

LENT: IN FAITH WE JOURNEY WITH JESUS

Good Friday
April 6, 2007

Isaiah 52:13—53:12

Psalm 22

Hebrews 10:16-25 or Hebrews 4:14-16; 5:7-9

John 18:1—19:42

Watching and Climbing Mount Golgotha

Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!
(John 1:29, CEV)

John's Gospel introduces Jesus as the paschal lamb (1:29, 36). When Jesus is condemned to death by Pilate (19:14), the sentencing occurs at noon on the day before Passover, the same time that the Passover lambs are being slaughtered in the temple. Jesus dies on a Friday – the day to prepare for the Sabbath and also Passover (19:31). Jesus is the sacrifice who takes away humankind's sin once and for all (Hebrews 9:26).

When one reads the Passion narrative as recorded in John's Gospel, the image of Jesus as the Paschal Lamb is a jarring contrast to the image several chapters back of Jesus as the Good Shepherd who cares for his sheep and searches for those who are lost (10:1-18). But now the Good Shepherd has become the victim – the sacrificial lamb. Yet a re-examination of that tenth chapter reveals that Jesus alluded to the sacrificial mission to which God had called him. Jesus said:

The Father loves me, because I give up my life, so that I may receive it back again. No one takes my life from me. I give it up willingly! I have the power to give it up and the power to receive it back again, just as my Father commanded me to do.
(John 10:17, 18, CEV)

Jesus gives up his life willingly! And he gives it up willingly for us!

It is Good Friday. We are now participants in the unfolding drama. Jesus' words to his disciples in the Garden of Gethsemane are now his words to us: "Watch with me" (Matthew 26:38, RSV). Watch ... watch ... watch ... watch as he is betrayed, arrested, tried, and sentenced to death. Watch as he is taken away, carrying his cross to a place known as "the Skull," which in Aramaic is called "Golgotha." Watch as soldiers nail him to a cross, divide up his clothes, and cast lots for his garment. Watch as he is offered sour wine. Watch Jesus suffer and die.

Are you willing to climb Mount Golgotha? Are you willing? Are you willing to take your place at the foot of the cross and watch God's beloved Son die – he who gave up his life willingly for you?

*...he suffered for our sins and asked God to forgive us.
(Isaiah 53:12b, CEV)*

And now we wait ... we wait ... we wait for that third day ... we wait with hope.

The Reflection for Good Friday was prepared by Barbara Bernstengel, who serves on the staff of the American Bible Society as Director of the Education Unit in the Nida Institute for Biblical Scholarship.

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This day we remember to pray: Lord Jesus, we remember your sacrificial love for us as you climbed Mount Golgotha, bearing the burden of our sins so that we might be forgiven and redeemed.

Activity Corner: “Without Jesus”

Supplies needed: Bibles; 7 purple candles; 1 white candle.

Good Friday is a time when one experiences the absence of Jesus. Some churches have “Tenebrae” services, or services of darkness, to commemorate Jesus’ suffering and death on the cross.

Begin your devotional time with all 7 purple candles lit. Read Psalm 22 together. Read four verses at a time, pausing to extinguish one purple candle each time and allowing time for silence and reflection. After 28 verses have been read and all 7 candles have been extinguished, pause again for silence and reflection. Then light the one white candle and invite everyone to read together verses 29-31.