



What do you need to nail to the cross and let it die?

Each of us has at least one thing that we need to give over to God. That we need to let die in our life so that we can come to a closer and more authentic life as a child of God.

Good Friday is called “Great Friday” in the Orthodox tradition. People will sometimes ask, “what is good about Good Friday? It is the day when Jesus was beaten, scourged, spit upon, nailed to a cross and then died. What is good about that?” Fair questions.

Great Friday, though, may be more descriptive. It is only through this day that we come to the resurrection. It is only through the pain and suffering- through the death- that we can put down those things that keep us from living a life understanding and accepting that God loves us and God’s grace is given to us freely and unashamedly and without end. It is only by going through Good Friday that we can truly walk The Way.

Good or Great Friday can help us learn our purpose as followers of Jesus. Robert Wright, the Episcopal Bishop of Atlanta writes:

Purpose is the fire that warms the heart, gives light for vision, and generates energy to sustain work. Remember, Jesus was a man of purpose. At his conception, his mother was clear she existed for the purposes of the Almighty, “Let it be unto me according to your word.” (Luke 1:38) From Jesus’ preadolescent mouth we hear, “I am about my Father’s business.” (Luke 2:49) At the beginning of his public ministry, he gathers people based on a purpose, “I will make you fishers of men.” (Matthew 4:19) Even in the agony of Gethsemane, despite betrayal and suffering, his purpose remained primary: “Not my will but God’s will be done.” (Luke 22:42)¹

Richard Burden, in writing about Good Friday says²:

The Passion reveals a deep truth about the way the world is. Not the world that God created and pronounced good... but the world that we have created. The world we have

¹ Robert Wright in *Vestry Papers*, January 2016.

² <http://episcopaldigitalnetwork.com/stw/2016/03/08/what-is-truth-good-friday-c-2016/>

made out of fear. Out of shame. Out of bitterness. Out of our desperate need to hide our own tender wounds. In our desperation and fear, we try to make it someone else's fault; we cast blame and cry out for the blood of someone else, an innocent, over and over and over. The Passion reveals the worst in us. Reveals the truth of the hideous things we're capable of when we're afraid. When we're ashamed.

These are truths that we can see with the help of the cross, if we have eyes to see and ears to hear. Once the crowd reasserts their commitment to the status quo, loudly affirming that they have no king but Caesar, Pilate turns away and goes back to business as usual.

How often do we catch a glimpse of this life-giving, world-altering truth and then go back to business as usual? How tempting is it for us to turn away? To not look at or accept this truth. The truth that we are capable of this horror... that the Passion takes place because of the world we have made, the world we are content to live in every day. We are constantly at risk of turning away – turning away from the cross of Christ, and turning away from all the crucified people of every generation – and returning to the status quo. It's so very easy to close our eyes, to change the channel, turn the page, walk away telling ourselves that the reality, the truth, of the cross doesn't really have anything to do with us. In hiding from or averting our eyes, we risk missing an opportunity for the transformation that God is always holding out for us.

The first act in repentance, the first move toward redemption, the first stance of transformation is simply to not turn away. To not close our eyes to the suffering of others. It is when we face reality—when we face the truth—when we bear witness to the suffering of Jesus and the suffering of all the crucified people around the world—that is when salvation and redemption begins.

Today is a day when it is especially good to reflect on what the death of the man Jesus on the cross means for us today. The voluntary giving up of a life so that others might live. The surrendering of human will to God's purpose so that all might believe and might have life and have life abundantly.

What in your life needs to be nailed to the cross so that God might work in your life in new ways? **Amen.**