

HEARTBEATS Staying Connected 4/15/2022

Dear Friends in Christ,

A gentleman was shopping in a grocery store when he heard a loud crash from the next aisle. He dashed around the shelves to see what had happened. There he came upon an elderly woman on her knees at the edge of a number of broken tomato sauce jars, trying to pick up the pieces of glass. Though there was a crowd of people gathering and watching the spectacle, the gentleman quickly got down and began to help her pick up the glass. The woman kept repeating that it was an accident; that she had reached for a jar and others started to fall; when she tried to catch them, still others came down; she was so embarrassed and upset; she wanted to try to make it right. As the gentleman tried to calm her, the store manager arrived and encouraged the woman not to worry and that the store would clean up the mess. The woman said that she was sorry and insisted that she would pay for the broken jars. The manager told her that it was alright, that the store had insurance for such occasions, and that she should just continue with her shopping. Everything would be fine and she should go on making her purchases as if nothing had happened.

Every analogy or parable has limitations on how well they are able to describe the truth at the heart of the story. The above tale is an analogy about Good Friday. Though we have erred, sinned, made a mess of everything, Jesus on the cross takes care of it all so that we can continue with our life without guilt or shame for the mistakes we have made. Like the “clean-up on aisle nine,” everything is taken care of and there is no cost to us. That doesn’t mean that there aren’t expenses. The store pays for insurance and deductibles for losses. Jesus pays for our sins with His life. (Again, analogies can only go so far.) The question for us becomes, “What will we do going forward after such a “clean-up” has been made for us?”

We call it Good Friday. That seems strange because of what we hear about on this day.” The late Johnny Hart was the creator and artist of the comic strip “BC.” One of my favorite strips shows the main character, BC, sitting and looking off into the distance. Thor, the resident theologian, is standing nearby. “I hate the term ‘Good Friday.’” BC says. Thor asks, “Why?” BC replies, “My Lord was hanged on a tree that day.” Thor thoughtfully says, “If you were going to be hanged on that day, and He volunteered to take your place, how would you feel?” BC says, “Good.” Thor turns and begins to walk away. “Have a nice day,” he says.

Today is Good Friday, the day we get a “clean-up on aisle nine,” the day we were supposed to be hanged, but Jesus volunteered to take our place. Every sin is removed. Every mistake erased. Every mess cleaned up. What now will you do? Will this make a difference in your life, and if so, how? Though it is a somber and dark occasion, it is also, nonetheless, so very good. Have a nice day.

In Christ's love,
Pastor Jeffrey