

**Saint John's Episcopal Church**  
**Southampton, New York**  
*"Thinking of You..."*

**John 19:17 – 27**

**Community Good Friday Service**

**March 25, 2016**

It was, to put it mildly, a horrible day. In a bone-jarring vindication of the truth of Murphy's Law, during the past twenty-four hours anything that *could* have gone wrong for Jesus, *did* go wrong! And boy, did it ever! First He was betrayed by Judas, one of the Twelve; one of the inner circle; one of the people whom Jesus trusted and depended on and turned to in time of trial. Judas was supposed to be one of the good guys... but for a handful of silver, Judas was willing to pull the rug out from under everything that Jesus had been working for. And Jesus had walked right into the trap, like some Bermuda-shorted, camera-toting, tourist getting his pocket picked on the streets of Manhattan.

Next Jesus was *arrested* like a common criminal... grabbed, smacked around, chained and dragged away, right out in the open; right in front of His friends and family; right there where everybody could see Him, and gasp at Him, and shake their heads at Him as if they always knew that He'd never amount to anything good. And the situation was made all the worse by the fact that Jesus hadn't even *done* anything to be arrested for! He was, in fact, innocent of any crime! But you can bet that nobody checked to see if the arresting authorities had any probable cause... they just cuffed Him up, roughed Him up, and led Him off to the pokey!

And then there was that *trial...* if you can *call* that sorry excuse for jurisprudence a "trial." Justice was supposed to be very important in Israel, the prophets had been railing about it for centuries... but the fact is that people get a better shake in front of Judge Judy than Jesus got in front of the Sanhedrin and the High Priest that night. I mean, people came in and told lies about Him; people came in and quoted Him saying things that He never said, or else quoted what He *did* say completely out of context; people came in and made up stories, manufactured evidence, and generally manipulated the facts so thoroughly that not even O.J. Simpson's "Dream Team" could have gotten Jesus off the hook! Given all that, is it a scoop to find out that Jesus was found guilty? Of blasphemy... of treason... of high crimes and misdemeanors?

One day you're a saint, you're a hero, "*you da man!*" whose going to be the answer to everybody's hopes and dreams... and the next day you're just another pain in the neck who needs to be gotten out of the way, so the people can concentrate on more important matters. Talk about going from the penthouse to the outhouse! That's the kind of day it had been... for Jesus.

Well, anyway, at least Jesus' friends, His comrades, His confidantes, you know, *the disciples...* at least *those* guys hung in there with Him, and spoke up for Him, and stayed right by His side while everything else was falling to pieces. Right? Oh sure...

right. The disciples, those intrepid champions of Jesus' cause, who only days before had sworn their allegiance to Him *no matter what...* the disciples, of course, were nowhere to be seen at the trial, because they were running like rats, hiding out in the upper room, doing their best to save their own hides and stay the devil out of harm's way. Yep, when the going got tough, the disciples got going... out the door, out of the way, out of danger, out of the picture altogether.

Oh... all except for Peter, that is. Remember Peter? He's the guy who said, *"Jesus, even if I have to die with you, I will never desert you! Honest! Scout's honor! I double-dog really mean it! You can count on me, boy!"*

Hmmm. Well, Peter was there all right. But we all know how much of a help *he* was to the Lord that night! While the "trial" was going on in the High Priest's house, Peter was holding court himself, out in the courtyard, next to the fire. And, uh, he wasn't exactly signing autographs and handing out tracts about how great Jesus was and why everybody should be jumping on His bandwagon! No... what Peter was doing, was denying that he even knew who Jesus was. What he was doing was arguing with a serving-girl while His friend was on trial for His life. What he was doing was pulling one of the biggest cop-outs that the world had ever seen... because he was too scared, and too weak, and too confused to do anything else.

And when the dust had finally settled, Jesus was left... alone; holding the bag, taking the fall, bearing the brunt, and being sentenced to death by some preoccupied Roman bureaucrat who didn't have a clue in the world as to who Jesus really was, or what Jesus was really up to. And now, to cap off the festivities, Jesus is nailed to a cross; where His breath will be sucked out of Him, and where His blood will be drained out of Him, and where His life will be strained out of Him, inch... by inch... by inch. Did I mention that it had been a really *horrible* day?

The Master of the universe... the eternal Son of Almighty God... the all-powerful Lord of humanity, who had come into this world only to do us good, and who had only used His power to help and to heal and to bless... this Jesus had been betrayed... beaten... bloodied... and abandoned. *And now He was looking straight into the face of His own, impending death.* And what does He say... as He looks down from His cross at the sea of faces who have come to watch Him die?

*"Hey... John! You make sure and take care of my mom, okay? Hey... mom! You go stay with John now. He's going to look after you, alright?"*

Can you believe that? After all that abandonment... after all that denial... after all that lying, and conspiring, and being treated like garbage... after everything that He had just been through; Jesus isn't concerned about *Himself*. He's concerned His *mother!* There's no self-pity, no righteous indignation, no last-ditch effort to plead His own case. There's just care and concern for the people He loved and came to serve!

And so He *doesn't* say to Mary: *"Hey mom! How about going back to Pilate and trying to beg for mercy?"* And He *doesn't* say to John: *"Yo, John! Go rally the boys and see if you can do something to get me out of this mess!"* And He *doesn't* say to the two of them: *"Don't just stand there looking somber! Do something to help me why don't you!"*

No... He doesn't say any of that at all. All He says is, "*John... Mary... I want you to love each other now, in the same way that I have always loved you. I want you to care for one another... to be there for one another... to support one another, as I have always been there for you... I want you to hang in there now, and keep moving forward in my name!*"

And not very long after those words were spoken... Jesus was dead.

You know, at first glance, this message from the cross may seem to us to be totally out of place, amid all the horror and sorrow and bloodshed of the day. I mean, just think about it. Jesus has just minutes to save Himself from an unjust, undeserved, unimaginable death. If He's going to survive this all-out attempt on His life, He doesn't have time to be thinking about anybody else's welfare, or anyone else's problems! He's got to put everything He has left into thinking about His *own* welfare, and saving His own hide! ***But as we have seen in our text, He's not thinking about His own welfare, is He?***

No... He's not. He's not thinking about Himself... incredibly, He's thinking about everybody ***but*** Himself! And, you know, at the end of the day, that, really, is what Good Friday is all about. If Jesus had been concerned primarily about His own welfare, His own safety. His security... well, He wouldn't have to worry about how to escape the horror of the cross, because He never would've been hanging on it in the first place! No, on Good Friday, He still would've been up in Galilee... eating fish with the disciples... telling stories and sparring with the scribes... and generally minding His own business while the Pilates and the Herods and the Caesars of the world did their earth-shaking thing without Him.

But the fact is that Jesus was ***not*** concerned about Himself. The fact is that Jesus allowed Himself to be subjected to all the misery of the past twenty-four hours not because it was going to do ***Him*** any good... but because it was going to do Peter and John and ***you and me*** a lot of good! Jesus went to that cross for us! So, it's not surprising to see that, while everybody else was thinking of nothing but ***themselves***, Jesus was thinking about everybody ***but*** Himself!

That was the point of His whole ministry! That's what put Him on the cross... that's what put Him in the tomb... that's what led to His resurrection... and that's what's brought us to this church this afternoon! We have peace, and hope, and life; because even as the power of Hell itself was being unleashed in Jesus' face... Jesus was still thinking, not about Himself, but about Mary, and John, and you, and me. And He's still thinking about us, right now; all these years later.

So, yeah, it was a pretty horrible day for Jesus... but it was the day that changed everything for us. For the better. Forever.

In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, amen!