

Good Friday, 2009

John 18-19

April 10, 2009

Title: It Is Finished

What if, what if the fullness of God is revealed in brokenness, in suffering, in giving up life?

Just two chapters of scripture—John 18/19

82 verses in those two chapters

In addition to Jesus—11 people are named here:

Judas, Simon Peter, Malchus whose right ear Peter severed, Annas and his son-in-law Caiaphas, the high priest; Pontus Pilate, the Roman governor; Barrabas, a released bandit; at the cross—Mary, the wife of Cleopas, and Mary Magdalene, a secret disciple of Jesus named Joseph of Arimathea, who asked for Jesus' body; and Nicodemus, a Pharisee, who helped bury Jesus.

Many others are unnamed: a woman guarding the gate who recognizes Peter, police, ever present, slaves of the high priest, Jews, soldiers, other chief priests, Pharisees, a disciple whom Jesus loved, Jesus' mother and her sister at the cross, two people crucified on either side of Jesus.

All of these present in locations in and near Jerusalem: a garden where Jesus is arrested; the courtyard of the High Priest; Pilate's headquarters where the religious leaders could not go; Pilate going back and forth between his Headquarters and the courtyard. The Stone Pavement where the crowds cry out for Jesus to be crucified; Golgotha, the Place of the Skull, where Jesus is crucified; an unused tomb where Jesus is buried.

And there are the details of these places and people: the day of preparation for the Passover, soldiers carry lanterns, torches and weapons; the sword of Peter; a guarded gate; a charcoal fire; a cock crowing; soldiers striking Jesus' face; a flogging; Jesus' seamless tunic, his clothes divided four ways; a sign "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the

Jews” written in Hebrew, Latin and in Greek; a crown of thorns, a purple robe, a jar full of sour wine; a wine filled sponge on a branch of hyssop; the breaking of legs; 100 pounds of myrrh and aloes for anointing Jesus’ body; linen clothes to wrap Jesus’ body.

And there are other pointers, significant markings, indicators that are not to be overlooked. Scripture is fulfilled:

--Jesus clothes divided by the soldiers pointing to Psalm 22:18

--Jesus declaring I am thirsty—in Psalm 69

--Jesus unbroken bones and pierced side—the witness of Exodus 12:46 and Zechariah 12:10

So there it is, a straight forward and direct presentation of our Lord’s passion. With all this action—betrayal, arrest, denial, trial, killing and burial---there is hardly any emotion. One singular person’s feelings are identified, Pontus Pilate—when the Jewish leaders tell Pilate there is a law that anyone who claims to be the son of God ought to die---Pilate is more afraid than ever. The rest is understated.

--When they are seeking to confirm Jesus’ identity he publically declares: I am he!

When Peter is accused of being Jesus’ disciple, he responds: I am not.

Ours is a seduced world...where we are capable of turning our back on good, vested in saving our own skin, preserving our own ways, looking out for self---a world where we protect our oil interests at all costs, where we stand at the gate denying any ravaging of God’s good creation; a world desensitized to violence....Peter speaks: I am not. His words echo over the wrecks of time.

“So you are a king.” Pilate asks Jesus.

“You say that I am a king. For this I was born, and for this I

came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice.” Pilate asked him, “What is truth?”

Pilate cannot imagine the truth Jesus bears. A kingdom not built on power politics, a kingdom that doesn't function to keep people in their places, that doesn't dole out favors, a kingdom that brings love, justice and renewal. Pilate couldn't imagine an order founded where Rome wasn't the winner at all costs. You can see Pilate's brow furrowing, his eyes finding it hard to focus, his legs beginning to quake.

Something is true if it works...that's Pilate's way. We know this kind of truth—Work hard to send your children to the best schools, so they can get in the best universities, so they can get the best jobs. It works

Pilate doesn't want his carefully well oiled world disturbed by Jesus.

The cry to crucify Jesus grows louder. The chief priests want him dead. Here they are on the day of preparation for the Passover where they reenact their allegiance to one god and what do they say, “We have no king but the emperor!” WHAT?

They opt to put an end to the liberator. They the very people whose history is defined by God setting them free from captivity, now before the gift of God, God's very incarnation in Jesus, choose to reject him.

The darkness is exposed, in full view. God put to death. It's Friday, God's day of entry into the hurt and hatred of the world. Here the fullness of God disclosed, given up, offered.

A hymn writers says of this ‘Who was the guilty? Who brought this upon thee? It was I who denied thee. I crucified thee.’”

To mark ourselves with Jesus' cross is to know we belong in this story. This Friday exposes the complicity of the human family. But more than that, the cross also exposes God's gracious forgiveness

which absorbs our blindness. Jesus takes on suffering—so that no suffering is beyond his reach. Jesus taking on rejection without rejecting. Jesus faithful to the character of God. Mercy, mercy, mercy.

Only 11 people are named; many others are unnamed—still we come named, unnamed, bearing ourselves to Jesus cross.

There he declares for all to see and hear “It is finished.” which is way we call this day good!