

Good Friday Sermon-2023

An incident is narrated of a 6-year-old boy, who was diagnosed with leukemia. One day, the child had to undergo a very painful procedure called "*spinal tap*". ('Spinal Tap' is a procedure in which a needle is inserted into the spinal cord to take out fluid for the purpose of diagnosis and treatment).

His mother, knowing that her child would have to undergo a lot of pain, approached him and told: "Remember, if it hurts, it's because you are loved, and there is a purpose for the pain!" The child remembered this sentence and took it to heart. As the procedure was conducted, the child yelled, sobbed, and cried with horrible pain.

When the procedure was finally concluding, the child, with tears in his reddish eyes, looked up to the doctor and exclaimed: "Thank you Doctor for the pain! I know there is a purpose! I know I am loved!"

Today we meditate the pain that Jesus underwent on the cross, that he took upon himself. He had a purpose, that we are loved, we are saved through that suffering. =After the long passion narrative, few thoughts on what we listened!

The big question of most who walk away from faith or deny God is: why God is silent at the suffering humanity? Why does He permit the innocent to suffer? Even men of faith sometimes ask as well.

2000yrs back, the same question was raised, from the cross. "*El, El, lama Sabathani*". When we suffer, all that we need is a bit of consolation, someone to hold to, stay closer, embrace us. Jesus asked for the same, to his loving Father, with whom he maintained a very good relationship: but his father-who once confirmed him: "*you are my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased*", was silent. He did not answer; but allowed him to die. Die for whom? Was there any reason, any wrong that he did, that he be crucified? (Pilate) No! But he **died as a substitute, - for me, for you.**

The Background story is in OT: Abraham was asked to sacrifice his son. Everything ready, Isaac asks: where is the lamb? Abraham responds: “God will provide”. In fact, God provided a “*substitute for Isaac*”- that lamb was killed, instead. = *Jesus, a substitute for me.*

We know, someone was set free, as a substitute for Jesus’ death: His name was Barabbas. Scholars say his complete name is *Jesus Barabbas!* Origen says: (*Bar=son, Abba=father*). Is it casual? You are set free, by the life-given by Jesus-Son of the Father.

Friends, we all cry to God because of our crosses. We have seen many personalities on Jesus’ way of the cross: *one of them is Simon, the Cyrene, who happened be there for curiosity, like others. He was called and forced to help Jesus carrying the cross: But, interestingly, he felt very light, though the cross was heavy; why, bcs the major part of the cross was on the shoulder of Jesus; he was carrying it for you. Friends, stay with Him, as you carry the cross, He will share the larger burden. When Jesus carries the cross with you, everything turns to be light. He transformed the cross!*

The two thieves: one accepted and the other rejected: why? The one on the left side rebuked Jesus, cursed everyone; he was full of anger and hate, *but never looked at Jesus*; he wanted Jesus to “come down from the cross”, but he lost everything. While the other thief, looked at Jesus, made a prayer, and instantaneously he was accepted. He in fact stole the paradise from Jesus!

Friends, during crisis, pain and difficulties, look at Jesus and ask for mercy; your cross will be lighter, salvation will be yours. Let’s pray: “*We adore you Christ and we praise you, because of your holy cross, you have redeemed the world*” . Amen