

The Best is Yet to Come

The last few hours of Jesus' life don't make sense. One of his followers turns him over for some money. His most passionate disciple denies even knowing him. Both the religious and political trials are a mockery of justice. The Sanhedrin breaks a number of rules and Jesus' rights in order to condemn him at all costs. He's brutally tortured and murdered. And through it all he shows a love that doesn't make sense. He heals the servant of the high priest whose ear gets cut off. He speaks with self-control and meekness to the men accusing him. He asks his Father to forgive the men who are callously betting over his clothes as he hangs on the cross. And in his last act of ministry before breathing his last breath, he promises the criminal next to him eternal life.

And then the darkest moments in history transpire:

Luke 23:44-46

44 It was now about noon, and darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon, 45 for the sun stopped shining. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two. 46 Jesus called out with a loud voice, “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.” When he had said this, he breathed his last.

The long awaited Messiah. The one who would come make all things right. The king who would finally free the chosen people from years of suffering. He dies. Jesus bears the pain of all people in one final act of relentless love. This wasn't how the story was supposed to go! He was supposed to fix it all. He wasn't supposed to end up mortified in the most viscous and embarrassing death, arms spread on a cross! How could this Friday ever be called Good? How could the story end this way?

Friend, I'm sure these thoughts have raced through your head a number of times throughout your life. Not just on Good Friday. But on Monday morning, when you were expecting another day at work and your source of income and stability was taken away with one swift HR meeting. Not just on Good Friday. But on the Wednesday night where the person who was supposed to keep choosing you, told you the marriage was over. Not just on Good Friday. But on the Thursday afternoon, in the doctor's office, when his grim face told you all you needed to know about the diagnosis.

Friend, there are too many senseless moments in this world. Too many dark days where we don't understand why. Where we don't understand what God is doing. Where it feels like darkness has come over all of the land. I know what happened on Good Friday was a necessary sacrifice to atone for our sins. But I think there is something special about how it happened. As strange as it might sound, I think it had to be that brutal. I think it had to be that senseless. I think it was the darkest day, so that on our darkest day, we can know that our Savior isn't far from us in our suffering. He knows what it means to cry out in deep anguish. He knows what it means to have people who loved him walk the other way. He knows what it means to wonder where His Father is in all of this pain.

He knows. He knows the questions of your heart today. He knows the senseless thing you are going through. He knows the pain that you can't even bear to put into words. He knows it because he experienced more pain than we could ever imagine. He experienced more pain than we ever will. And he can call it good. Even on that dark day, he did the unthinkable and chose love. For you and for me and for the criminal on the cross and for the person who hurt you who keeps you up at night.

A day like today feels senseless. The Jews didn't understand how this Messiah was truly the Son of God if the story ended like this. Jesus' disciples didn't understand how all he had done and taught could lead to this heartbreak moment. Jesus' mother sobbed as she watched the life of her baby boy come to a close on a cross.

But this Friday is Good because it wasn't the end. This Friday is good because it was the necessary pain to get us to an eternal future. This Friday is good because we have a Savior who would endure this kind of Friday for the good of his children. This Friday is good because the story doesn't end here. Because Sunday is just a few days away. And the best is yet to come.