



“Can you tell me why we call it “GOOD Friday?” What happened to Jesus was horrible!

A long-time family friend tossed this question my way as we sat eating Easter Dinner last week.

On the surface, my friend had a point. It would seem that some title like “Black Friday” might be more appropriate. What happened to Jesus on that Friday was indeed horrible. He had the flesh on His back ripped to shreds by a whip. The King of all kings had a crown of thorns jammed into his scalp by mocking soldiers. The Roman official (Pontius Pilate) who gave the orders to have Him flogged and then executed knew that He was innocent! His mom (Mary) watched Him hang there, treated as a common criminal at a public execution. Nearly all of His closest disciples - who had trained under Him for three years! - ran and fled. One of them betrayed Him into the hands of His killers for 30 silver coins. Another of them (Peter) denied even knowing him - three times! He cried out “My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?” indicating that not only was He suffering physically, but also spiritually (to be abandoned by God is literally to suffer hell).

And after all that we call it “Good”! Seems a bit inappropriate to our way of thinking. But it really was Good.... For us! Here’s why:

It was “good” because of what Jesus’ death really meant. Jesus didn’t die as an unfortunate victim of circumstances beyond His control. He didn’t die as a martyr for a good cause. He didn’t die as an example of standing up for your rights. Jesus died as a SUBSTITUTE - ours. The sinless Son of God took the punishment for your sin and mine!

Our sin - our natural rebellion against God - had erected a wall between us and our sinless God. A wall that, unless torn down, would have separated us from God for eternity. But because God loves us rebellious creatures and didn’t want to be separated from us for eternity, He came to earth in the person of Jesus for the express purpose of taking our punishment.

Jesus said from the cross, “It is finished,” he wasn’t talking about His life. He was talking about His mission - the very purpose He came to this earth!

You may remember that at the moment Jesus died, “the curtain in the temple was torn in two from top to bottom” (Matthew 27:51). That curtain had served as a visible reminder of the barrier that our sin had erected between us and our Creator. That Friday is called “Good” because it was on that day the barrier was torn down. Our sin was paid for!

You can think of Good Friday as the day a trade was made. A horrible trade for Jesus. He got our sin - and its punishment. In exchange we are offered His perfect righteousness - a right standing with God that we receive when we repent of our sin and place our trust in Jesus as the God who died in our place to remove our sin!

Of course, we can have total confidence in calling that Friday “Good,” because of what happened the following Sunday. Jesus rose from His grave, proof that God the Father had indeed accepted His Son’s sacrifice as full payment for all sin!

After I gave our friend that little sermon - or something close to it - I summed it up this way (feel free to use a

metaphor from your favorite sport):

That Friday was “Good” because it was the day Jesus “Shut out Satan to win the 7th Game of the World Series.
Easter Sunday was the ticker-tape parade celebrating the victory!”

Thanks for asking,
Pastor David

Send your questions to pastor@livingwordlutheran.net