

## **Sermon for Good Friday, John 18:1-19:42**

Will you pray with me the Collect for Good Friday –

Almighty God, we pray you graciously to behold this your family, for whom our Lord Jesus Christ was willing to be betrayed, and given into the hands of sinners, and to suffer death upon the cross; who now lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

After reading the passion narrative, we are left empty. What is there to say? Nothing happens the way we would prefer, the way we hope. Even though we have heard this story many times and we know how it ends on the cross, it is still painful and disturbing to us. To walk with Jesus through the final hours of his human life is agonizing every time. Maybe that is because we can all too easily identify with one of the people in the story, one of the ones who deserted Jesus, who caused Jesus to suffer, who chose to go along with the crowd rather than risk standing up for what is right. This story is so powerful precisely because it is a story about all of us. It's powerful because it holds up a mirror for us to see ourselves and our behavior, not in a glass dimly, but with fearful clarity.

Pilate goes in and out too many times to count, back and forth between the accusing crowd and Jesus, looking for the truth. Pilate's struggle is ours as he makes an effort to resolve the problem, but he cannot, in the end, leave the stone pavement of popular opinion to stand on the foundation of the truth he knows in his heart.

And what is that truth? I believe we can find it in the Collect we prayed a moment ago. It is the truth that our Lord Jesus Christ was willing to be betrayed, and given into the hands of sinners, and to suffer death upon the cross. Jesus was willing to do this for his family, for God's family.

And who is God's family?

Is it those who have been baptized in the faith? Yes, and it is bigger than that if we remember John 3:16 – for God so loved the world, the whole world, the entire human family, that he gave his only Son. Whether we were there at the crucifixion or not; whether we are always faithful or often unfaithful; whether we have faith or have not yet found it; God beholds us, God loves us.

We are not in the church on this Good Friday; we are in the world. Many of us are in our homes, trying to stay safe from the virus which could bring death, even as we sacrifice our freedom to keep our neighbor well. Some of us are out risking our own safety to care for those who need healthcare and the necessities of life.

On this Good Friday, perhaps we identify with the suffering of Jesus more acutely than ever before, and maybe we are better able to ponder just how connected we all are as the human family. We may finally be taking time to contemplate the reality of death. We long for God to behold us.

As you take some time to read the Passion Narrative and sit at the foot of the cross today, consider where the truth is in your life. Think about the ways you avoid it, ignore it, deny it. Consider the Body of Christ, broken for you, broken so that our human family might be made whole. And then offer all of your longings, hopes, and fears to God. Because God is there with you, beholding you with eyes of deep love. Amen.