

Good Friday Meditation

"And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit."

(Matthew 27:50)

Jesus' death was very sudden. In the course of one day, he was beaten, hung on a cross, and died. It even seems that he died faster than expected, as according to John's gospel, centurions were dispatched to break the legs of those being crucified to speed the process along, only to find Jesus had already died before they arrived. Jesus did not hang on the cross for forty days and nights. He simply suffered, bled, and died.

When Michelle was in university, she took a course in Old Norse, studying the sagas and the language. These Old Norse tales were full of legendary heroes and told the stories of their brave exploits and heroic deaths. I particularly remember Michelle telling me about how it was common practice for these viking legends to sing a song after their death, as if the sheer power of their heroism would keep them alive for just a little bit longer than most, and die a saga-worthy death.

It strikes me that Jesus' death was not a heroic one. It was so fast, so sudden. He sang no song, he died like a normal man. That is the real scandal and shock of Good Friday, isn't it? That the Son of God, on this day, becomes so weak, so small, and so vulnerable. His skin is pierced by thorns, his blood flows out of him, he is too weak even to stand, and he dies so quickly. That which was so great and powerful and good is taken away so quickly and effortlessly.

As we continue to live in these days of social isolation, we have each had to endure the loss of much that was good in our lives. The things we love have disappeared so completely that it is shocking to realize that it has only been less than a month since measures began in earnest to combat the virus' spread. Our worship services, our book clubs, our time at the gym or the mall, even having tea with a friend, all of these good things have disappeared so fast. Two months ago, would any of us imagine that this could have happened? Would you have believed it if someone had told you what life would be like now?

I don't think the disciples would have believed it if you had told them Jesus was going to die like any other man on a cross, alone and humiliated. Jesus was walking on the water, healing the blind, and outwitting the Pharisees at every turn. Yet die he did.

So this Good Friday, may you be reminded of how easy it is to take the good

for granted. So many blessings in our lives are things we assume could never be taken away from us: our homes, our health, our family. We assume they will last forever, and we forget to receive them as a true gift. May Jesus' death remind us that all that the good gifts of God are just that, gifts. All that we have, we have been given. All that we have, but for the grace of God, could be lost. Be thankful today, and rejoice in the good blessings of today, for Good Friday reminds us that we too often take them for granted.

May God bless you and those you love this Good Friday. Amen.

