

April 3, 2015 – Good Friday
TGFGF

A business man stepped into an elevator and was greeted by a lovely young lady who said to him, “TGIF.”

The business man smiled at her and said, “S-M-I-O-T.”

She looked at him with a very puzzled look and said again, “TGIF.”

He responded once again by saying, “S-M-I-O-T.”

This time the young lady smiled her biggest smile and as sweetly as she knew how she said, “TGIF.”

Without hesitation the businessman replied, “S-M-I-O-T.”

Now the lady is a little exasperated and decided to explain things, “Thank God, It’s Friday... get it?”

The man answered, “yeah, I get it, but ‘S-M-I-O-T,’ Sorry Miss It’s Only Thursday!”

Well it is definitely Friday. And not just any Friday. We call it Good Friday. No one is exactly sure why we call it “good” Friday. Some sources say the originally the word “good” meant good as in “pious” or “holy.” We could have been here tonight for Holy Friday. That makes more sense, doesn’t it? It is one of the holiest days of the year for followers of Christ, for it commemorates the day Jesus the Christ/Messiah laid down His life on our behalf. I guess it is a good Friday for us, the best possible Friday because, in a way we don’t fully understand, The Son of God took upon Himself the sins of the world. Good Friday is the holy day that we look at the cross and say with deep gratitude, “He died for me.”

It reminds me of something I read recently about President Franklin Delano Roosevelt. Did you know that Roosevelt almost did not become President of the United States? He was speaking in Miami, Florida when a would-be assassin named Giuseppe Zangara fired a gun at him, but at that critical moment, Lillian Cross, a doctor’s wife, hit Zangara’s arm with her purse and spoiled his aim. Instead, the bullet hit Anton Cermak, the mayor of Chicago. Mr. Cemak died a few days later, an unfortunate case of being in the wrong place at the wrong time. Here is what interested me, though. It is said that before he died Mr. Cemak said to Franklin Roosevelt, “I’m glad it was me instead of you.”

We’re not sure he really said that, but if he did, he was a man who truly love his country. “I’m glad it was me instead of you.”

Tonight we can also hear Jesus saying those words to us. “I’m glad it was me instead

of you.” Who did Christ love when He gave His life on the Cross? He love all humanity. He loved you and He loved me. So I hope you won’t think I’m being too flippant for saying T-G-F-G-F – Thank God for Good Friday.

Good Friday reminds us of the suffering of Christ for us. I remember more than a few years ago now being at a funeral service in a Catholic church. Hanging right over head, not up by the altar, but hanging from the ceiling right over me where I sat was a crucifix depicting the suffering of Christ. I was raised in the Catholic religion and I was use to seeing a cross with a statue of the suffering Jesus nailed to it. When I became a Christian and the question was asked why in Protestant churches we display an empty cross the answer given was that we emphasize the Risen Christ. He is no longer on the cross so we adorn our churches with an empty cross. I get that and I like that we focus on the resurrected Christ. But, as I sat in that Catholic Church and looked up at that crucifix above my head I was moved by the love of Jesus that was willing to suffer to that extent for me and I was humbled, repentant, and broken as I contemplated that.

In his book Dare To Believe, Dan Baumann wrote these thoughtful words, “We have perhaps unwisely and sometimes unconsciously glamorized the cross. Jewelry and steeples alike are often ornamental and attractive but carry nothing of the real story of crucifixion. It was the most painful method of public death in the first century. The victim was placed on a wooded cross. Nails... were driven into the hands and feet of the victim, and then the cross was lifted and jarred into the ground, tearing the flesh of the crucified and racking his body with excruciating pain. Historians remind us that even the soldiers could not get used to the horrible sight. [Often they] took strong drink to numb their senses.”

No it’s not a pleasant thought, but it is a necessary thought. The cross is about suffering – suffering love. And Jesus did it for us and He did it willingly as an act of obedient service to His Father. He knelt in the garden and prayed, "Father, if you are willing, please take this cup of suffering away from me. Yet I want your will to be done, not mine." (Luke 22:42). You see, the cross was not something Jesus looked forward to, but He was willing to endure it.

And there is something about Christ’s willingness to go to the cross that made it possible for you and me, thought sinners, to be reconciled with God. We are not all we ought to be, but God has made us part of His family.

Perhaps you have seen this obituary by an unknown author. It was envisioned to be an obituary from Jerusalem, in the year 33 A.D. Here’s how it reads:

“Jesus Christ, 33, of Nazareth, died Friday on Mount Calvary, also known as Golgotha, ‘the place of the skull.’ Betrayed by the apostle Judas, He was crucified by order of ruler Pontius Pilate. The causes of death were asphyxiation by crucifixion, extreme exhaustion, severe torture, and loss of blood.

“Jesus Christ, descendant of Abraham, was a member of the house of David. He was

son of the late Joseph, a carpenter of Nazareth, and Mary, His devoted mother. Jesus was born in a stable in the city of Bethlehem, Judea. He is survived by His mother Mary, His faithful Apostles, numerous disciples, and many followers.

“Jesus was self-educated and spent most of His adult life working as a teacher. Jesus occasionally worked as a medical doctor and it is reported that He healed many patients. Until the time of His death, he was sharing the Good News by healing the sick, touching the lonely, feeding the hungry, and helping the poor.

“Jesus was most noted for recounting parables about His Father’s Kingdom, performing miracles, such as feeding more than five thousand people with only five loaves of bread and two fish, and healing a man born blind. The day before His death, He held a last supper celebrating the Passover feast at which He foretold His death. The body was buried in a grave donated by Joseph of Arimathea, a family friend. By order of Pontius Pilate, a boulder was rolled in front of the tomb and Roman soldiers were stationed on guard.

“In lieu of flowers, the family has requested that everyone try to live as Jesus did. Donations may be sent to anyone in need. “

That’s a pretty good summation of His life and death; Suffering, serving, sacrifice, and salvation.

Jesus would suffer the brutal death of crucifixion. The Bible tells us the "why": For the atonement of sin Jesus was the perfect sacrifice. But that reason--that explanation--the answer to "*Why did Jesus have to die...and why did He have to suffer so much?*" does not make it any easier. I don't think Mary, or John, or Peter, or any of the disciples, loved ones or followers of Jesus felt any better or hurt any less because they were told that He died for their sins. It still does not make sense to me. It still brings me pain to see Jesus on the cross. It's not even something I can begin to understand. Telling me that Jesus had to die for me to go to heaven really does not help make any more sense of His sacrifice. Yes I understand (intellectually) He was the lamb who was led to the slaughter for my sin. Yes I understand (intellectually) that He took on Himself the sin of the world. And yes I understand (intellectually) what the Bible says about life being in the blood, and there has to be a shedding of blood for the forgiveness of sin. I get all that, but my heart still screams that there must have been another way.

But I also believe in a resurrection. I believe in life after death. And I can't explain that either. It has everything to do with faith. We are made right with God by faith in Jesus "For God loved the world so much that he gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life." (Jn 3:16)

Taking the messages from two songs you heard tonight, There is room at the cross for you Jesus suffered and died, for you. And if you have already come to the cross of Christ, when will you realize people need the Lord. Share the Good News: And so yes, TGFGF – Thank God for Good Friday.