

Good Friday, 2021
Good Shepherd, Beaver Dam
Luke 23:32-34

Were you there when they crucified our Lord? Were you there when they nailed Jesus to the tree? Were you there when they laid Him in the grave? Before you answer, I want you to remember some of the people who were there at Calvary and who played prominent roles in our Savior's death.

Some **Roman soldiers** were there. It was their job, and they were brutally efficient. They didn't know that when they drove home the nails and divided up Jesus' clothing, that they were fulfilling prophecies that were hundreds of years old. But one of the soldiers, the centurion, could see that the man hanging on the middle cross was different. He said, Truly this was the Son of God.

Two criminals were there, and they didn't have a choice either. They were getting what they deserved. But after one criminal confessed his sins, he also confessed his faith and asked Jesus to remember him. And Jesus assured him, Today you will be with Me in paradise.

The **Jewish religious leaders** were there. They had waited a long time for this day. They wanted Jesus dead. They jeered and taunted and challenged Jesus to come down from His cross. They didn't realize that Jesus could have climbed down off the cross and destroyed them all!

Pontius Pilate was not physically at Calvary, but he made his presence known by posting a sign above Jesus' head. It read, Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews. Some wanted Pilate to change what he had written, but he denied that request. But for Pilate it was too little, too late. It would be nice to say that all the **disciples** were there to

support Jesus in His dying hours. But they weren't. They had deserted Jesus. Only John had come to Calvary.

Jesus' mother was at Calvary, and what Mary witnessed must have broken her heart. As a young woman Mary had received the amazing news from Gabriel that God had chosen her to give birth to the promised Messiah. Not long after Jesus was born, Mary heard news that wasn't so good. While at the temple, while Simeon was holding her child, he predicted that a sword would pierce Mary's soul. At Calvary, Mary understood what those words meant.

Were we there, at Calvary? The obvious answer is NO. We are separated from that day by many miles and many years, so unless we could use a time machine it would be impossible for us to be there.

There is another way to look at that question, however. In the second verse of the hymn, God Was There on Calvary, it says, All the world on Calvary, Crucified the Prince of life, Pierced the hands of God's own Son, There on Calvary.

If the words of that hymn are true, then you were there! And so was I! We didn't bring charges against Jesus. We didn't give the order to crucify Jesus. We didn't nail Jesus' hands and feet to the cross.

But we were there!

We were there because our sins were there. That means that our sins are the reason God's Son had to suffer and die! We were as guilty as the religious leaders, the soldiers, the disciples and Pilate.

Don't compare yourself to the soldiers, the criminals, Pontius Pilate or the disciples who fled to save their own lives.

Compare yourself with Jesus, the perfect Son of God.

When we compare ourselves with Jesus, we think of the times we got into arguments with our parents or children; we think of the hurtful things we have said to our spouse or our friends; we think of the times when we stole something, or hated someone or said words that Jesus would not have said. When we compare ourselves with Jesus, we find that we are very imperfect. We need a miracle to be forgiven!

Jesus, who had performed many miracles during His ministry, didn't look like a miracle-worker on Good Friday. He was beaten. Stripped of His dignity. Covered with blood. Too weak to carry His cross. Barely able to stand. Jesus looked like a loser. It looked like Satan had won. One of our Easter hymns says, The foe was triumphant when on Calvary, the Lord of creation was nailed to the tree. In Satan's domain did the hosts shout and jeer, for Jesus was slain, whom the evil ones fear.

But the demons' triumphant celebration was short-lived. Jesus was about to perform His greatest miracle. To declare His victory over the devil, to show His power over death, to assure all of us that our sins are forgiven, Jesus held out His nail-pierced hands.

It was Sunday. The disciples had gathered together behind locked doors. They were confused about what had happened to Jesus. They were afraid about their future. And then they saw Jesus but thought they were seeing a ghost! It was the Lord! And Jesus did something that took away their worries – He showed them His hands!

Those nail marks were the most beautiful thing the disciples had ever seen! Those wounds remind us of the high cost of our salvation. Jesus suffered the anger of His Father over our

sin. Jesus felt our pain in hell. Jesus died on the cross to win our forgiveness.

The sacrificial love of Jesus is why we call this day Good Friday. When Satan seeks to destroy us, Jesus defends us. When we feel guilty because of our sin, we remember what Jesus did to save us! Jesus will never leave us or forsake us. He is in heaven now preparing a place for us.

If all this sounds too good to be true, remember the cross. Look at your Savior's wounded hands and shout out to the world: Christ is risen! He is risen indeed!

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