

GOOD FRIDAY, TODAY

Sermon preached by The Rev. Dr. Ralph W. Bayfield at
Good Shepherd Church, Pine Grove, Bluemont, VA 4/14/17

This week an aircraft carrier, the U.S.S. *Carl Vinson* and its accompanying fleet with guided missile destroyers returned to the China Sea. North Korea has been firing missiles at peaceful Japan and threatens South Korea. Are we headed for another Korean conflict or war? In Afghanistan, our Air Force dropped a huge bomb to take out ISIS military elements that threaten the peace. In the middle east in Syria, children, parents, men and women are gassed to a suffering death. Two women doctors who have been working in Syria in the war torn area, came to the *Charlie Rose* show and told how Saran and Chlorine gas destroy a person's lungs and cause a most painful way to die.¹ President Trump is upset after looking at the pain promulgated on innocent children and their mothers. He ordered a missile fired from a Navy ship at a Syrian airbase.² Will he do more to take out the Satanic, demonic, Assad, the leader of Syria? Assad has denied any involvement in the gas bombing. Will we invade or bomb Syria, and more people will die? There is a shattering of hope on this Good Friday.

I learned a lot about Good Friday from the publication *Synthesis*,³ Much of the material in this sermon comes from that article. At last we come to the end of Passion Week. It is not the end of Jesus life, but it is the most dreaded, awful day of the Christian Year. We find ourselves, taken back to Calvary, painfully aware of the imminent death of Jesus of Nazareth. Maybe the moneychangers have shakily set their

¹Charlie Rose Show, WETA TV, 4/11/17

²*The Washington Post*, 4/11/17

³.*Synthesis*, April 3, 2015, Boyd, Md.

tables upright while the towel used by Jesus to wipe the disciples' feet is left crimped and soiled in the deserted upper room alongside the left over bread and wine. The flowers of Gethsemane's garden have been crushed as mute evidence that Jesus prayed here. They were crushed beneath the uncaring feet of soldiers and a disciple of Jesus who betrayed him and led the Romans to arrest Jesus.

There is a trial during which we get the feeling that Jesus might be let off. We found some hope, hearing about Pilate's wife, whose dream related that Jesus should not be convicted nor sentenced. Pilate himself, tried several times to have Jesus released. However, Pilate was weak before the crowd of religious leaders who were insistent, determined that Jesus must die. Our hope is built up, only to be shattered again as we find ourselves transported in time, to the trial of Jesus. It was decreed that Jesus should die. The sentence was pronounced. If any of us had any notion that Jesus statements about His coming end were ill advised, we must now realize Jesus was speaking the very truth.

From the cross, on which Jesus is nailed, He cried out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me."⁴ Why? Why? Jesus questioned, and in compassion He prayed, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."⁵ To the crucified criminal who was on another cross beside Him, Jesus said, "Today you shall be with me in paradise."⁶

⁴*The Holy Bible, Matthew 27:46:* Thomas Nelson & Sons, New York, Toronto, Edinburgh: 1946 page 784

⁵*The Holy Bible, Luke 23:34* page 832

⁶*The Holy Bible, Luke 23:40-43* page 832

To his mother Mary and Jesus' friend, the beloved disciple, our Lord said, “Woman behold your Son,” and “Son behold your Mother.”⁷ In response to His physical need, Jesus cried out, “I thirst,” and finally “It is finished.”⁸ It is accomplished. Jesus earthly ministry is over, His voice is hushed in death.

It is finished. It is said, that sometimes the dying have a panorama of their lives that flash before them as they expire. One wonders if Jesus had a cascade of such images? What did Jesus remember about His life as He breathed His last? Did He remember old Simeon of Jerusalem, wheezing in excitement with tears running down his face as he saw his first glimpse of life. Seeing the world, after being born blind, he blessed God. As Simeon held the Christ child in his arms he sang: *the Nunc dimittis*.

“Lord, now lettest thou thy servant, depart in peace,
according to thy word.
For mine eyes have seen thy salvation,
which thou has prepared in the presence of all people.
A light for the revelation to the Gentiles and
for the glory of thy people Israel.”⁹

Did Jesus, remember His parents being upset with Him when He was a child, and they lost him. How frustrated, he must have felt, informing them that he had to go teach and be about His heavenly Father's business. The leaders of the synagogue were amazed at his understanding and teaching ability while leading discussion in the Temple.¹⁰ He was so young. Did Jesus recall for a moment, the temptations in the

⁷ *The Holy Bible, John 19:26-27* page 854

⁸ *The Holy Bible, John 19:30* page 855

⁹ *The Holy Bible Luke 2:25-35* page 806

¹⁰ *The Holy Bible, Luke 2:42-52* page 807

wilderness? Did He wonder if the road He had chosen, in light of His present condition on the cross, had been the wise and the right decision? Did He recall his anguish in leaving Capernaum and the unhealed people he had abandoned? He had to go to neighboring towns. to proclaim God's message of love in other places as well as the former town.¹¹

Did Jesus see once more, the storm on the lake that He stilled to help the disciples overcome their fear?¹² Did Jesus remember the leper that he healed and the paralyzed person who walked,¹³ the demoniac freed from bondage¹⁴ the incurable cured, and the dead man Lazarus raised from the dead?¹⁵ Did Jesus recall the grand parade as He rode into Jerusalem and the people threw palms, thinking He was coming to deliver Israel from the Roman military bondage.¹⁶

Did Jesus remember the Last Supper with the disciples and the strange look on their faces as He interrupted the Feast of the Passover with His strange new teaching about a new Covenant of His Body and Blood.¹⁷ Did Jesus recall the kiss of death from Judas in Gethsemane.¹⁸ Did He see Barabbas with his fist clenched as the crowd cheered and turned to Jesus shouting, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!"¹⁹

¹¹*The Holy Bible, Mark 1:38, page 787*

¹²*The Holy Bible, Mark 4:38 page 788*

¹³*The Holy Bible, Mark 2:3-12 page 787*

¹⁴*The Holy Bible, Mark 5:1-20 page 789-790*

¹⁵*The Holy Bible, Mark 5:35-41page 390*

¹⁶*The Holy Bible, Matthew 21:1-12 page 775*

¹⁷*The Holy Bible, Mark 14:22-25 page 800*

¹⁸*The Holy Bible, Mark 14:45 page 801*

¹⁹*The Holy Bible, Luke 23:21 page 832*

Who knows what Jesus saw and thought in those last moments before and on the cross?
Who knows what our own experience and thoughts will be tonight, as we contemplate
the cross. What is important is how we stand before our Lord Jesus Christ.

John Donne, the great Dean of St. Paul's Cathedral, London wrote:

“When all is said and done with this cross thus laid for me, and taken up by me.

I must follow Christ to His end. His end is His cross and resurrection. That
is, I must bring my cross to His cross to find a new life. I lay down my cross
at the foot of His cross; I confess there is no dignity, no merit in my cross. But
it receives an impression, a sanctification from Jesus' cross. If I could die a
thousand times for Christ, this is nothing if Christ has not died for me. But
Jesus has died and risen from the cross for me and all humankind.”²⁰ All of us who live
and have faith in Him will be raised from death and are saved.

The great French Jesuit theologian and paleontologist, Pierre Teilhard de
Chardin, whose theory blended Christianity and science, believed man was evolving
mentally and socially toward a perfect state. His theory was called “unorthodox” by
the Roman Catholic Church. However I believe He had correct insight when He said:

“Christianity does not ask us to live in the shadow of the cross, but in the fire
of the Holy Spirit of its creative action, which is resurrection, new life, eternal life in
the kingdom of heaven with Jesus Christ our Lord.”²¹ *AMEN*

²⁰Dictionary, John Donne, Dean St. Paul's Cathedral, Lond, UK 1572-1631

²¹Dictionary, Teilhard de Chardin, Pierre 1881-1955