

Good Friday  
Isa 52:13-53:12  
Heb 4:14-16; 5:7-9  
John 18:1-19:42

The first Good Friday was the day the world changed. Before that day it was locked into the blame game, described in the story of Adam, Eve and the serpent in the Garden of Eden. When God created Adam, He allowed him to eat the fruit of the trees in the garden except the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and if he ate that fruit, he would die. God then created Eve and they lived in the garden, but the evil serpent sowed seeds of doubt in Eve's ears about whether God said that she and Adam would die if they ate of the fruit.

After all, God never said that to her, but only to Adam. Was Adam sure about what he heard? God is a loving God, so surely He will not let them die if they become like Him, knowing the difference between good and evil. So when Adam and Eve were caught out, the blame game began. Adam blamed Eve and Eve blamed the serpent.

The blame game promotes fatalism which is the belief that there is another force that determines our fate. Call it the gods, the force of nature, the powerful, or karma, but the message is that we humans are not responsible for what happens in our lives. Jesus broke that blame cycle on the cross because through God's power He was able to take control of His own destiny. Through His free-will, He chose to subject His own will to the will of the Father. "Nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done." This is not helpless fatalism, but active submission to God and an entering into partnership with Him to further His plan.

So on Good Friday, Jesus empowered human free will. We have the freedom to choose. One thief who died with Jesus only thought of how to save himself from death. The other acknowledged Jesus as Lord. The choice is between life and death. Through Jesus' resurrection, the blame game can be overcome, so enabling us to be agents of Jesus, the agent of God, in growing God's Kingdom.

On Good Friday we learn that we do not need to allow ourselves to be imprisoned by the whims of the gods, an irrational caste system or the force of karma. We can take responsibility for ourselves and the choices we make. Once we see that, we come to the realisation that we cannot make right choices by ourselves. We need to join ourselves to the risen One, so the power of the Holy Spirit can work through us. How can we make that possible?

In the differing accounts of the Passion story of Jesus, we are told that significant events occurred on the 3rd, 6th and 9th hour of that Good Friday. The Jewish day begins at 6-00 am, so Jesus' trial began at 9-00 am, He was nailed to the cross at noon and died at 3-00 pm. These were the hours when Jewish prayers and sacrifices were offered in the Temple in Jerusalem and observed in the synagogues. Those who prayed at these times were making verbal offerings in harmony with the sacrifices offered by the priests.

During His ministry, Jesus said that He was God's new Temple that would be destroyed

and raised on the third day (Jn 2:19). Our worship and self-offering is no longer tied to a building in Jerusalem but offered through the One who has revealed God to us. The traditional times of prayer in the ancient Religious Communities included prayer at Terce – 9-00 am, Sext at noon and None at 3-00 pm. Perhaps in our daily lives we might try to offer a short prayer, even one word or line, around those times, to recall whose we are, as we continue our journey into Christ-likeness and the fulfillment of the Kingdom of God. Good Friday was certainly the day the world changed for those Christians who love God. For everyone else, it is just part of another long weekend.

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