**Good Friday 2023**

Reflection # 1

**Bible reading: Romans 5:1-8**

**“While we were still sinners!”**

While we were still sinners…

**That’s** when it happened.

While were still in **rebellion** against God

While we still had our **backs turned**

When we were still **shutting** him **out**

When we were still doing our **own thing**

When we were still **playing God…**

…**fooling** ourselves we were in **charge**… //

**That’s** when Christ **died** /

What’s when God loved us **so** much that he sent his only **Son /**

While we were still **sinners**, did he plan to meet us at our **deepest** point of **need**

**That’s** when Jesus left the **safety** of heaven – to step into the **muck** of our **world /**

While we were **still sinners**, he came into this world to be born in a **manger** and worshipped by **shepherds**

While we were **still sinners**, he came into this world and was rejected by his own people… subjected from the beginning to harsh criticism - **questions** designed to **trap** and **plots** to do **away** with him.

While we were **still** **sinners**, did he plan a Passover and explain in the last supper that he would pour out his blood for the forgiveness of sins…

While we were still **sinners**, did he wrestle with and petition his Father that if there be any other way to provide for our forgiveness other than die on the cross, could he please do ***that*** way.

While we were **still sinners** did he surrender to his Father’s will – *not* ***my******will****, but* ***yours*** *be* ***done***. /

While we were **still sinners** did he give himself up to the **religious leaders** and the **Roman guards**

…and undergo the **ridicule** and **torture**…

…and the **humiliation** and **degradation** of the **cross**…

While we were **still sinners**, **Christ died for us… ///**

You might say ‘people give their lives for others all the time’ – in war, or perhaps in a **rescue** or **police** work…

That’s **true**… /

But it is **rare** – and usually only for someone who is **loved** or revered… or a **benefactor**…

But for **sinners**? For **enemies**? For those who have **rejected** you?

No – that’s **love**… **deep** love; **costly** love; **generous** love…

That’s the **definition** of love… that Jesus gave his life for us before there was any hint of us turning **back** to him – before we had any **awareness** of the **seriousness** of our **rebellion** or showed any **sign** of **sorrow** or **repentance**!

And **because** Jesus died for us, Romans 5 says we have been declared **right** with God (justified) and we are at **peace** with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ…

“peace” there = ‘**shalom’** - not just the ***absence*** of conflict, it is the ***opposite*** of conflict.

So when Paul says “we have peace with God” he’s not just referring to the ***absence*** of judgement; he’s referring to the ***opposite*** of judgment—**full and complete blessing from our God…**

Our relationship with God is not one where he merely **tolerates** **us**….it is **deep and rich**. It is one of **shalom**. ///

Why on earth is today called “**Good** **Friday**”? // – how can the day mankind did away with their creator, be **good**?

How is it a **good** day when an **innocent** person died the way he **did**…? //

Because ***while we were still sinners, Christ died for us*** – died so that **sinners** could be declared **righteous**; so that **enemies** could become **friends**; so that **rebels** could stop being **rebels**… **died** so that we gain **access** to the **Father** through the **grace** of the **Son**

Yes, // …while we were still **sinners**, **Christ died for us**.

**Reflection # 2**

**Bible reading: 1 Peter 2:18-25**

 **“He himself bore our sins”**

**He himself bore our sins…**

He bore **our** sins, though he was **without** sin

He bore our sins though no **deceit** was found in his **mouth**

He bore our sins and did not **retaliate** – rather offered **forgiveness** for those driving in the nails…

He bore our sins and offered no **threats**

He bore our **sins**, entrusting himself to his Father whom he knew would be **just**…

**He bore our sins in his body on the cross**, so that we might **die** to **sins** and **live** for **righteousness**… /

**Die to sins**? / That is, as he bore the **penalty** of our sins, so did he rob sin of its **power /**

He **bore** our **sins**, so that we might **die** to that life where sin and rebellion **rule**…

…and **live** for the life where we are **right** with **God** and live for everything that is **right**…. //

We have the power to say **no** to sin

We have the power to say **yes** to all that is right and good!!

…**because** **he bore our sins in his body on the cross**…

He took on **his** shoulders, what was rightly coming to **us**…

…so that we might be **free** – free from sin’s **penalty** – free from sin’s **power**…

And by his **wounds** – our broken relationship with the Father – **broken** by our **wilfulness** – broken by our **rebellion** – broken by our **declaration** of **independence** against God – has been **healed** – **mended** – **restored** – put **right**. //

We were going **astray** – like **sheep** go astray – but **because** Jesus bore our sins, we are now **free** to **return** to the Good shepherd and **overseer** of our **very** **souls**. //

Do you know that **because** Jesus bore your sins, then – if you are a **Christian** – if your trust is **firmly** in Jesus and not in **yourself** – **because** Jesus bore them – you **never** **will**!!

He bore them **for** you. /

**Instead** of you /

In your **place /**

What was **due** to **you,** was put on **him /**

What should have been **yours**, will now **never** be yours.

Your **debt** has been **paid** //

In **full. //**

Can you **grasp** this? /

Do you **believe** this? /

Do you **trust** this news? /

…because when we truly ‘**get’** this… every last **corner** of our life is **changed** by it… //

You can’t grasp this and then live **unchanged**. /

If your life is not impacted by this news **every** day, then I can confidently say, you’ve not yet understood the **significance** of what it means that Jesus “*bore your sins in his body on the cross…” /*

If you think it was a **small** thing…

…if you think it’s **no big deal**…

Then you’ll live life / **unchanged**…

…but if you know it’s your **only** hope…

If you know Jesus has done what **no one** else **could** do…

If you know Jesus’ **death** means your **life**…

…if you know sin’s **penalty** is **taken**…

…sin’s **power**, **broken**…

Sin’s **impact** **reversed** so your broken **relationship** with God is **restored**… //

…then your life will demonstrate…

**freedom** from **sin**;

**joy** in **forgiveness**;

**hope** for the **future**…

It will demonstrate

A heart that **loves** Jesus

A passion to **serve** Jesus

A longing that others **too,** might know this **glorious news**

*He himself, bore our sins in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness.*

**Reflection # 3**

**Bible reading: 2 Corinthians 5:16-21**

 **“God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ”**

**God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ**,

…**not** counting people’s sins against **them**. ///

…not counting people’s sins **against** them? /// How could he do that?

Because he **ignored** them?

Because he swept them under the **carpet**?

Because our sin is not all that **serious** after all?

**No**. //

The only way he could not count our sins against us is because of **Jesus**.

Did you take note of that last verse in that passage? *God made him who had* ***no*** *sins, to* ***be*** *sin for us, so that in him we might become the* ***righteousness*** *of God. //*

Around this time of the year back in 2018, that was a terrorist siege in France.

A policeman by the name of Lt-Col Arnaud Beltrame had offered to take the place of one of the hostages.

So an exchange took place

A hostage was **released** and then the **policeman** took their **place**.

The policeman was **shot** and **stabbed** after he traded places with one of the captives and subsequently lost his life. //

The hostage went **free** and **lived //**

The policemen took on the **mantle** of the **hostage** and **died**.

An **amazing** and **humbling** **exchange**

How would you feel if that had been **you** set free by such a generous and sacrificial action? //

Well, I’m sure you can see where I’m going with this. //

That **hostage’s** story is **your** story. //

And it’s true – no human story can ever quite do justice to what we commemorate today…

…but **you** have been set free, because Jesus **went in** **for** **you**. //

Jesus **had** no **sin**. / He was the only man who has lived who has been **sinless**!

He lived the **perfect life**. **Sin** free. **Guilt** free. Never crossed the lines we cross nearly every day. Never pushed his Father’s will **aside** to do his **own thing** and go his **own way.**

Yet God made him who had **no** sin to be sin for us.

**Our** sin, put on **him**.

He who was **sinless**, became **sin**.

Only it wasn’t just that we might go free.

…but **SO THAT** – in **him** (**through** Jesus’ action) we might become the **righteousness** of **God**… that is – so that we might be put **right** with God and live in **right-relationship** with him!

Why is today ‘**Good’**?

**Because God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ!**

…**not counting our sins against us**

…the day Jesus **became** **sin** for **us**!! //

But I have a **question** for you this morning.

The passage goes on to explain, that the state of being reconciled is now **possible** for all, but not **automatic**…

Because we see clearly that the first disciples were given a **task** – their task was to be **ambassadors** for Jesus… to be his **representatives**… and in that role, they were to implore people, on behalf of Jesus, to be **reconciled** to **God**. //

Obviously that would not be necessary if everyone was reconciled **automatically**…

So here’s my question: are **you** reconciled to **God**? //

Because while it’s **probable** that most here **are**, it’s ***also*** **possible**, some **aren’t**!!

…**aren’t** reconciled because you’re still holding **out** on God…

Aren’t reconciled because you’ve never actually said “**sorry”** to God for doing you own thing and you have never decisively turned **back** to him.

So I want to urge you this **Good Friday 2023** to make it the **best** Friday of 2023 - the best **Friday** **ever**… / I want to urge **you,**  to **be** **reconciled** to **God**… //

**Revel** in this brilliant opportunity and wonderful invitation to be reconciled – to have your sin **dealt** **with**…

To have Jesus go **hostage** in your **place** so **you** can go **free**.

How? **Two** words.... “**I’m sorry**”.

… sorry for cutting you **out**… for living as if you don’t **exist** or don’t **matter**…. For doing my **own thing**… for keeping you on the **sidelines**…

And **then**..? and then you’ll have a **fresh start** and a **new beginning**… **reconciled** to and in **brilliant relationship** with the God who loves you **so so much** that he sent **Jesus** to **become** **sin** for you!! //

**Today’s** the **day**… I implore you on Christ’s behalf, to be **reconciled** to God!!

For: ***God was reconciling the world to himself…not counting people’s sins against them.***