

Good Friday Homily
John 19:28-37
April 14, 2017

“I am thirsty” – John 19:28

It is said that on the cross, the two supreme attributes of God met – those attributes being God’s righteous judgement and God’s infinite mercy. Much like the colliding of hot air and cold can erupt into a sudden and violent storm, these unchanging characteristics of God collided on the cross. The immovable object of God’s holiness and the irresistible force of God’s grace were met, wrestled if you will for supremacy, a fight to the finish, and they did so entirely within the person of Jesus Christ. The Roman Governor Pontus Pilate had taunted Jesus when at trial Jesus told him he came *“to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me.”* Hah...*“que est veritas”* Pilate sneered...*“what is truth?”* That was a very modern question for such an ancient man to put forth by the way. We don’t so much care for truth claims these days – particularly religious ones. We’re a tolerant society, and that tolerance implies – no demands – that words like ‘truth’ be used judiciously if at all, and almost never when describing someone’s faith and someone’s god .

Jesus died because he was not tolerant - not as we define tolerance that is. Jesus was on the side of truth – the side of God. And the truth - the hot wind that blew down upon Golgotha, is that human sin merited nothing but the righteous judgement of God. If God is truth, then it follows that God must be true to his nature. God is holy and neither contains nor condones any unrighteousness – any sin. On the cross, the righteous, justified judgement of God was poured out on Jesus.

“I am thirsty”, Jesus said. Thirsty for the truth that is – he was a man who uniquely craved God’s will. And yet remember - Jesus was a man – fully human. He suffered and atoned for humanity’s sins as a righteous *man*. Perhaps we’re reluctant to call Him “human” because we know that this would create the need to crave a good and godly life ourselves. Acknowledging Jesus was a man would expose our moral weaknesses and reveal our thirst for our ways. If we need not be righteous, then we can go safely on just as we are. But Jesus was a man...who thirsted for God. And because Jesus experienced the terrible sorrow for sin God’s holiness awakens – because as I Corinthians says he *“became sin who knew no sin”* – because Jesus felt in his body the hot, isolating breath of God’s judgment and accepted it - despair need not be the last breath of any human being.

“It is finished” – John 19:30

And yet Jesus is fully God. *“In him the fullness of God was pleased to dwell”* Colossians says, so he responded to what everyone would have regarded a dismal defeat as only God could – with a victory shout. *‘It is finished’* was just that - it was a word of triumph...a word which acknowledges that sin and evil are real... that evil is not just naughty boys and girls playing tricks behind the teacher’s back... that sin it is not simple error or ignorance. Sin is rebellion against God... treason against the One who gives breath and life to all creation.

On Good Friday, on the cross, sin, long since deserving the hot breath of righteous judgement, was blown away by a righteous judge's grace. On the cross, the two supreme attributes of God collided – judgement and mercy – and mercy, the cool wind of forgiveness – triumphed. And winners have every right...to shout! God's word of victory, "*it is finished*" means that through the cross God stilled the storm of human rebellion that threatened to blow apart God's good creation for all time. On Calvary, dear people of Calvary....Jesus restored you to the purpose for which you were created- to live with God in righteousness and purity forever - to live with God and breath the fresh air of grace – and that's the truth!

"It is finished." The Passion of Jesus Christ according to St. John is long, arduous, and difficult. Yet the suffering and death of Jesus, the one through whom all things were made, should not arouse pity or sentiment within us. Joseph of Arimathea did not pity his Lord, he worshipped him by giving him the decent burial God would want for any man or woman. No, Jesus death, instead of pity ought to give us hope and spur us on to face the world as it is, but like Joseph of Arimathea and the Lord he worshipped, never accept the world on its terms.

In his book "*Reliving the Passion*", Pastor Walt Wangerin offers this prayer for this day we remarkably, but appropriately call Good.

"Lord, the sigh we breathe (tonight) is me, the twenty first century me, attending your burial. Your dying is never far away nor long ago, but always as close as my own. I breathe a sigh of sorrow for being at your death. But I cry also in gratitude that you will be at my death, O my Savior – and that, though I can only cry for yours, you rescue me from mine. AMEN"