

“Called to be Servants of Christ in Our Community”

Niagara United Mennonite Church

April 2, 2010

GOOD FRIDAY WORSHIP SERVICE & COMMUNION

Worship Service – 10:30 am

Gathering

Lawrence Eady

Worship in Song ~ “The Old Rugged Cross” (Das alt rauhe Kreuz)

Congregational Life

Stephen Cox

Offering ~ MC Canada Formation

Hymn HWB # 240 “Go to dark Gethsemane”

Proclamation

“Ah, Holy Jesus”

Scripture Reading ~ Mark 15:1-41 (pew bible pg. 987)

Hymn HWB # 252 “O Sacred Head, now wounded”

(GB# 82)

Children’s Story

“What’s so Good about Good Friday?”

Pastor Rudy Dirks

“Gather ‘Round”

Communion

Sending ~ HWB # 151 “Marvelous grace of our loving Lord”

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*“Called to be Servants of Christ in Our Community”* expresses our desire to share our faith and love of Jesus Christ with all we meet. We welcome you and hope that your time with us will be enjoyable and enlightening. Families with children are invited to worship together with us in the service. For children 5 yrs old or younger who are not able to sit through the church service, there is a nursery downstairs, or a glassed-in room behind the sanctuary where you may sit with your baby and still follow the service. If you feel a sense of belonging, you are most welcome to be with us. Talk to us about how you can participate.

**Male Choir Easter Concert** this evening at **7:30 pm** at St. Catharines United Mennonite Church (335 Linwell Rd, St. Catharines).

**Easter Sunday Service** begins at **10:45 am**.

There will be no Nursery supervision during Worship service today.

## What's so Good about Good Friday?

Jesus' death and resurrection are the culmination of the Incarnation – of God coming to us as a human person. All Jesus' miracles, teachings, good works, and his perfect obedience to God in every aspect of his life were completed at Easter. Easter has two parts: Jesus' death, and his resurrection. Today, on Good Friday, we reflect on Jesus' death.

Jesus' death on the cross has at least these three meanings, all three being equally important:

**One – Jesus died as the ultimate sacrifice for all sin.** The Old Covenant required the shedding of innocent blood to forgive sins. But people still sinned, and the sacrifices had to be made over and over again. Jesus, being God himself and also the only perfect human being, was the only one whose innocently-shed blood could remove the guilt of sin totally and forever. So when Jesus allowed himself to be executed, he effectively was the ultimate sacrifice (the sacrificial lamb) for the forgiveness of all sins (the theological word for this is “atonement”). For you and me, that means that Jesus removed our guilt and sin totally. We are not forgiven when we confess, or repent, or are sorry for our sins. We are forgiven already, we have only to receive that forgiveness with gratitude, and refuse to live in guilt – it is finished.

**Secondly, when Jesus died he overcame all the powers of evil and darkness.** (In Latin, this is known as “Christus victor”.) Colossians 2:15 tells us that Jesus “*disarmed the powers and authorities...triumphing over them by the cross*”. So along with forgiveness, through the cross we have power. Not our power, but when we have accepted Jesus' forgiveness and his Lordship in our lives (becoming “in Christ”), we receive the power and authority of Jesus to overcome all evil in our lives. Darkness has nothing on us any more. For you and me, that means we live, not defeated by this world and its troubles, but rather, victorious over the powers of evil (Romans 8:37 “*we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.*”). When evil and darkness threaten you or someone you know, ask Jesus to overcome that darkness with the authority he exercised on the cross. Then ask God what you need to do to line yourself up with Jesus' kingdom authority in your life.

**Thirdly, when Jesus died he gave us direct access to God.** When the curtain was torn, the Holy of Holies in the temple was exposed. Under the Old Covenant the temple had three sections: the outer court, where gentiles were allowed to enter; the inner court where only Jews were allowed to enter; and the Holy of Holies which only the High Priest could enter, once a year, to offer a sacrifice for the sins of the people. People had to come to the temple to offer sacrifices for their sins. They had to give these to the priests

to offer on their behalf to God. They depended on the priest for forgiveness because only the priest could properly offer sacrifices to God. When Jesus died and the temple curtain, separating the Holy of Holies from the rest of the temple, was torn – it meant the end of the temple sacrificial system. Jesus was the ultimate sacrifice who not only forgave all sins, but also who now gave anyone access directly to God through Jesus. For you and me, this means we can pray to God, receive His Holy Spirit, and have Jesus with us every day of our lives with no temple, no priest, and no law. Jesus has made us acceptable to God and has brought us right into God's presence (Hebrews 4:16 “*let us approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.*”)

All this is what Jesus did when he died on the cross. **That is why Jesus is the only way to God.** Not because Christianity is a better religion than Buddhism, Islam, Hinduism, or any other religion. Not because Christians are right and everyone else is wrong. Not because Christians are

better people than others. Jesus is the only way to God because He, being God himself, became a human and lived a perfect life, culminating in his death and resurrection, and returned to His Heavenly Father from where he reigns over all creation.

On Good Friday, Jesus turned the world upside down by allowing himself to be killed on our behalf, thus forgiving our sins, overcoming all the powers of darkness, and bringing us into the very presence of God. That's what Good Friday is all about, and that's a good thing.