

Isaiah 52:13 – 53:12

Psalm 22

Hebrews 10:16-25

John 18:1 – 19:42

Good Friday Sermon

“The Cost of Changing the World”

In our gospels, we see that Jesus changes lives through his ministry. Jesus heals the sick. Making the unclean, clean again. Reconnecting them to their family. To their community. Jesus shows hospitality to those who have been rejected by their community helping them feel value as a person, as a citizen. Many of these people go on to do great things in Jesus’ name. Jesus speaks out against injustice giving people who suffer from this injustice hope that their fate can change. That they will find themselves living in a just society. Where they feel safe. Jesus cares for those who are living in poverty, helping them feel like someone actually cares about them. That they are worthy. That they have a purpose in their community.

In our gospels, we see that Jesus not only changes lives but also changes his community through his ministry. People start asking important questions about systems that had been in place for centuries, because Jesus challenges how these very systems are run. Helping contribute to a reformation within his faith tradition that helps his faith community adjust to life after the Temple is destroyed.

And Jesus challenges not only his religious community, but the greater society to do more to care for and empower the vulnerable people. To welcome children. To listen to their voices more. To welcome women at the same table as men. Inviting them into theological and political conversations that will shape the future. To care for those who live in poverty more. To help them feel valued. To welcome people who don’t always fit into the norms of society. To show them that they are loved.

In our gospels, we see that Jesus changes the world through his ministry.

Unfortunately, as we see in our gospel this morning, the passion narrative, that changing the world comes at a cost. Jesus is arrested, beaten, and crucified for speaking out against injustice. For loving the vulnerable, rejected, people. For trying to change oppressive systems that have been entrenched in this world way too long. For being a strong advocate for Reformation within his faith community.

Through Jesus’ story we see that there is a cost to changing the world. Sometimes a very grave cost.

Today, on Good Friday, we reflect on this cost. And also, we reflect on Jesus' invitation to invite us to follow Jesus down this road. To take up our crosses and follow Jesus. To suffer a similar cost.

Over history, we have seen followers of Jesus face a similar cost when they try to enact change in their community. From the person who is pushed out of their faith community for challenging a toxic person or system within that community. To someone being killed for speaking out against an injustice they are seeing happen in their community. From someone being shunned for hanging out with someone the community deems not welcome. To someone being exiled for challenging the leaders of the faith community to do things differently. Many Christians over the centuries who have taken up their crosses and followed Jesus have suffered a similar cost.

And yet, with all this reflection on the cost of changing the world, this is a Good Friday. Not a sad Friday. Or a frustrating Friday. This is a Good Friday. Because we are not remembering a leader who stood up for people and then failed. We are not remembering an Empire that continues to get away with propping up oppressive systems. We are remembering a leader who cared so much for everyone in his community that he was willing to risk his life to change his community into the kind of community where everyone feels welcome. We are remembering a leader who empowers his followers to keep challenging the Empire to change these oppressive systems. I don't know about you, but I think this is something to celebrate, not grieve.

And even though he does face death on the cross for changing the world, his movement doesn't die. It keeps going. It keeps changing the world throughout the centuries. It keeps calling people to challenge the injustices and oppressive systems that exist. It keeps challenging us to change. To be better people. To be a better community. People who are loving and hospitable to others. People who stand up for the vulnerable rejected people in our community. People who take up their crosses and follow Jesus.

Today is a good Friday, because Jesus' passion story empowers us to continue to strive to be the kind of community Jesus calls us to be.

Let us pray, gracious God, thank you for sending us your Son who showed us a better way to be community. Who empowers us to challenge the principalities and powers who continue to perpetuate unjust systems that oppress vulnerable people. Who continues to work in and through us to change the world despite the cost we face.

Amen.

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