

2 April 2021
WHAT IS GOD'S PLAN?
Good Friday

Today we celebrate Jesus crucifixion, which leads me to the obvious question; why? Why would the God of the universe choose to be born only to be executed; broken, beaten, bruised? Why?

I was surprised to find part of the answer in Leviticus; that's the third book in the bible. Here's a couple of verses to give you a sense of what I heard as I read through Leviticus. God said; "It was I who rescued you from the land of Egypt that I might be your God. I am the LORD." (Lev. 22:33)

Did you hear what God said; he rescued this community of people that he might live with them, share his life with them. I think that's God's plan, to find a way to share himself with us.

God said; "I will live among you, and I will not despise you. I will walk among you, I will be your God and you will be my people." (Lev. 26:11,12)

Did you hear that; God's plan is not to despise you but to walk with you, to live with his people, his children. To me that speaks of Jesus on the cross; he took the worst humanity could throw at him but he doesn't respond by despising us. Rather Jesus has opened the door for us to walk and talk with him throughout life. Jesus opens the door for God to come and live with us as his brothers and sisters, as the heavenly Father's loved children.

Jesus sacrifices himself that we might have a wonderful intimate relationship of love and affection with God as our heavenly Father.

When I hear the word sacrifice I think of a lamb being burnt on an altar. But that is not exactly what happened. Often only a small, representative, portion of the lamb was burned. God's family were instructed to eat the rest of the roast, joyfully in the presence of the LORD their God.

The image that comes to mind is having a BBQ with Dad. This wasn't a sombre affair but a celebration. God was pointing to the way into his presence. The way to live life with him, joyfully, celebrating life with God.

Jesus has made this a reality. Not for an hour a week on a Sunday morning, but for every day. In Jesus, because of his sacrifice, we get to feast on life in God's presence.

No wonder Jesus took the Passover; a victory feast, and reclaimed it as his family's feast. Jesus is inviting us to come and feast on life in him. Communion is feasting on the life Jesus gives. Communion is a celebration of the victory Jesus has given his life for us to live in and celebrate with him. We get to feast in the presence of the LORD our God, rejoicing in all he's accomplished.

In Deuteronomy; that's the fifth book in the bible, I read; "Do not worship the LORD your God in the way the pagan peoples worship their gods. Rather you must seek the LORD your God at the place of worship he himself will choose." (Deut. 12:4)

Where has God chosen to be worshipped?

It's not Jerusalem. It's not this building. It's not contained in any liturgy. Actually the moment you think your form of liturgy is the only correct way you are acting like the pagan peoples. I don't want to do that.

Where does God choose to be worshipped? Where does God want to share himself with us that we might be walking and talking with him in a relationship of love and affection in a conversational atmosphere?

I began by asking the question; Why would the God of the universe choose to be born only to be executed; broken, beaten, bruised? Why? Because this is where he has chosen to be worshipped. This is where he has chosen to be known, personally, intimately, loving us so that we might let his loving nature flow freely through his family.

We don't have a place or a ritual, we have a person. A person who has given his life for us, literally.

You might be wondering why I chose several parts of the bible which aren't read often instead of a traditional Easter reading. I wanted to show that this is and always has been God plan; to birth a family, a community of people where he is known for who he is. Known personally, intimately in a relationship of love and affection.

God's eternal plan has nothing to do with architecture or ritual and everything to do with sharing himself with us in an open and honest, relationship of trust.

Have you noticed that I've been using 'US', that's plural? Sure Jesus died to save people, but his goal is that these individual people live as a community, as a wonderful extended family, who display their father's characteristics because his DNA is now their DNA as well.

Jesus has given his life to make God the Father's extended family a reality. We are birthed into God the Father's family through Jesus. Through Jesus crucifixion, his being torn, broken, beaten, bruised.

It strikes me that Jesus has come to equip us for life together, for in life, where we seek to live close intimate lives we inevitably get broken, beaten, bruised. We get torn like the bread of communion. Thank God he pours his forgiveness, grace and mercy all over us. The wine of communion reminds me of Jesus blood poured out forgiving me, forgiving us that we might live in his grace and mercy. That we might live as his community. The community where Jesus is present, where his character is displayed.

Jesus has given his life that we might share life with him as community. That has always been God's plan; to create a community of people founded on him, displaying his personality and character.

In Jesus we are empowered to love, to forgive, to heal and encourage each other, even when we feel broken, beaten and bruised by our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Thankfully, because of Jesus crucifixion, we get to live in God's presence. We get to know his grace and mercy personally so we can live it out, building each other up.

That is actually part of God's plan for worship; that as he comes to us, healing, loving, restoring us, then we in turn can build each other up. We move from what we want to what is best for the other person according to their needs and we pay the bill. We chose to be uncomfortable and not have it all our way for the sake of the other.

Did you come today seeking to share what Jesus has placed on your heart to build up the other people here, to encourage them, to support them, to walk with them in the ups and downs of life. That's why Jesus is here today, to encourage you, to support you, to walk with you in the ups and downs of life. Jesus is here pouring out his life that we might grow and mature as Father's loving family, displaying his character and nature in the way we share life together.

I always thank God for that because I know at times I can get grumpy and even point an accusing finger at other's behaviour. Thank God he doesn't come to despise you but to breathe his life giving spirit into you, that we might share life with him as Father's loved child, in whom he delights.

That's always been God's plan, from eternity to eternity, to birth a family in Jesus, his Son, who live out his very DNA, as they share life with him in a relationship of love and affection, building each other up to be all that Dad has dreamed possible. This dream is built on Jesus sacrifice, his crucifixion, so in him we do have the power and authority to do it.

Who wants to be living with God our heavenly Father today? Who wants to be living in God's presence through Jesus, as Father's loved child in who he delights? Who wants to be growing and maturing as part of Father's family, building each other up, encouraging one another, loving one another, forgiving one another in all the ups and downs of life?

I certainly do.

I pray that Jesus fills each one of us with the Spirit that we might know his presence with us now in a personal way, right now. Jesus fill us now with the Spirit healing Father's family where we are broken, beaten, bruised. Jesus breathe the Spirit of life into us now for we want to know you, not just hear about you. We want to live the reality of all you've made possible. Jesus send the Spirit that we might display Father's character and personality in the way we share life together, today, tomorrow, this year, to his glory, praise and honour.

Come Spirit and fill us that we might be all that Jesus has made possible through his being broken, beaten, bruised for US.