

Sermon for April 3rd, 2026

GOOD FRIDAY

READINGS

Isaiah 53:5-12

- 5** But he was pierced for our transgressions;
he was crushed for our iniquities;
upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace,
and with his wounds we are healed.
- 6** All we like sheep have gone astray;
we have turned—every one—to his own way;
and the LORD has laid on him
the iniquity of us all.
- 7** He was oppressed, and he was afflicted,
yet he opened not his mouth;
like a lamb that is led to the slaughter,
and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent,
so he opened not his mouth.
- 8** By oppression and judgment he was taken away;
and as for his generation, who considered
that he was cut off out of the land of the living,
stricken for the transgression of my people?
- 9** And they made his grave with the wicked
and with a rich man in his death,
although he had done no violence,
and there was no deceit in his mouth.
- 10** Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him;
he has put him to grief;
when his soul makes an offering for guilt,
he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days;
the will of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.
- 11** Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied;
by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant,
make many to be accounted righteous,
and he shall bear their iniquities.
- 12** Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many,
and he shall divide the spoil with the strong,
because he poured out his soul to death
and was numbered with the transgressors;
yet he bore the sin of many,
and makes intercession for the transgressors.

Psalm 22:1-20

- 1** My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?
Why are you so far from saving me, from the words of my groaning?
- 2** O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer,
and by night, but I find no rest.
- 3** Yet you are holy,
enthroned on the praises of Israel.
- 4** In you our fathers trusted;
they trusted, and you delivered them.
- 5** To you they cried and were rescued;
in you they trusted and were not put to shame.
- 6** But I am a worm and not a man,
scorned by mankind and despised by the people.
- 7** All who see me mock me;
they make mouths at me; they wag their heads;
- 8** “He trusts in the LORD; let him deliver him;
let him rescue him, for he delights in him!”
- 9** Yet you are he who took me from the womb;
you made me trust you at my mother's breasts.
- 10** On you was I cast from my birth,
and from my mother's womb you have been my God.
- 11** Be not far from me,
for trouble is near,
and there is none to help.
- 12** Many bulls encompass me;
strong bulls of Bashan surround me;
- 13** they open wide their mouths at me,
like a ravening and roaring lion.
- 14** I am poured out like water,
and all my bones are out of joint;
my heart is like wax;
it is melted within my breast;
- 15** my strength is dried up like a potsherd,
and my tongue sticks to my jaws;
you lay me in the dust of death.
- 16** For dogs encompass me;
a company of evildoers encircles me;
they have pierced my hands and feet—
- 17** I can count all my bones—
they stare and gloat over me;
- 18** they divide my garments among them,
and for my clothing they cast lots.
- 19** But you, O LORD, do not be far off!
O you my help, come quickly to my aid!
- 20** Deliver my soul from the sword,
my precious life from the power of the dog!

2 Corinthians 5:14-21

14 For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; **15** and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.

16 From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer. **17** Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. **18** All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; **19** that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. **20** Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. **21** For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

John 19:16b-37

So they took Jesus, **17** and he went out, bearing his own cross, to the place called The Place of a Skull, which in Aramaic is called Golgotha. **18** There they crucified him, and with him two others, one on either side, and Jesus between them. **19** Pilate also wrote an inscription and put it on the cross. It read, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." **20** Many of the Jews read this inscription, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city, and it was written in Aramaic, in Latin, and in Greek. **21** So the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate, "Do not write, 'The King of the Jews,' but rather, 'This man said, I am King of the Jews.'" **22** Pilate answered, "What I have written I have written."

23 When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they took his garments and divided them into four parts, one part for each soldier; also his tunic. But the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom, **24** so they said to one another, "Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it to see whose it shall be." This was to fulfill the Scripture which says,

"They divided my garments among them,
and for my clothing they cast lots."

So the soldiers did these things, **25** but standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. **26** When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, "Woman, behold, your son!" **27** Then he said to the disciple, "Behold, your mother!" And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home.

28 After this, Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said (to fulfill the Scripture), "I thirst." **29** A jar full of sour wine stood there, so they put a sponge full of the sour wine on a hyssop branch and held it to his mouth. **30** When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, "It is finished," and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

31 Since it was the day of Preparation, and so that the bodies would not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a high day), the Jews asked Pilate that their legs might be broken and that they might be taken away. **32** So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first, and of the other who had been crucified with him. **33** But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. **34** But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water. **35** He who saw it has borne witness—his testimony is true, and he knows that he is telling the truth—that you also may believe. **36** For these things took place that the Scripture might be fulfilled: "Not one of his bones will be broken." **37** And again another Scripture says, "They will look on him whom they have pierced."

Our text for meditation this Good Friday is on our Epistle reading.

Grace, mercy and peace to you from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Introduction

Why do we call this day “Good Friday?”

It does not seem to be an accurate title. After all, the Son of God was crucified on this day. Not only crucified, but *tortured* beyond normal human recognition. The physical pain that He went through was excruciating, and the emotional and spiritual pain was likely even worse. He was betrayed by one of the Apostles, abandoned by the others, had to watch his own mother weep over Him while He was callously mocked by the men who arranged His murder. Worse yet, during this time He knew that our Heavenly Father had turned His Face away from Him as the blame for every sin was laid upon His shoulders. For six long hours (after a sleepless and violent night) He endured this extreme pain and exhaustion, and then finally expired.

Why do we call this day “Good Friday?”

On the one hand we might say that this Friday is *good* because it is the anniversary of when we were liberated. St. Paul makes it clear that our trespasses are no longer counted against us, our sins are forgiven, and God the terrifying Judge is now God our Heavenly Father by virtue of seeing His Son die in our place. The devil no longer lays claim to anyone who has saving faith in Jesus, the grave which we merited by our sins is no longer a power in our lives, because those sins were all nailed to the Cross. Yet is it right to call this “Good Friday?” Of course something good happened for us, but isn't it a bit of a ghoulish euphemism if we skip over all the pain in the title. Why not call it “Sacrifice Friday” or “Atonement Friday,” taking away any attempt to smooth over the pain our Savior went through? Shouldn't the Church be honest that this is the anniversary of the wickedest sin that ever happened?

Why do we call this day “Good Friday?”

We cannot forget of course that “Good” can also mean good in the sense of holiness or moral correctness. It is good to help a starving homeless child obtain a home and a steady diet. It is good to tell the truth and not lie. God is Good. And on this day, something very holy and morally correct happened as an infinite mercy was bestowed upon all who would believe. Yet if we say *that* is the reason for it, we are ignoring all the evil that went into making such a day happen. It was good that Jesus paid the penalty for our sins; it was evil that the pharisees arranged for His crucifixion and Pilate submitted to their will. It would be sorely confusing to ignore such a terrible crime.

Why do we call this day “Good Friday?”

We can say that it is because Jesus is Good, so we celebrate that Good Man for being as Good as He is. This is more true than saying water is wet. Of course Jesus is Good. He is fully God already, so He is infinitely good, and in His humanity we understand that He is the greatest man ever. No one will surpass His greatness. Yet this does not suffice as a reason for this day's title, because on account of His greatness we ought to celebrate Him every single day. Good Friday is a *specific* holiday where we celebrate a *specific* good thing, not just Jesus being good in general. Yes, Jesus is good: that is why we worship Him.

Here is why we call it Good Friday, my friends.

Yes, we celebrate Christ who is good and we celebrate the good has come to us from the Atonement and the goodness of mercy given to us. But more importantly, we celebrate that the greatest

deed ever performed for humanity happened, as our Lord took all of the evil we had ever committed, and made something good happen. What the pharisees and priests meant for evil, God meant for good, permitting them to do their foul deed so as to provide life, forgiveness and salvation to us all. Christ *showed* His goodness to us by taking away *our* evil deeds on the Cross, then granting us freedom from the sentence of death on account of His death. In our reading, St. Paul says this is the reason he could no longer think of Jesus as a mere man; *no one* among mere men could ever accomplish a universal pardon offered to all mankind in exchange for their life. Only Jesus could do such a good thing – in fact, the *best* thing that any man has ever done.

This is what makes it *Good* Friday, that the greatest good deed in history happened at the same time as – and in spite of – the worst sin in history. We *could* call it some other title that emphasized the murder of our Lord, but that would take away the glory due to Jesus. He deserves the honorable distinction of having enacted this great salvation: we want to praise and worship Him for not just being our atoning Sacrifice, but for the good of the deed He performed. It is not the Church engaging in euphemistic language to call it Good Friday, but rather it is a way of keeping our eyes on Jesus Christ, the author of our salvation.

Christ Jesus actively gave Himself for us on this day, so that with His good deed we may be made good as well. Every one of us may be a new, perfected version of ourselves freed from the weight of our sins and in loving communion with our Heavenly Father. Because He has done this, the Good Deed to surpass all other good deeds, let us give ourselves to Him. Let each one of us say “I belong to Christ” in our hearts, minds, and will, that we may no longer live in our old ways but live with the newness of life that Jesus have given us. For that is the greatest good given for us on the first *Good Friday*.

Now the Peace of our Lord, which surpasses all understanding, guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.