

Giving His life so that we might live



The journey that Jesus made to Calvary was excruciatingly painful, physically impossible, emotionally inhumane and beyond terrifying. Jesus was determined to complete his earthly journey with the same tenacity and inner spiritual strength as he lived his life and his ministry. He had lived, prayed and prepared for this time.

Jesus' viciously cruel death had purpose and meaning. His apostles and disciples still could not comprehend the events of the past week. They were like fearful orphans without a compass. Eventually they would realise that Jesus had given his life for many. While it was a cruel death, it was a purposeful death.

Good Friday is a reminder to us to live our lives with purpose; to consciously strive for our best personal and spiritual selves. Mary Oliver in one of her poems, reflects her desire to not just be a visitor to this world but to make of her life something particular and real. Recently I listened to a wonderful homily where the preacher was breaking open the gospel story of the raising of Lazarus. He spoke about how some people can be walking around dead while they are still alive. He remarked, "Some people spend ages wallpapering their tombs and choosing appropriate furniture. For these people who are buried alive we are meant to call them out of darkness and help them to unwind".

The crucifixion of Jesus reminds us of the importance of life and death. Ronald Rolheiser speaks about the giving of self in death. This concept was addressed deeply by Henri Nouwen, "Yes, there is such a thing as a good death. We ourselves are responsible for the way we die. We have to choose between clinging to life in such

a way that death becomes nothing but a failure, or letting go of life in freedom so that we can be given to others as a source of hope. This is a crucial choice and we have to work on that choice every day of our lives".

(Life of the Beloved, 1992)

Rolheiser points out that our lives follow a pattern of achievement and fruitfulness. I would prefer to say that as we grow and elder our deepening spiritual connection is related to the shift from a life grounded in doing to one grounded in being. It is a call to hold a place of hope and perspective. It means to be able

to remind people that there is something larger and deeper than the various identities we've had throughout life. It's about belonging and connectedness.

As we reflect on the importance of Good Friday, may we reflect also on our lives as we strive to live our lives into a blessed death, that will give life to others while we live and when we die.

Good Friday

Crucifixion

*See, as they strip the robe from off his back
And spread his arms and nail them to the cross,
The dark nails pierce him and the sky turns black,
And love is firmly fastened onto loss.
But here a pure change happens. On this tree
Loss becomes gain, death opens into birth.
Here wounding heals and fastening makes free
Earth breathes in heaven, heaven roots in earth.
And here we see the length, the breadth, the height
Where love and hatred meet and love stays true
Where sin meets grace and darkness turns to light
We see what love can bear and be and do,
And here our saviour calls us to his side
His love is free, his arms are open wide.*

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