

Who does that?

As you scan the daily news or catch up on the news in conversation with someone else how often do you shake your head in disgust and think, “who does that?” You hear about a shockingly evil crime that has happened and you wonder, “who does that?” You hear about the latest example of how sin is glorified as being good and right and you think “who does that?” You hear about the foolish thing that someone has said or done to embarrass themselves or get themselves into all kinds of trouble and you think “who does that?” Of course “who does that” is not always asked in a negative sense. Sometimes you hear about another person’s selfless act, kind word, or amazing act of generosity and you think in a positive way “wow, who does that?”

As we reflect upon the events that led up to Good Friday and the events of Good Friday we wrestle with thinking, “who does that,” both negatively and positively. Israel’s religious leaders hatred of Jesus, the sham trial, their relentless pursuit of execution, their anger over the sign Pontius Pilate placed above Jesus on the one hand and their lack of empathy on the other hand as they hurled shocking insults at Jesus while he is executed. Who does that? From the self-preservation actions of Pontius Pilate to the inhumane brutality of the Roman soldiers we think, “who does that?” The criminals next to Jesus on the cross experiencing the same humiliating and excruciating death still somehow muster up the energy to mock Jesus. Who does that? Then we reflect on Jesus. In the toughest moment of his life and human history Jesus asks his Heavenly Father to forgive the people responsible for the atrocities happening to him. Wow, who does that? During the toughest moment of his life and human history Jesus takes the time to comfort one of the criminals on the cross, who had misspent so many years of his life and earlier in the day was mocking Jesus, and promises him Heaven. Wow, who does that? During the toughest moment of his life and human history Jesus isn’t too busy or self-focused to care for the needs of his mother. Wow, who does that?

When Pontius Pilate finally gives in and sentences Jesus to death he uttered these words, “I’m innocent of this man’s blood” (Matthew 27:24). Who does that? We do that. How often do we consider our sins more lightly than God does? Staring us in the face on Good Friday is how serious God considers our sins. It wasn’t just the sins of the religious leaders, Pontius Pilate, the Roman soldiers, and the criminals next to Jesus that made Good Friday necessary. Your sins made it necessary. My sins made it necessary. Good Friday was necessary because of our failures to forgive others, our reluctance to share the Gospel with those who are craving to hear it, our selfishness that keeps us from caring for the physical needs of others. None of us is innocent of Jesus blood. Good Friday needed to happen because of us. As you reflect on Good Friday again remember that the amazing “who does that” moments and words of Jesus, those moments and words were meant for you too. Marvel again that you have a Savior who does things like this – forgives the unforgivable, grants Heaven to sinners who deserve Hell, and always has time to take care of people’s real needs – even beyond what we asked or expected. Who does that? Your Savior Jesus, that’s who. Amen.

Good Friday

Pastor Arndt

In Christ Jesus,

As a Christian, your entire life is abnormal. A prime example is the name that we give today. The day that Jesus dies we call “good.” That is not normal. Why of all things do we call this “good” Friday? In the end, it comes down to the way the Holy Spirit has taught you to determine if something is *good*.

The Holy Spirit needs to *teach* us what is good, because from the moment sin enters our hearts, we see things completely backwards. Don’t believe me? Just take a look.

In Genesis 3, sin has already entered the world before Adam and Eve take a bite. How can you tell? They see everything backwards! God had told them that eating the fruit would be *bad*. But Adam and Eve reach out for the forbidden fruit because they think it is *good*!

“6 When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it.

– Genesis 3: 6”

God promises to save Adam, and Eve, and all people from their sins. This is *good*. The angels understand this and sing to the shepherds;

“I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people.” – Luke 2: 10

But, when Jesus explains the cross to Peter, he [Peter] is a little behind the understanding of the angels. Peter thinks that the cross is *bad*.

²² Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. “Never, Lord!” he said. “This shall never happen to you!” – Matthew 16: 22

We become like toddlers. We put dangerous and disgusting things in our mouths. But somehow, we sense that vegetables are to be avoided like the plague. Good seems bad. Bad seems good.

There was not a single disciple that ran home from the crucifixion of Jesus, slammed the door shut and said, “*Wheh...That went well!*” For the disciples, this was not “*good*” Friday. This was, “*the worst thing that could ever happen*” Friday.

The Holy Spirit must *teach* us. Among the countless miracles of Good Friday is the miracle of the Holy Spirit who teaches me that though painful, today is *good*.

The angels did not lie to us when they proclaimed, “*good news and great joy!*” The angels of Bethlehem were not ignorant. They knew the cross. Angels are sent to Jesus in Gethsemane to comfort him and encourage him to the cross. Still, they sing to us, “*I bring you good news of great joy!*” To us that sounds like a contradiction... but not to the angels. Those angels will one day, because of the cross, joyfully carry your soul home to your Father in heaven!

The angels are not the only ones who have this otherworldly understanding of good. Months ago, at Christmas time, we listened to Simeon. Simeon isn’t just being sentimental as he holds the infant Jesus in his arms and says, “*Now I’m ready to depart in peace because, Lord, I have seen your salvation.*” Simeon,

in one sentence, speaks of his death, his Jesus, and his Joy, and sees no contradiction whatsoever. He is preparing to die, and prepared he is because he holds Jesus who will die for him. Ask Simeon if today is good!

All of these sing for joy because the Spirit lifts them out of confusion and opens their minds to what is *good* in the death of Christ.

Good Friday is an invitation to ponder the "*worst*" days of our lives. You know the ones... when it would seem that we lost husbands and wives, moms and dads, grandmas and grandpas, sons and daughters. It is especially a day to gather our fears of our own death. For a while, the disciples thought that they had lost Jesus. In a little while he will find them behind their locked doors. A risen glorified Savior will breathe the Holy Spirit on them and teach them that what they thought was very bad, was so very good.

Today, Jesus dies for me. Despite what the world tells me... that is good.

-Amen