurotic fear they lived. I'm sure Mary felt just as they felt and feel, but with a lot more God stuff thrown in. It seems God created Mary's problems. As a young girl of 15, an angel appeared to her telling her the Holy Spirit would cause a child to be born in her who would be the Saviour of the world. In fact, he would be the Son of God and king of Israel. When he was born in the humble situation of a stable in Bethlehem, shepherds and kings came and told her great things about the child. Then when she and her husband Joseph took him to the temple to be circumcised, an old man named Simeon and an old

woman named Anna prophesied great things about him, but also that her life would culminate in great pain because of this child.

As a child Jesus was rather precocious about matters pertaining to Israelite faith. But, then, something happened when he hit 30. He went to his prophet-“nephew” of a cousin named John who baptized him along with all those other fanatics who came out to the desert to get themselves right with God through John’s baptism. People said that God spoke that day and called Jesus his son. Oddly, not soon after that, John was arrested and Jesus started wandering around the Galilean countryside proclaiming that “the kingdom of God is at hand, repent and believe the good news.” Then he started healing people and casting out demons. He even brought a couple of people back to life. He also kept getting into disputes with the religious authorities. Mary probably thought she’d raised him better than that. For a time she thought he was crazy, but yet it seemed that what the angel had said was coming about.

Then, in the span of twelve hours, there came the arrest, the trial, and the horrible Roman flogging that left him unrecognizable. And then, there Mary stood watching her son die the slow, cruel death of crucifixion. Her Son of God, the Saviour of Israel grew up to be convicted of blasphemy and leading a revolt. I can’t help but think that Jesus wasn’t the only one that day saying “My God, My God, why have you forsaken me.” Mary had more than enough reason to say that. Her son began life according to God’s promise, but his life ended in God forsakenness. I don’t know how to sympathize with Mary, the mother of Jesus today on this Good Friday. Why is this day called Good when we are remembering such horrible things that happened.

Well, it was on this day that a new and living way was opened to God. It was on this day that death itself was put to death. This is why we call it Good. Yet, on this day God himself experienced great tragedy; God the Father had to suffer the death of God the Son who was wrongly put to death by humans. I used to believe wrongly about this event. I used to wonder how it was that God died in Jesus’ death. People have often said that that the God part of Jesus vacated him while he was on the cross and that’s why he cried about being God-forsaken. Yet, if God did not die then death was not put to death and nothing has changed. But, then again, if God did die, did the creation go awhile with no God? Such is what happens when we forget that God is Trinity. It was God the Son who became human as Jesus of Nazareth and who died on the cross. God the Father and God the Holy Spirit suffered the death of God the Son. God the Father knows what it is to lose to death his one and only Son. The Father could only stand back and watch because the very means through which God created and speaks his will into this creation was dying. Oh well, enough theology. It is enough to say that God the Trinity knows what it is to die and to lose a child to death. Let us not forget that resurrection was forth coming for God the Son because death could not hold him. So also for all who have lost children to death, resurrection is forth coming.

Through the death of Jesus, the Christ, God the Son, God the Trinity has established in our hearts a new covenant, a new way to live in response to him, a new and living way of coming to him. The result of our death going into God was

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that the life of God, the Holy Spirit spews forth upon us and into us. John gave us a very graphic image with that Roman soldier piercing Jesus' side and water and blood began to spew forth upon him. Yet that is what is happening to humanity and all of the creation now since God the son has died and risen. We are being flooded with the life of God and are being recreated to bear forth the living image of Christ Jesus and his self-giving love. In this new life we live not according to laws but out of the new life of hope that we find in God's continual and forgiving presence in our lives. Jesus' once and for all death has made it possible for us to do God's will provided we are willing to listen to his Spirit which he has poured into us making us able trust him and to follow.

Jesus' death had a purpose. It was a purposeful death. But, we still have the capacity to void his death of its purpose. When we let go of our hope and cease trying to discern and trying to help one another to discern the acts of love and good that the Trinity wants us to do with the new life he has given to us, we make Jesus' death meaningless. When we turn our backs on each other and let hate, unforgiveness, and disunity into our communities of faith we make his death to be in vain. When we cease to encourage and love one another and rather gossip and lie and ignore one another, we have done nothing less than crucified our Jesus once again. Friends, for Jesus sake live your new life before God in the new and living way. Amen.