

HEARTBEATS Staying Connected 2/19/2024

Dear Friends in CHRIST,

ONE AT ONE – *Every day this week beginning on Tuesday, February 20 you are encouraged to pray for one minute at one o'clock. This week, pray for someone toward whom you have a grudge or hard feelings. Ask GOD to bless that person. Pray for release from those strong resentments. Pray that your relationship might be held through the power of GOD's love.*

Our confirmation classes regularly begin with what I call “Stump the Pastor.” We offer confirmation to young people beginning about the age of twelve because they are starting to have their own questions regarding church beliefs and practices. “Stump the Pastor” is an opportunity for them to ask these questions about what is of greatest interest or importance to them rather than just learning about what I want them to know. (We usually get to these things also.) “Stump the Pastor” isn't about proving that I know it all, because I don't. Sometimes their questions push me to do more research about topics of theology or religion that I haven't thought of or don't know enough about to answer their questions right away.

Confirmation age is not the only time people have questions, either. This past week, the Sunday school class had a great question that brought me into their classroom for some conversation. It may be a question that many of us have had. “Why do we call it Good Friday since JESUS died on that day? That wasn't a good thing.”

My answer to the Sunday school students came from a strip of the cartoon B.C. by Johnny Hart. I've always remembered it as a very good response to this question.

B.C. says to Thor (the resident theologian), “I hate the term “Good Friday.”

Thor asks, “Why?”

B.C. replies, “My LORD was hanged on a tree that day.”

Thor then asks BC, “If you were going to be hanged on that day, and HE volunteered to take your place, how would you feel?”

B.C. answers, “Good.”

Thor says, “Have a nice day.”

This is a good way for us to reflect on Good Friday in particular and the season of Lent in general. This is a time for us to remember what our future looks like because of the choices we make in life—choices that far too often are not what GOD would want from us. The Bible tells us that the “wages of sin are death,” the reality of what our selfish natures mean for eternity for each of us. Then, as we approach Holy Week and JESUS' unwarranted crucifixion and death for our sake, we also can reflect on what HIS death means for us.

We should not lose the feelings of the great sacrifice JESUS made for us. That's what services on Good Friday are all about. It is a tremendous tragedy that JESUS was put to death and the reality for us is that we bear guilt for this happening. Nevertheless, that day is also “good” for us in that JESUS allowed this to happen for us. As we live our lives, we should always seek to do so in response to the good thing that JESUS did because of GOD's tremendous love for us.

Each week, when we walk forward to receive Holy Communion, we are confessing our need for GOD's love and grace. In Holy Communion, we are receiving by faith CHRIST's body and blood, HIS sacrifice on the cross. We come with solemnity over our need for GOD's love and we leave with joy over what GOD has given to us in CHRIST. Even in Holy Communion, we have that feeling of the tragedy of CHRIST's death, but the joy over the good news of what HE did for us.

In CHRIST's love,
Pastor Jeffrey