

## Good Friday?

Perhaps one of the questions we most often think about on this day is: "why do we call it Good Friday?"

Just a few hours ago, our stations of the cross took us through the long painful journey that Jesus suffered.

From beatings to an excruciating death on the cross.

What could possibly be good about that?

Our fathers and mothers in faith, back in the early days, began to think of Jesus coming to save us from our sins by repaying a debt that we owe to God.

That only he could repay the debt that we had accumulated.

This was a notion based on medieval thinking of lords and serfs and the honor of those who rule.

God could not forgive our sins without a payment — because that would be an affront to God's honor.

But that way of thinking pretty much leaves us off the hook, when it comes to personal and society-wide transformation.

If Jesus cleared our debt, then what's left for us to do?

A nod of the head?

A tip of the hat?

Thanks Jesus!

Now that our debt to God is paid, we can get back to the world as it is, and join in the fray!

But perhaps there's another reason why we ought to come to see this Friday, as good.

Perhaps the 2000 years that we have been granted to reflect on the meaning of Jesus' life, death and resurrection can bring us to a different insight.

To a different wisdom.

One that says "we are not off the hook!"

A conclusion that says Jesus didn't come so much to repay a debt as to show us how to live, if we wish to continue to have life on this planet.

Just take a gander at this morning's headline.

"Russian Setbacks Raise Nuclear Fears." Star-Advertiser, p.1, 4/15/22.

It's taken us 2000 years to develop the capacity to destroy nearly all life on earth.

The wars and rumors of wars that have occurred throughout these 2000 years have permitted us to bend and mutilate Christianity into a religion that supports such things.

Priests and bishops bless our troops.

We have a nuclear submarine named: "Corpus Christi," Latin for "Body of Christ."

It carries 24 nuclear warheads that can obliterate any target on the planet.

We have created a culture that, rather than seeing the military as a sad but perhaps necessary consequence of our stubborn refusal to follow Jesus, a shameful reminder of our sin, of our estrangement from God, we instead glorify the military and worship it as our savior in time of need.

The Russian orthodox church today endorses the slaughter in Ukraine.

All of this an unintended consequence of thinking that Jesus paid our debt to God, leaving us, to be us.

So maybe we need to look at today with a different set of eyes.

Perhaps we need to come to see that what Jesus came to do was less about paying a debt and more about teaching us the way to live the life that truly is life.

To live the life that God always intended us to live.

And that is a life of self-giving service.

It's a life that helps us come to see that if we can learn to die even before we die, then we need never die.

What does that mean?

Perhaps it means that if we can enter into this flow that is Jesus, that is God the Father, that is the Holy Spirit, if we can trust that life is not something that we have to figure out or muddle through, but rather, that life is a gift and if we will simply surrender our egos and our purported needs and wants, we suddenly find ourselves – transformed!

Experiencing a peace that passes all understanding.

Experiencing a unity with one another that cannot be described.

We get there by giving up.

Letting go.

Surrendering.

Isn't that the way of the cross?

Isn't that the way of Jesus?

Isn't that why this Friday is good?

+amen