

2023-04-06
Maundy Thursday

Do not skip too quickly to the resurrection. Use two illustrations. 1) Grand Canyon photo. I would not appreciate the climb simply by looking at the photo. I needed to walk the trail, make the climb, to fully value the image in the picture 2) Lord of the Rings. First time reading that Gandalf dies, I couldn't believe it and almost quit reading. How could Tolkien do that? In my 14 year old mind it made no sense. And since I didn't know the rest of the story I was left with a grief very much akin to what the characters experienced.

Here's the dilemma that we all face on Maundy Thursday and Good Friday. We know Sunday's coming. We know Jesus rises from the tomb. We know even now he is seated at the right hand of God the Father, interceding for us. These are good and awesome truths and we should relish them and praise God that we know them and that they are true. But they often cause us to short change our view of the cross. Like my picture of the Grand Canyon, we want to see its beauty without experiencing its pain. We want the blessings of new life in Christ without slowing down enough to consider what Jesus endured on our behalf. Tonight and tomorrow, can we give serious, prayerful, joyful meditation to length and depth and breadth and height of the sacrifice of Christ?

Psalm 22:1-18.

Can we step into the anguish of Christ? Can we see in his suffering the sacrifice that brought us peace. Isa 53:5 He was pierced for our transgressions. He was crushed for our iniquities. Upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace. And by his wounds we are healed. Look into your own heart, into your soul, into the core of who you are. What has Jesus done for you? What difference does he make in the

essence of who you are? No Sunday school answers, please. Just a true, honest assessment.

Here is my challenge. First to myself and then to each of you. Sometime before Sunday stop. Take 15, maybe 30 minutes and just reflect on the death of Christ. What do nail pierced hands mean for you? What does the crown of thorns accomplish. The scourging. The whipping. The spear. And, what about his betrayal, both by Judas and by Peter? What about the mocking? What about the reality this entire series of events was a contrived power play? Then consider that God planned this from the beginning of time. Seriously ask yourself: what difference does it make? Does Jesus death change how you live?

On last thing: in Mt 27:46 Jesus cries: “Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?” that is, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” Do you feel the depth of that cry? The anguish in Jesus’ soul. There he hangs broken and bleeding, suffocating in his own phlegm. Everyone has abandoned him. And as the sin of every believer, my sin, your sin is poured on to Jesus, God the Father must turn away. Every sin has a consequence and this it: Jesus dead and alone for the love of God and his love for you.

Thoughts for communion:

Today is Maundy Thursday which simply means remembrance Thursday. My challenge to us all just a few minutes ago was to remember Jesus’ death, his suffering, his abandonment, his sin bearing for us without skipping too quickly to the resurrection. There should be a gravity when we consider the consequence of our own sin. We in essence nailed Jesus to the cross.

But I would be remiss in going to the table without the good news. Jesus' very words: "My body is broken for you". "My blood is shed for you". Consider that for just a moment: All that happened in Jerusalem 2,000 years ago, the betrayals and the beatings, the crushing and the crucifying, the sin bearing and the wrath receiving. Jesus words, not mine: "This is for you". Selah