

SERMONS FOR GOOD FRIDAY

GUIDED

to the

CROSS



GUIDED TO
SACRIFICE

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SERMON

- The **Sermon** is delivered by the pastor:

¶ Grace, mercy and peace to you, my dear Christian friends. Tonight on this Good Friday, after 40 days of being guided to the cross this Lent, we stand now at the foot of the cross. We have been guided to this point, to this place, to the crucifixion of our Savior, who is the sacrifice for us.

The concept of sacrifice can have many levels and dimensions. But on this day we see the ultimate sacrifice on the cross for our sins. Jesus gave of himself fully, freely and completely. He did not hold any part of himself back. He did not say no to any aspect of his mission to remove the power of sin, death and the devil from us. Because of the depth of Christ's sacrifice, it is hard for us to look at the cross today. It was hard for those who were there, too. The women stood at a distance. Many who had heard of Jesus or known him certainly must have turned away as they saw him lifted up the cross on the outskirts of town at The Place of the Skull.

Crucifixions were designed to be public displays of humiliation after all and deterrents to all of those who were considering claiming to be a king or a god or an opponent to Roman authority. This type of death was not private; each pain, each agony, each embarrassment was seen by all. There was no hiding what was happening. People could see firsthand that Jesus was in the throes of dying. And that might have served to prove to any doubters out there that may have wondered if Jesus really died. There was no denying it. Christ's physical sacrifice was very real.

At the end of the day, the soldiers recognized that he was already dead when they took him down from the cross.

But what the people at the cross that day may not have seen that readily or that clearly was the internal spiritual sacrifice that Jesus was enduring. The heavy burden of every sin of every person past, present and future was placed upon his sinless divine nature. He felt every inner pain and struggle of sin that we experienced and took that all away with his final breath. With his death, the power of the dying happening inside of us each day is removed and replaced by the power of new life through him.

This sacrifice of our Savior on the cross on this day is the culmination of thousands of years of promises from God and centuries of waiting by God's people for this moment to arrive. This sacrifice was even foreshadowed when the high priests in the Temple in Jerusalem would sacrifice animals on the altar in the Holy of Holies, sprinkling the animals' blood there to atone for the sins of the people.

Because of the sacrifice on the cross, all such sacrifices are no longer necessary. Jesus is the Lamb of God who was slain for the sins of the whole world. Even in heaven, we will praise the Lamb upon the throne, the Book of Revelation tells us. We will see with our own eyes there the one who sacrificed himself for us, and we will rejoice. Even John the Baptist, when he saw Jesus coming toward him early in his ministry, said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). John the Baptist even then knew that a sacrifice like no other would happen on this day, this Good Friday.

So what does this sacrifice on the cross mean for us? In a word, everything! We are forever changed because of Christ crucified. The wrath of God over our sins is no longer a threat. Jesus takes on the eternal consequences of our sins by dying as a sinless person in our place. We are no longer doomed to die for sin. We are forgiven and free and able to live a new life in him. Because Jesus sacrificed himself for us, the devil has no more power over us because Jesus has defeated him. Way back in Genesis, God said his promised Messiah would defeat Satan, when he said to the serpent: "And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel" (Genesis 3:15, NIV). Jesus crushed Satan with his sacrifice on the cross this day so that we do not have to fear the temptations of the devil anymore. He has been defeated. We can overpower him through our faith in Jesus and the strength of the Holy Spirit within us.

Christ's sacrifice on the cross for us also enables us to be what St. Paul calls living sacrifices. He says in Romans 12:1: "I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship." How does that look? St. Paul gives us some guidance here: "I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned" (Romans 12:3). Living a sacrificial