

Our Lenten Devotionals feature reflections from *The Road Back to God* by Larry Neeb.

Good Friday, April 2, 2021

**Luke 23:33-43** **33** When they came to the place called the Skull, they crucified him there, along with the criminals—one on his right, the other on his left. **34** Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.” And they divided up his clothes by casting lots. **35** The people stood watching, and the rulers even sneered at him. They said, “He saved others; let him save himself if he is God’s Messiah, the Chosen One.” **36** The soldiers also came up and mocked him. They offered him wine vinegar **37** and said, “If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself.” **38** There was a written notice above him, which read: THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS. **39** One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: “Aren’t you the Messiah? Save yourself and us!” **40** But the other criminal rebuked him. “Don’t you fear God,” he said, “since you are under the same sentence? **41** We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong.” **42** Then he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.” **43** Jesus answered him, “Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise.”

**Today I will set aside ten minutes for silent meditation on the meaning of suffering and death as well as the promise that in him there is victory over both.**

### “The Final Battle”

He was not the first or the last innocent person who would be crucified by the Romans – but he was different from any others. He uttered no protest, no cursing of his abusers, only a prayer of forgiveness for those who were now in charge and those who watched. “Father, forgive them. For they know not what they do.” (Luke 23:34)

This was a turning point in world history – a reversal of the trend of evil repaying evil, an act so powerful in its significance that, remembering it, there would be those who would follow in every age, asking for the strength to forgive instead of retaliate.

The first word that our Lord uttered from the cross was his last prayer and it rose to heaven burdened as no other prayer, heavy with all of the sins of the world. The fear and loneliness of all who had gone before and all who would come after rose with that prayer to the heart of the Father.

At the top of the lonely hill that Friday were focused the sins of all time upon the sinless Son of God. As O.P. Krentzmann said, “Here absolutes met.” All sinfulness and the sinless Son of God. All the rebellion of human beings and the self-giving love of God ... a Father whose heart was so large that it could embrace all of the sins of the world and still have room for forgiveness.

Good Friday is the story of God’s wrath against sin and God’s love for the sinner, and it is called Good Friday because God’s love won!

--Larry Neeb

Friends –

Good Friday always seems to be a difficult day for me and probably for many of you. The description of the crucifixion and Jesus’ death is horrifying and frightening.

But unlike those who were actually present that day, we have the gift of historical perspective, and we know that, as horrible as the crucifixion was, the mysterious new life of resurrection will come on Sunday, when we celebrate the empty cross and Jesus being present among us, even today.

--Pastor bea