

“Death Is Always Bad”

John 19:30

April 22,2011

Good Friday

We do not like death. When someone dies, the family feels sad and grief stricken. Friends feel uncomfortable because they don't know what to say to comfort them. At the funeral, people feel awkward and don't know what to do. All people agree that death is bad. Death is bad for the person who has died. Death is bad for the family who loved them. Death is bad for the friends and people near the family.

We have gathered here this evening to remember the death of Someone - Jesus Christ. There are many reasons to consider this bad. First of all, Jesus is dead. That is sad. He was the cute little baby born in Bethlehem with angelic choirs singing, shepherds worshiping, and wise men bringing gifts. He grew up to be a good teacher - speaking God's Word of Good News to the crowds of people who flocked to hear Him. He was a kind helper - feeding hungry people, healing sick people, rescuing people from demonic control, and even making people alive from the dead. Now He Himself is dead.

Secondly, it is bad because of how Jesus died. He did not die of old age. He died in a violent and painful way. Soldiers had whipped Jesus without mercy, causing Him to lose great quantities of blood. They had beaten him with their fists until he was black and blue. They had made a crown of thorns and jammed it upon His head. That was only the beginning of His suffering. The soldiers led him out to a hill, forced Jesus to lie on a large wooden cross and, taking seven inch spikes, they drove them through His hands and His feet. That was bad enough. But then Jesus had to hang there, enduring people's mocking, losing more body fluids, finding it difficult to breath, and suffering great pain until He died.

Thirdly, it is bad because Jesus died innocently. This death did not have to happen. Jesus did not break any Jewish Law. Jesus did not break any of God's Laws. Jesus did not break any Roman

law. The Jewish leaders concocted false charges against Jesus because they were jealous and angry with Him. They twisted Pontius Pilate's arm so that He would agree to execute Jesus. The Jewish leaders won and Jesus died.

All of these things are bad: the Son of God is dead; He died painfully; He died innocently. We might conclude that Jesus' death is bad like all other deaths and that we should feel sorry for Him. That is Satan's lie. Satan wants you to believe that Jesus' death is bad. Satan wants you to feel sorry for Jesus, think that this is a tragedy, and go home depressed and miserable. But remember what this day is called -- "Good" Friday. Jesus' death is not bad. Jesus' death is good -- for us.

We come to God with a debt. Our holy God requires us to live holy and perfect. He has a right to demand that because He created us and controls us. But the sad truth is: we do not live holy. We constantly break His Law. We constantly do wrong and bad things. Consider your own life: anger, hold grudges, arguments with other people, fighting with your spouse, bawling out your children, sinful thoughts (lust, anger, jealousy). We also do not always do the good things God requires: being kind and helpful to spouse, parents, children, loving our neighbors as we love ourselves, loving our enemies, praying for people who hurt us, and so on.

Each of these sins is like a debt. Every time we do sin, our debt increases. We owe God more and more. It is like a credit card. We keep sinning -- charging up a debt. If you use a credit card, you don't notice your debt when you are charging, but, when the bill comes, you realize that you are in trouble. You owe it and have to pay. In the same way, you may be comfortably sinning now and not notice it. But a bill will come and you will have to pay. You will have to face God with all your sins. Then what will you do? If you cannot pay, your debt earns death for you and an eternity of punishment in hell. The truth is: you cannot pay your debt to God. The only way to pay a debt of sin is for an innocent victim to trade their life for yours. God will accept that trade.

Jesus came to earth to make that trade. The Bible says of that trade, "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." (2 Cor. 5:21) As

we consider Jesus' death on the cross today, we should not pity Him. This death is not bad. It was God's plan all along. Jesus is on the cross, not because He is weak and the Jewish leaders and Roman soldiers were much stronger. Jesus is the Son of God. He has all power and could have commanded a thousand angels to free Him. Jesus is on the cross, not because of an accident. Jesus is not killed on the cross. Jesus voluntarily goes to the cross to lay down His life. He accepts punishment, suffering, and even experiences hell - not because He Himself has done wrong and broken God's Law. He deserves none of that because He is holy and innocent. He accepts your punishment. He suffers for your sins. He experiences hell on your behalf. Jesus willingly goes to the cross to offer His innocent life in place of your sinful life as a payment for your sins.

In our text, Jesus says, "It is finished!" Some people may think that means Jesus is depressed and is saying, "It is finished! My life is over. I'm dying." That would be sad and bad. But that's not what Jesus means. Jesus uses a special Greek word that merchants would use when they would write out a bill that somebody owed them. When that person paid the money, the merchants would write that word meaning the debt had been paid. The word is equivalent to our English phrase, "Paid In Full". When Jesus spoke before He died, He was not sad and despondently saying, "It is finished. My life is finished." He shouted those words victoriously, "It is finished! Your debt is finished. It is paid in full!"

Jesus had accomplished everything to save you from death, hell, and Satan. He had suffered all the punishment for your sins. He was offering His innocent life as a payment for your guilty life. And He had succeeded. All of your sins against God - paid in full! Your debt to God - paid in full! You are holy and righteous before God. You now receive blessing, not punishment. You receive life, not death. You receive heaven, not hell.

So, when you gaze at the cross this day, do not see a tragic and sad event. But see God's great mercy for you in sending a Savior for you. See Jesus' great love for you in voluntarily going to

that cross in your place. See Jesus' wonderful victory, offering His life as payment for all of your sins.

It is finished! It is paid in full!

Reject Satan's lie. Death is not always bad. Here, death is good. God blesses you greatly because of Jesus' death. Your death will be good as well. Because Jesus suffered, God blesses you. Because Jesus was crucified, God forgives you. Because Jesus' died, you will live forever in heaven with Him. Today is truly a Good Friday. Amen.