

Pastor Geoffrey R. Boyle  
Good Friday  
22 April 2011  
Grace Lutheran Church, Wichita  
John 18-19

*In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit*

Who is it that died on this Good Friday?

Was it some religious fanatic, an extremist—  
an intolerant crusader for the truth?

Was it a wise man, a great teacher—  
the beloved Rabbi with a school of followers?

Was it a kind and gentle man—  
peaceful, friendly, and not too pushy—  
someone that'll be missed by many?

Was it a rebel—  
someone who stands up for a cause or a movement,  
protesting injustice and fighting the authorities?

Was it you?

Well, no, it wasn't.  
And *that's* what makes this Friday so "Good!"  
It wasn't us.

It was Jesus.

Jesus died and you live.  
That's Good Friday.

But why not you?  
Why didn't you carry the cross and stand before Pilate?  
Why weren't you brought up on charges?  
Why didn't anyone accuse you of breaking the law—  
of making yourself like God?

You deserve it.  
You've earned it.  
And yet, it's not you crucified, but Jesus.

This Prince of Life, Jesus of Nazareth, suffers a death not His own.  
He shouldn't be there.  
He's done nothing wrong—He's innocent.

Death is for those who deserve it,

who's sin is great,  
 who hate their parents or their spouse,  
 who cheat and kill and lie and deceive,  
 who gossip and steal and covet and lust.  
 Death is for anyone and everyone who's not perfect.

But this Jesus is perfect.  
 He's the Prince of Life!

He's loved the world and His disciples to the end!  
 He's kept the law, done its requirements, fulfilled its obligations,  
 and all the while, enjoyed doing it!

Nevertheless, on Good Friday Jesus, God Himself dies.

And for what?

Well, St. John tells us that it's all for Barabbas.

All of this, all of the scourging and mocking  
 and striking and whipping  
 and beating and spitting and killing—  
 all for Barabbas!

“Seriously?” you ask, “Barabbas?—  
 “But he was a robber, a murderer, a liar, a cheat—  
 he was a sinner!”

Yet, the crowds yelled all the more,  
 “**Not this Jesus, but Barabbas!**” (18:40).

And so Jesus died for Barabbas.  
 His imprisonment meant Barabbas' freedom;  
 His death meant Barabbas' life.  
 Jesus is condemned, Barabbas is acquitted—  
 And nothing seems more unfair than this!

And yet, that's the kind of Lord you have:  
 the kind that gives His life for Barabbas.

Now, as you read and hear this passion story,  
 how can you help but to hear your name with Barabbas?  
 “**Not this man, but Margie!**”  
 “**Not this man, but Wayne!**”  
 “**Not this man, but Al!**”

As the Prince of Life went to the cross for Barabbas,

He did it for you.

You're that robber and murderer and liar and cheat.  
 You're the drunkard, the adulterer, and the gossip.  
 You're the guilty—  
 Christ is innocent—  
 and yet He goes for you.

We are the Barabbas's who benefit from this unjust exchange.

And perhaps what's most striking of all,  
 is that all the while, the Father *wants* this to happen.

The Heavenly Father shouted along with the crowds,  
 “**Crucify Him! Crucify Him!**” (19:6)

He mocked the Son, and helped the Pharisees,  
 He joined the voices saying,  
 “**Not this Man, but Barabbas!**”

The Heavenly Father had all this in mind even from the beginning.  
 His Son would be given unto death.  
 The promised heir would die.  
 Abraham almost sacrificed Isaac—  
 Jesus went the whole way!  
 Joseph almost died in that pit and prison—  
 Jesus made sure it happened!  
 Jonah spent three days living in the belly of a large fish—  
 Jesus spent the days dead, in the belly of a tomb.

It's almost like the Old Testament's a script for what took place on this Good Friday;  
 and as Jesus walked this road carrying the cross,  
 He was walking in step with His Father's will the whole way.

The Father wanted Barabbas to live,  
 not His Son.

And so it was.  
 “**Jesus said, ‘It is finished,’**  
**and He bowed His head and gave up His spirit**” (19:30).

It's finished—  
 complete, full, done, accomplished, fulfilled.

The Prince of Life has died,  
 Barabbas is freed,

and the Father's will is done.

And because of this death, it's not just Barabbas that goes free—  
 but all those that are like Him, too!  
 All sinners, all drunks, all who are abusive and mean and self-important.  
 All who've broken the law, even those drinking under age and speeding five over!

Jesus died for Barabbas,  
 and for you,  
 and for the whole world.

With this death sins are forgiven,  
 the righteous for the unrighteous,  
 the beloved for the unlovable,  
 the innocent for the guilty,  
 the Holy One of God for all of us Barabbas's.

And this forgiveness,  
 this freedom,  
 this innocence is all delivered to us by water and blood—  
 the gifts flowing forth from His pierced side.

When the soldier found Christ already dead,  
 rather than breaking His bones they lunged a spear into His side (19:34).  
 And out of His side "**came Blood and Water**" (19:34).  
 That is, Holy Baptism and Holy Communion.

The life of the Church, just like Eve,  
 is taken from her sleeping Lord's side!

Just as Eve came forth from the rib of Adam,  
 so also does the Church, the bride of Christ,  
 come forth from His pierced side.

Blood and water, Altar and Font, coming to you again and again with forgiveness and life.

What hung on the cross, with nails and thorns, is what is given from this altar to you.

The Prince of Life who died gives Himself to you for your life, for your forgiveness.

He frees Barabbas over and over and over again!  
 So also, He frees you.

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