

The Rock: 04-15-2022**Good Friday**

Title: Were you there?

Scripture: Luke 23:44-56 (black bible Pg. 830 ESV)

Theme:

This good Friday we are going to walk through these events through the eyes of those who were there.

Introduction:

The writer to the Hebrews offers us up a challenge this Good Friday evening when he writes:

-Hebrews 13:13 (ESV)

"Therefore let us go to him outside the camp and bear the reproach he endured."

Good Friday is anything but good, unless we understand the purpose and meaning behind the death of Jesus. Taken outside the city (camp) and crucified before a crowd of people.

This evening I want us to look through the eyes of those who were there, and hear through Luke's writing, what they

saw, how they felt, and what they believed.

It's like an avalanche, and out of control. A down-hill slide to the crash at the bottom of the hill. A singular focus.

Yet, unlike an avalanche, this is not an out of control event of nature. Rather, this scene is a perfectly scripted, God controlled and ordained event.

Designed from the very beginning to destroy death through death itself:

-Genesis 3:15 (ESV)

"I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel."

The very beginning of the story finds its fulfillment at the very end of all things.

Death would no longer have its say - but in order for that to be true, death it seemed, would have its day, its final day on that hill, outside the "camp" -where they crucified the God/man who had become such a threat.

The Story:

Jesus had been tried, mocked, and beaten, literally almost to death. The Romans were good at and had perfected the art of torture and killing.

Mercilessly and far too often with little care or feeling. After-all, power and control were everything. And tyrants will suffer no threats, neither for them who desire and hope for killing, or those who carry out the act.

It's what makes the centurion's response so surprising, so out of place. Darkness has crept in, in the middle of the day, a frightening thing in itself.

-Luke 23:44-45 (ESV)

"It was now about the sixth hour, and there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour, while the sun's light failed. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two."

The centurion, posted at the foot of these crosses to keep family and friends away. He would be standing within ear shot and in full view of this ugly scene.

He heard Jesus already speak in a way that was unthinkable. He didn't curse, yell and rail against Rome, not one bit.

Rather, He simply said: "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do."

That is not how he had seen anyone handle this predicament before. You see, it was the way in which Jesus died that grabbed this battle-hardened warrior.

He had seen death a lot, and most likely he had seen more than his share of crucifixions. After-all, it was Rome's preferred method of torture and death. It intimidated everyone into submission.

-Luke 23:46b (ESV)

"Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!"

He died, fearlessly, and in peace, almost as if this was exactly how it was supposed to be.

The German theologian, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, standing next to the commandant of the camp, and looking at the gallows he was only moments later to walk up upon, shivered as he stood unclothed.

The commandant noticed his shaking and asked: "Are you scared, Bonhoeffer?". His response: "No, simply cold."

Bonhoeffer knew death was not the end, that in just moments he would come face to face with this same Jesus who hung before a Roman centurion. Jesus:

-Luke 23:46c-47 (ESV)

"And having said this he breathed his last. Now when the centurion saw what had taken place, he praised God, saying, "Certainly this man was innocent!"

It was the way He died which caused the statement, one of faith. Luke gives us this purposefully. For the word he used here tells us that the centurion genuinely believes that he has just put an innocent man to death.

This confession, Church Swindoll would write, is a declaration of not guilty and therefore, a repentance of his sin. In other words: "I have wronged this man."

The crowds too, gathered for "The spectacle", the show, are affected by how this carpenter from the north died:

-Luke 23:48-49 (ESV)

"And all the crowds that had assembled for this spectacle, when they saw what had taken place, returned home beating their breasts. And all his acquaintances and the women who had followed him from Galilee stood at a distance watching these things."

J.B. Phillips paraphrase says this:

"When they saw what happened, went home in deep distress."

Now that the deed was done, and they had eliminated the threat, guilt perhaps grew, doubt and perhaps conviction.

"We are complicit in this -screaming at Him, insulting Him and mocking, caught up in the moment.

But the way He died. Did you hear Him as he looked at us? 'Father, forgive them'. And then, 'Into your hands..'"

These aren't the words of a worried and guilty man afraid of dying. No, they aren't. They went home in deep distress, wondering..

We find too, that not everyone on the ruling council agreed with the rouse that this man be condemned. Perhaps some were not even there, as it only took the votes of 23 out of the 50 plus to condemn a man.

We know of at least two who wanted nothing to do with this, who were unwilling to condemn Him. They were willing to risk their reputation this Friday with their own people, as well as with Rome.

-Luke 23:50-52 (ESV)

"Now there was a man named Joseph, from the Jewish town of Arimathea. He was a member of the council, a good and righteous man, who had not consented to their decision and action; and he was looking for the kingdom of God. This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus."

John tells us that there was another with Joseph:

-John 19:39-40 (ESV)

"Nicodemus also, who earlier had come to Jesus by night, came bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy-five pounds in weight. So they took the body of Jesus and bound it in linen cloths with the spices, as is the burial custom of the Jews."

Joseph, will offer his brand-new tomb, empty at the moment, as the place to lay His body. Going to Pilate, he asks for Jesus' body.

"He's dead. You've done enough, please let me take Him down and give Him the dignity of a burial, as it is our custom. Please."

This was not normal. Crucified bodies were typically left on display for long periods of time. A horrific example of

what happens to those who rebel against Rome and defy the powers that be.

But Joseph is granted his request, and he and Nicodemus are secret followers of Jesus no more. They took Him, and laid Him in the tomb. With the grave linen and spices, enough to at least begin the proper burial process.

After all, Sabbath was fast approaching, and they needed to seal the tomb.

In the background, weeping and distraught, I am sure, stood the women:

-Luke 23:55-56 (ESV)

"The women who had come with him from Galilee followed and saw the tomb and how his body was laid. Then they returned and prepared spices and ointments. On the Sabbath they rested according to the commandment."

They needed to know where they had put their LORD, their friend Jesus.

Every gospel writer, every single one, said that the women SAW where Jesus was put- this is important. They were not deluded, crazy, emotionally charged with grief that Sunday morning and went to the wrong tomb. NO!

They saw, and they remembered where. Why? Because Jesus was their LORD, Jesus was their master, Jesus was their friend.

Rockhill cemetery is a very large cemetery in my home town of Foxboro MA. Yet, years can pass and often do, yet with eyes closed I can tell you where both family plots are, right where my family is buried.

Why? Because they are my family, and my friends.

These ladies would never forget! Emblazoned upon their minds and hearts, not only were the day's events, but also where Joseph and Nicodemus had put their Jesus.

Sabbath was fast approaching, and they had work to do also. More spices, more ointment was needed for Jesus the moment Sabbath was over.

He was dead after all, and they had no expectation that His condition would change. Crucified, dead, and now, buried.

For them, and all who were there that day, they knew: Dead people stay dead, and that behind that stone, Jesus lay there, in the tomb.

Nothing at all at that moment made any sense -But it would..

All of these people were there when they crucified the LORD, and they all saw how He died, all of them.

Two things to ponder this Good Friday and into Saturday.

"The dominion of evil presumed to destroy 'The Christ of God', but what satan intended for evil, God used for good, even as He poured out His wrath upon the savior hanging on the cross"

-Living insights: Pg. 569

-Hebrews 13:13 (ESV)

"Therefore let us go to him outside the camp and bear the reproach he endured."