



BECAUSE OF JESUS

Part 3: Good Friday

If ever there was a misnomer, surely 'Good' Friday is it! It's the often asked question by children hearing the story for the first time, 'What's so 'good' about Good Friday? Isn't that the day Jesus died?' It's a fair question- why would we celebrate the death of the one who said he came that we might know life?

Western cultures traditionally don't deal with death very well. Neither do we talk about death comfortably, nor do we even think about its implications. Therefore, the realities of Good Friday often are an uncomfortable place for us to dwell.

The famous sermon, "It's Friday but Sunday's coming", first preached by Rev S.M. Lockridge, is an incredibly powerful and moving sermon that stirs the soul, but at its essence it reminds us that, as Christians, we often have trouble sitting with Friday- we struggle to linger at the cross with all that it implies. However, if we want to experience the fullness of the hope and joy of the resurrection, we need to sit with the hopelessness and fear of Jesus's closest followers and all they experienced on 'Good' Friday.

The death of Jesus for those who walked with him meant the end of the promise. We see Jesus (three times!) predict his death in the presence of his disciples, but they didn't choose to listen or want to understand. The text tells us that they were afraid to ask what it all meant (Mark 9:32). Indeed, on one

occasion, Peter even 'rebuked' Jesus (Mark 8:32) for suggesting such an outrageous idea in front of the others. If Jesus died, it meant it was all for nothing. All that they had given, invested, and sacrificed – it was pointless because this man surely was not the Messiah they had hoped for and staked their life on.

The foot of the cross was a bleak place on that 'Good' Friday. It was a place of despair and hopelessness. It was a place of defeat and a space of mourning. There was nothing 'good' about it. Even on the road home to Emmaus, their bodies were 'still' and their faces were 'downcast' (Luke 24:17). 'We had hoped...' they explained to the stranger who joined them on their journey, but that hope had now evaporated. It strikes me as fascinating that Jesus didn't say a word to those travellers at that moment. There was no 'Look- it's me!' or even a 'don't be so downcast, I'm alive!' He walked with them. He listened to them share their story. He shared his.

As followers of Jesus, 'being and sharing good news' sometimes means sitting in the space of pain and grief, despair and hopelessness with others - lingering there longer than is comfortable. It means weeping at the foot of the cross at the injustices that take place in our world, the brokenness of humanity and holding the pain of those around us- and ourselves- with gentleness and care. 'Being and sharing good news' means listening deeply to the 'good Friday stories'

that surround us in our families, in our communities, in our world, and sharing in the suffering. Sitting in silence with God and one another- simply to 'be'.

As the Psalmist reminds us, 'weeping may stay for the night' (Psalm 30:5)- but yes, 'joy will come in the morning.' Those of us who live on this side of the resurrection can't help ourselves but to skip to the 'good bit' - the hope, the joy, the celebration. But, this Good Friday, can we take ourselves back and sit with the disciples as they gathered again in the upper room in fear and confusion or walk dejectedly with Cleopas and friends on the road home to Emmaus. To listen to what the Spirit of God says to us about what it meant for God to enter into the suffering of humanity and what that means for the good news that we bear to the world.

It's Friday...

Questions?

- It's often said that listening is the first step in 'being and sharing good news'. How have you seen this to be true in your own experience?
- In Jesus, God entered into our suffering. And still does. How is this good news for our neighbours?

Rev Beth Jackson