

E-Series

Good Friday

Read Mark 15:1-47

Every day this week, I will be sharing with you some reflections written by my friends James Howell, pastor of Myers Park UMC in Charlotte. He will guide us through this Holy Week.

The paradox that is Christianity is elegantly expressed in today's unexpected name: Good Friday. Seems like it should be called Dark Friday, or Tragic Friday, or The Worst Friday Ever. But, God's power "is made perfect in weakness" (2 Corinthians 12:9). "God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise, God chose what is weak to shame the strong, God chose what is low and despised to bring to nothing the things that are" (1 Corinthians 1:27).

"At the right time, Christ died for the ungodly" (Romans 5:6). Good Friday is a day to check your watch, at 9 in the morning, at 3 in the afternoon, and as it grows dark – and pause to consider the sufferings, death and burial of our Lord.

Between 6 and 9am, Jesus was tried by [Pilate](#) in a contest between the powerful and the powerless, between searching questions and silent submission. Jesus was mocked, whipped, made a laughing-stock: "He was despised and rejected, a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief. Surely he has borne our grief, and carried our sorrows. He was wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities, with his stripes we are healed. He was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth, like a lamb led to the slaughter; they made his grave with the wicked, although he had done no violence" (Isaiah 53).

Beginning mid-morning, and extending through mid-afternoon, Jesus was [crucified](#), a horrific form of capital punishment, an excruciating public humiliation designed to intimidate the rabble and keep the peace. The Romans alone wielded the legal authority to crucify. Pilate had crucified quite a few himself.

With little breath left in him, Jesus cried out, "My God, why have you forsaken me?" Doesn't this leave us space to cry out in the darkness when we seem forsaken by God? God did not remain safely aloof in heaven, but God entered into human suffering at its darkest. Just as Jesus stretched out his arms on the cross, so God envelops us in a love that even death could not defeat.

One of the most interesting characters in all the Bible, Joseph of Arimathea, insures Jesus' burial. As the shadows lengthen this day, feel sorrow, grieve deeply over the death of Jesus, and yet lift your heads, look up, anticipate the elation to come, the gift of life in the throes of Jesus' death.

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