

Good Friday, April 2, 2021

Pastor Peter Gregory, Our Savior Lutheran Church, Westminster, Massachusetts

The Sixth Day

The Passion of Our Lord – John 19:30

In the name of Jesus. Amen.

Jesus said, “It is finished,” and He bowed His head and gave up His spirit (John 19:30).

In six days, God created the earth and everything in it.

Day one was a Sunday.

God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light (Gen 1:3).

Then Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday.

Friday! The day He crowned the creation with one final creature: man.

Man—male and female—made in His image;

having His own heart;

taking after God Himself in righteousness and holiness;

the highest, most noble creature.

God started with the *man*,

and then formed the *woman* from the sleeping man’s side.

Made for each other.

God blessed them.

He put them over the whole creation.

He placed them in a garden.

It all took place just as God said.

There was order and purpose.

And on the sixth day, it was finished.

God saw everything that He had made,

and behold, it was very good (Gen 1:31). *Very good.*

Once again it is the sixth day, but a very different sixth day.

Darkness lies over the face of the earth.

The sun hides its face for shame.

The whole creation groans. It is unmade.

Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday

have been filled with conflict, intrigue, betrayal, and desertion.

The image of God has been marred, disfigured beyond recognition.
As it says in the psalms, **"I am a worm and not a man"** (Ps 22:6).
Man is no longer a creature after God's own heart.
No longer having the same righteousness and holiness.
No longer the highest, most noble being.
Man, now lower even than the beasts,
 more debased in his cunning, cruelty, and violence.
How far we have fallen!

On this day,
 a curse rests on the land—cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree.
The creature who should be over the whole creation
 will be interred under it.
Instead of being placed in a fertile garden,
 he is placed on a barren height and then a barren tomb.
The creation was made for life,
 but death has taken over.

Still, there is order and purpose even in this,
 even in the chaos and confusion and mayhem of this day.
It all took place just as God said.

Three times Jesus had said it:

He had taught the disciples **that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed, and after three days rise again. And He said this plainly** (Mark 8:31–32).

He had told them, **"The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill Him. And when He is killed, after three days He will rise"** (Mark 9:31).

And a third time, **He began to tell them what was to happen to Him, saying, "See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn Him to death and deliver Him over to the Gentiles. And they will mock Him and spit on Him, and flog Him and kill Him. And after three days He will rise"** (Mark 10:32–34).

This is what must be done to restore creation,
 to remake man, to put everything very good again.

So He does it.
He is the new Adam.
He has come to destroy the works of the devil,
to expose His lies,
to deliver humanity from his clutches,
and to hand our race back to His Father.

On the sixth day, Friday, God is not a simply the object of what is happening.
He isn't just a passive bystander or sufferer.
He is an actor, *the* actor.
He acts.
He is the subject of the day's events.
He isn't just done to; He is doing something.

Jesus said, "**For this reason the Father loves me,
because I lay down My life that I may take it up again.
No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of My own accord.
I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again.
This charge I have received from My Father**" (John 10:17–18).

No one takes it from Him.
He lays it down, of His own will.

This isn't a mark of weakness but a measure of His strength.
This isn't a sign of impotence but a demonstration of His power.
This isn't a lack of control but the greatest exercise in self-control.

**Having loved His own who were in the world,
He loved them to the end** (John 13:1).

He bore the curse.
He paid the full price.
He atoned for the sins of the whole world, yours and mine included.
The devil brought sin and death into the world through Adam and Eve.
Jesus takes that sin and death into Himself.

He lays down His life for His bride.
His eyes are closed in the sleep of death.
From His side, flow blood and water to create and cleanse His Church.

Jesus said, "It is finished," and He bowed His head and gave up His spirit (John 19:30).

It is finished.

He saw everything that He had done to redeem His people.

And behold, it was very good.

The sixth day.

The peace that passes all understanding guard your hearts and minds through Christ
Jesus.

Phil 4:7
