



Good Friday

GOOD FRIDAY • APRIL 10, 2020

*There in the ground
His body lay
Light of the World
by darkness slain...
— In Christ Alone*

Worship Service

Live feed to Pleasant Manor at 11:00 am

Message available at 11:00 am from the

NUMC Website www.redbrickchurch.ca under Sermons.

For God so loved the world...

Good Friday is a day of sorrow mingled with joy. It is a time to grieve over the sin of man and to meditate and rejoice upon God's love in giving His only Son for the redemption of sin. *Good Friday* is a day of hope. It is a day where we look forward to a brighter tomorrow. For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son. John 3:16

Order of Service

Message: "For such a time as this" Daniel Janzen

Scripture Verses: Hebrews 12:2, Psalm 22, Matthew 26-27

Communion

Easter Sunday Service...

Sunday April 12th

11:00 am Worship Service live feed to Pleasant Manor

11:00 am Message available on NUMC website under Sermons

Message by: Daniel Janzen

"REGRETS"

Reflecting on the Story of Christ's Suffering, Death and Resurrection

Looking for something to read during this time of social distancing, I happened to pick up the book, "Dead Man Walking", the 1993 account of Sister Helen Prejean's work providing spiritual counsel to inmates on death row in Louisiana, and her activism against the death penalty, while also establishing support services for victims of violent crime. Her story was subsequently made into a movie starring Susan Sarandon and Sean Penn. In her descriptions of offenders coming to terms with their horrific actions, of families burdened with grief and pain, and of workers in a legal system riddled with injustices and corruption, regret is a common theme. Central is the regret felt by these inmates as they approach their execution date and find words to articulate profound remorse for their horrific actions. But Sr. Helen also touches on the regret of families of murdered loved ones, who felt that they didn't do enough to protect them from harm, and regretted that their last words to them were so mundane, not realizing it was the final good-bye. And there was also regret among some of the officials who spent their careers doing the bidding of politicians, propping up their pro-capital-punishment campaigns by sending numerous convicts to their deaths, despite obvious flaws in the investigations and trials.

The similarities to Jesus' trial and execution depicted in the Gospels are remarkable. There, too, the thematic thread of regret winds its way through the story. We think firstly of the disciple Peter, who left the scene weeping bitter tears of regret after three times denying he even knew His beloved Master (Luke 22:54-62). Sr. Helen refers to an old Christian legend that claims Peter's remorse was so deep that he never stopped crying for the rest of his life. Knowing the story of Jesus pardoning Peter when they met again after the resurrection (John 21:15-19), I believe that forgiveness freed Peter from his grief, and dried his tears. But we do well in contemplating the depth of his sorrow in those long, dark in-between days.

We must also contemplate the torment of regret that drove the disciple Judas to take his own life, unable to come to terms with the fact that he betrayed Jesus to His enemies (Matthew 27:3-5). One spiritual struggle is to accept that God can forgive us; another is to learn to forgive ourselves. That can be a life or death lesson when the anguish of failure runs to the core of our existence.

In contrast, there is light at the end of the road for the criminal being crucified next to Jesus (Luke 23:39-43), who realizes with regret that his punishment is well-deserved. Yet, at the last possible moment, he entrusts his fate to this innocent man dying beside him, and offers his heartfelt penitence. As death closes in, ...heaven opens its doors to his soul.

There is the centurion, who watches Jesus breathe His last, and exclaims, "Surely, this was the Son of God!" (Matthew 27:54). What regrets did he carry with him when he descended Mount Calvary and walked home at the end of his shift?

And what about Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, secret disciples among the religious leaders? Joseph provided his own tomb for Jesus' final resting place (Mark 13:42-46), and Nicodemus supplied spices for the traditional burial (John 19:39-40).

Were these the last gestures of devotion, motivated by regret, that they hadn't been able — or willing — to say anything during the Sanhedrin's unjust proceedings, to save Jesus from this horrific execution?

We are all familiar with burdens of regret, big or small, that weigh on us at some point in our lives. They can keep us emotionally chained to the past, eat away at our joy and self-worth, keep us awake at night, and torment our thoughts when death approaches. In these Holy Days, as we contemplate Christ's suffering and death, what regrets do we need to honestly name in the face of our wounded Saviour? As we also celebrate the empty tomb, let us give thanks that Jesus Christ has the power — and the desire — to free us from our weight of regret, just as He forgave and reinstated Peter, building His church on the "rock" of a broken man who came to terms with his failures; just as He welcomed a dying criminal into the Kingdom of heaven.

It is not God's will for anyone to remain imprisoned by regrets, to be condemned to "death row" in their sense of failure and unworthiness. He is eager to forgive us, and gives us the power to forgive ourselves, and to forgive each other. As Galatian 5:1a states: "It is for freedom that Christ has set us free." He went to the cross for you and for me. And for that He has no regrets.

With prayers of blessing from Pastor Renate Dau Klaassen