

Good Friday 2019
John 18:1-19:42
St Peter's Lutheran Church Elizabeth 19/04/2019
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Grace and life to you dear Brothers and Sisters from Father God, the slain Lamb and Holy Spirit. "Here is the man!" [John 19:5] Let's pray:

"Here is the man!" Pilate speaks a truth far more profound than the words we hear. Who is this man? Who do you see? To whom is Pilate referring?

Obviously, it's Jesus of Nazareth. He's wearing a crown of thorns and dressed in a purple robe. He's been whipped and beaten. But I wonder if this man might also be someone else – this man who is beaten and abused, this man who has been broken, this man who is mocked and ridiculed, this man who is cut and bleeding, this man who is the victim of violence and injustice, this man who is in pain and suffering, this man who has been abandoned, betrayed, and denied, this man who stands alone in silence.

Who is this man? Do you recognise his face, his pain, his brokenness?

Touch with his hands and feel your own pain. Look with his eyes and see your own brokenness. Listen with his ears and hear the silence of your own loneliness and rejection. Taste with his tongue your own thirst and dryness. Smell with his nose the many ways the stench of death has visited your life.

This man, Jesus, is the image and reflection of our own lives, our losses, our pain and suffering, our brokenness, our loneliness and rejection. His story is the human story. We see him everywhere. Look in any hospital room or nursing home; "Here is the man!" Hear the cries of those who grieve; "Here is the man!" See the violence across our world; "Here is the man!" Wherever you find injustice,

discrimination, or oppression; “Here is the man!” Look into the faces of battered women and abused children; “Here is the man!” The poor, the hungry, the needy; “Here is the man!” In the midst of fear, loss, or sorrow; “Here is the man!” In condemnation and guilt; “Here is the man!” Wherever there is pain, suffering, or death; “Here is the man!” In the brokenness of humanity; “Here is the man!”

If we aren’t able to see that, if we look at this man and see only the individual, Jesus of Nazareth, if we can’t see that this man is every man and woman, the Son of Man, the human one, the personification of all human beings — then the passion of our Lord Jesus Christ is just another tragic story of humanity turning against itself, just another chapter in the book of humanity’s ability to be less than human, just another sad tale at which we shake our heads and wonder when and how any of this will ever change; and there is nothing good about this Friday.

“Here is the man!” The hidden meaning and truth in Pilate’s words are this. Here is the human being. Here is you. Here is me. Because Jesus is the Son of Man, the human one, “the man,” he is the mirror in which we see the truth of our own pain, the suffering of all people, the brokenness of our world, the violence that destroys, and the tragic reality of death.

So how can this man make any difference? He is guilty. Jesus has been charged and condemned for making himself equal to God, claiming that he is the Son of God. Of that he is truly guilty. And later in the gospel story Thomas will confirm the truth of the charges when he looks at Jesus’ wounds and proclaims, “My Lord and my God” [John 20:28]. Here is the man; the one who is truly and fully human and yet, also possesses the full divinity of God. Jesus is one with the Father and if we have seen him, we have seen the Father. And that makes all the difference.

Here is the man. See the dignity of the one who is charged, condemned, and guilty. Hear the peace that fills his silence. See the strength that lets him embrace and cling to the cross. Hear the compassion in the midst of his suffering as he unites his mother and the beloved disciple to become a new family. See the companionship that stands next to his loneliness and rejection. Hear the victory in his words, "It is finished." Receive the life he offers when he gives up his breath, his spirit.

That dignity, peace, strength, compassion, companionship, victory, and life, are the very presence of God himself. God is not distant from this man, his pain and suffering, or his death — this man who is every man and woman. Here is God. Here is the man. Only by becoming entangled in the cycle of human pain and suffering, human violence, human tragedy, and human death, does God get near enough to break the cycle with divine healing, reconciliation, and restoration.

"Here is the man." Jesus has embraced the cross of suffering and death for all people and transformed it into the Tree of Life. The hard wood of the cross now flowers with hope and possibility for the healing and restoration of our own lives. That's what make this Friday good.

Today is Good Friday and "Here is the man!" Amen.

And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds, in the one who was, is, and always will be, Christ Jesus. Amen.