

Good Friday
April 15, 2022

Grace and peace be with you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Good Friday is always a good time to talk about fear, because fear surrounds the entirety of the Passion.

Fear is an emotion that “makes us” do things that we know are not good, but we’re so afraid for our own survival we’re willing to scapegoat someone else. To let them die so that we can continue with our lives the way they are, even if they’re not that great.

In the Passion according to the Gospel of John, which we have tonight, we see a lot of fear. The religious leaders are afraid that Jesus may cause a revolution and flip the status quo. They then stir up the crowd with their fear to get them to follow their plan. And then even Pilate, the Roman governor, is filled with fear that the religious leaders might cause a revolt if they don’t get their way.

It is fear that puts Jesus on the cross. Everyone is afraid... except for Jesus. Jesus is the only calm one in the entire picture.

The Gospel of John makes it clear that Jesus is not afraid of the cross and what is to come. Jesus is willingly taking up his cross and following through on the mission he has been sent on, and nothing is going to keep him from doing it. This is God’s plan.

So, Jesus is fearless. He is fearless because he already knows the resurrection, because he has full confidence in God’s plan, and because he is God incarnate.

Surrounded by fear, Jesus alone remains calm.

One of the greatest fears people have is dying. In the abstract, people may say they have no fear of death, but when it becomes real very few people aren’t trembling.

Death is scary. Death is final. Death is heartbreaking.

And yet... and yet for God, death is not the end of the story.

So, Jesus enters our fears and takes them with him to the cross – the fear of death, the fear of insecurity, the fear of finality, the fear of insignificance, the fear of retribution, the fear of war, the fear of separation, the fear of rejection.

Whatever it is that we fear, Jesus takes them to the cross in order to destroy them, to expose them as being absolutely nothing at all. They hold no water.

We have nothing to fear, because God is in control and because God loves us unconditionally.

Throughout the Passion according to John, you will notice that everything is according to scripture and you'll notice that Jesus takes on the cross without ever once asking it to be taken from him.

Jesus is fearless, because this is God's plan, a plan that has been set in motion for a long time. This is God's plan to let all of humanity know that there is nothing that can separate us from God – not fear, not murder, not death, not sin of any kind.

God is great enough, and loving enough, to take on all our fears and shine the light on them, to expose them all as being unfounded.

Not to get ahead of the story, but tomorrow night we will proclaim that Jesus Christ is the light of the world. The light that shines on our darkness and exposes God's love.

So, Jesus stretches his arms out on the cross in order to embrace all people and squeeze out all of our fears, entering into our story and proclaiming that we are not alone. We are never alone, so there is nothing to fear, not even death, because God will never leave us. Never.

Nothing can separate us from God – not sin, not death – not even death instigated by us and fulfilled on the cross, because God is greater than all of our fears and it was our fear that put Jesus on the cross, but that's not the end of the story.

So, with the cross in our eyes and the love of Christ in our hearts, we are strengthened to confront all that scares us and ask it point blank – why am I afraid of you? Is it my security? Is it my worth? Is it my shame? What is it?

If we don't confront our fears and face them head on, they can cause us to choose hurting someone else instead of loving them, like nailing Jesus to the cross. To save ourselves we might scapegoat instead of trusting in the one who dies for us in order to save us from this fear in the first place.

Fear causes us to hurt others. Trust in God causes us to love others.

So, Jesus goes to the cross and takes all of our fears with him, so that we can trust that God really does love us unconditionally and that there really is nothing to fear.

Jesus Christ is our Lord and Savior, the one who removes all of our fears so that we can truly live.

Thanks be to God. Amen.