

Good Friday 2022

The Cross is love; it is a Good Friday.

1 Corinthians 1:18 ***For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.***

The cross is love. Today is a Good Friday...

I'm guessing many of us would prefer Easter Sunday to Good Friday?

It's a bit happier – more chocolate – and Jesus is alive not dead.

The problem with Good Friday is the cross – Jesus, God, the son of God, suffering a criminal's death on a cross is ridiculous to human thinking.

And then we say this is our salvation!

In Rome there's a famous graffiti - called "the Alexamenos".

It says "*Alexamenos Cebete Theon*" = Alexamenos worships God – and God is depicted as a donkey.

(Hopefully you saw it on the screen)

Next time you're in Rome have a look – it's in the Palatine Museum – near the Colosseum.



It's a Mona Lisa – tiny, about a foot by a foot.

The sad thing is they say this graffiti could be the earliest picture of Jesus in the world – maybe only a few years after his death – and he's a donkey - it's a mockery.

Alexamenos the Greek is saying the cross is foolishness.

But not for us.

The cross is love – this is a Good Friday.

I guess the cross looks foolish because it seems God is angry with Jesus, his son, – because he has taken on our sin.

It seems God is an angry monster – who wants and needs blood before things can be made right with us.

Let's know the cross is love.

God cannot let sin rule. Imagine if he overlooked every sin? Imagine if he let us off. Imagine if he let the murderer, the rapist, the liar just walk free.

A just and fair God cannot sweep sin under the carpet – it must be dealt with.

He loves us so much he allows Jesus to take on the consequences of our sin on himself – on the cross. You know Isaiah:

***he was pierced for our transgressions,
he was crushed for our iniquities;
the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are
healed.***

No other god is like this. All other gods demand gold, girls, or blood to make things right – all other gods demand ‘their’ people pay.

The one true God of Israel lays down his life for his people.

This does not make human sense.

Let’s know that God planned from eternity – to love us and to redeem us – make us right with him.

Ephesians 1: 4,7 ***“...he chose us in Jesus before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight....In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins..***

Before it ever entered our minds to repent, or to believe, God planned to love us through cross.

Jesus didn’t have to die on the cross before the father would love us – he has loved us from eternity.

God isn’t moved from anger to love because of Christ’s death.

He’s moved *by* love to make all thing right.

He’s moved by love to remove our guilt and our opposition to him through the cross.

Whatever else we think – and we are great thinkers – let’s know this: Grace and mercy are God’s eternal idea – from the beginning.

On the cross Jesus paid the price – the wages of sin is death – only a loving God allows that to happen.

On the cross Jesus destroyed the Devil’s power (1 John 3:8): ***The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil’s work.***

The cross is love. This is a Good Friday.

Hear this Colossians 2:13-15: ***When you were dead in your sin ...God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, having cancelled the charge of our legal debt, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross.***

On the cross Jesus took on our sin – fully loved by the father – fully planned by the whole of God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

This is the plan - Revelation 12:10-12:

I heard a loud voice in heaven say:

“Now the salvation, the power, the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Messiah has come.

For the accuser, who accuses us before our God day and night, has been hurled down.

The devil can no longer accuse us – we’ve been forgiven by Jesus on the cross.

Luther had a dream once about being attacked the devil.

The devil unrolled a long scroll containing a list of Luther's sins, and held it before him. Luther looked at the list of sins – one by one – when he got to the bottom he said: "Is that all?"

"No," said the devil and he rolled out two more scrolls full of Luther’s sins.

Have you had these dreams – God and the little black book?

When the devil had shown Luther the millions of sins he had done Luther said to the devil: "You've forgotten something," "The blood of Jesus cleanses me from all sins."

Write it on your heart - *'The blood of Jesus cleanses me from all sins.'*

This is a Good Friday if you can do this.

As Paul says: The cross is love – the cross is the power and wisdom of God.

So: we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles,²⁴ but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.²⁵ For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength.

This is why Alexamenos scribbled on the wall. This is why he depicted Jesus as a donkey – he was looking for wisdom in Jesus. This is what he got:

God chose the foolish things of the world (Jesus on the cross); to shame the wise.

God chose the weak things of the world (Jesus on the cross) to shame the strong.

God chose the lowly things of this world (Jesus on the cross), and the despised things (Jesus on the cross)—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are²⁹ so that no one may boast before him.³⁰ It is because of him, God the Father that you are in Christ Jesus the Son.

The cross is love – the cross is the power and wisdom of God.

This is a Good Friday

We look to death as the beginning of life – it doesn’t make sense does it?

What is your stumbling block?

“Lord I struggled with sin but you say I’m forgiven but Satan accuses me day in day out. I’m like Alexamenos – I want it all to make sense”.

Sorry you won’t get that in this house of God.

Grace – receiving love you do not deserve does not make human sense.

I have a theory and I share it adnauseum and I test it all the time – and it always works.

If something makes sense it is of man.

For example, I am a sinner, I owe God my life, or I owe a life time of doing good to pay him back – that makes perfect sense – we live in a world where we pay to make things right.

So if it makes sense it’s of man.

If it doesn’t make sense it’s of God.

I owe my life to God, I owe a life of good deed to payback – but he allows his son to die on a cross in my stead – that doesn’t make sense – it is of God.

Nothing of God makes human sense – especially God loving us when we do not deserve it – we call that grace.

Alexamenos was looking for a God who made sense – he drew Jesus as a donkey on the cross – little did he realise that a pathetic looking Jesus on a cross is the power and wisdom of God – in God’s eye this made perfect sense.

If you want to make sense of God look for the foolish things of God.

Look at your own life, look at your own sin, look at the people you have hurt. Now hear God: you are my beloved, pure, innocent, child whom I love. That is the foolishness of God.

Salvation has been won for us this Good Friday – we have only one thing to worry about – that is how to say our thankyou.

Luther reminds us that saying thank you is simply living a life of simple thanks – he mentions milking the cow, changing the babies nappy’s – Give God your whole life – not little spurts of thankful acts - do all things to the Glory of God.

The cross is love. Today is a Good Friday...

God give us underserved love, grace. Let us accept that Jesus died for us. Help us live a life of thanks in all that we do. Amen.

(May the virus not be with you)