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St. Stephen's Church – Edina, Minnesota
7:00 a.m. Morning Prayer with Communion from the Reserve Sacrament
Good Friday – April 19, 2019

“A Dark Friday Turned Good”

Scripture: John 13:36-38

I suppose I understand, or I at least accept, the reality of death. But... like this? Isn't it enough that we must live day to day with the understanding or the acceptance that death is the single most inevitable thing we ever face in life?... That our time is not unlimited, and we must part from those people and those things that we love, or they will part from us, in the inexorable march of relentless time. It may be that near the only thing that makes such an understanding tolerable are those friends and loved ones that surround us and comfort us and give us joy and hope... if we are so fortunate as to have such friends.

So, this death? On “Good” Friday? It doesn't feel so good. Because little by little, moment by moment, too many of those who have surrounded Jesus begin to peel away in their fear or their frustration or confusion or exhaustion. And, how can I say it?... God the Father bless him, because Jesus knows it. He sees it coming to pass. His closest disciples are a bit confused. Judas has already departed their company to work his treachery, and then Peter, good ol' Peter, comes to the rescue... “I will lay

down my life for you, Jesus” he crows. “If only...” I imagine Jesus might have sighed. But no. Not yet.

And if there is anything good in Good Friday, I think it must emerge from little moments like this one. For I imagine that Jesus must have felt a little —what?— let down? Forlorn? Abandoned? Perhaps just plain... alone. Because he sees what is coming, and despite his three year sojourn with these disciples, with all their adventures and all his teaching of God and of love, and the miracles and the wonder, and despite all Peter’s good intentions, the road Jesus is about to walk grows lonelier by the moment. Thank God for the women who never really abandon him and who, I believe, at least try to remain on the edge of hope. Yet before this day is through, even Jesus will wonder if he is entirely forsaken.

So, death?... I get it. We are mortal, made of the dust, “...and to dust we shall return,” our ancient wisdom reminds us. But I am sorry for this moment, this morning, this approaching death, when Jesus has to say to Peter, Really? “Will you lay down your life for me?” Not before you turn your back on me, Peter. And I imagine that for a man who foresees the coming trials he must face, this is indeed a bitter, melancholy moment.

And from this moment grows something of the good in Good Friday. Because despite Peter's overly ambitious expectations of himself in this moment, Jesus, having loved his own who were in the world, "...he loved them to the end." Those men who most closely surrounded him did not remain with him in his time of trial, and those women who sought to care for him were kept away, except, perhaps, in one way...

Though the men dispersed into the night, though Peter denied his friend three times, just as Jesus told him he would, though the women could only be near as possible to watch, though Jesus would this day hang on a Roman cross with nothing and no one to stop it... his friends *were* with him really, because *he* carried them along. He held on to them, he chose to hang on to them... in here [**indicate the heart**]. He still holds them... in here. And this Friday of betrayal and disappointment, even death, is become good, because he still holds *us*... in here. Even death has not and cannot separate us from the love of God in Jesus Christ our Lord. It is a dark Friday turned good that calls out to us today to remember that love... to live by it, and to share it.