

Theme: Ironies of the Passion: He Said, "I Will Rise Again."

John 19:28-30 (EHV)

²⁸After this, knowing that everything had now been finished, and to fulfill the Scripture, Jesus said, "I thirst." ²⁹A jar full of sour wine was sitting there. So they put a sponge soaked in sour wine on a hyssop branch and held it to his mouth. ³⁰When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, "It is finished!" Then, bowing his head, he gave up his spirit.

Matthew 27:62-66 (EHV)

⁶²On the next day, which was the day after the Preparation Day, the chief priests and Pharisees gathered in the presence of Pilate ⁶³and said, "Sir, we remembered what that deceiver said while he was still alive: 'After three days I will rise again.'⁶⁴ So give a command that the tomb be made secure until the third day. Otherwise his disciples might steal his body and tell the people, 'He is risen from the dead.' And this last deception will be worse than the first."⁶⁵ Pilate said to them, "You have a guard. Go, make it as secure as you know how."⁶⁶ So they went and made the tomb secure by sealing the stone and posting a guard.

During this Lenten season we've been considering the various words, actions and attitudes in connection with Jesus' suffering and death that would be considered "ironic." Irony is defined as "a result that is the *opposite* of what might be expected."

Is there irony here on Good Friday? Absolutely! In fact, there is some irony in the very name we give to this holy day: Good Friday. Really?! That's the name we give to the day that our Savior, the Son of God, was horrifically and shamefully put to death on a cross!? Well, yes, because we know that the reason for His death was good!

How good? Listen again to Jesus' words from **John 19:30, When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, "It is finished!" Then, bowing his head, he gave up his spirit.** Finished! Completed! A Greek word that when used in regards to paying taxes or paying a debt that is owed means, "Paid in full!" What was "**finished?**" What was "paid in full?" All the suffering, all the payment for our sins, all that was needed to be done to earn our full and complete forgiveness was finished—now and for all time!

On the cross we see the bitter, yet beautiful, irony of the fact that the only truly innocent man who ever lived was declared guilty by God and punished for all the world's sins, while the guilty sinners—you and I and all people who've ever lived—are declared to be "innocent" in God's sight! The innocent Son of God suffered hell itself so that we, the guilty, would receive heaven! Thank God for that bitter, yet beautiful irony of Good Friday!

Yet we also see irony in the words and events that took place after Jesus' death and burial. In fact, one of the great ironies of Jesus' passion is how often His enemies said things that were true—even if they were hoping for, or expecting, the complete opposite result. This is the case once again in the words we hear Jesus' enemies speak to Pilate in our sermon text from **Matthew 27, "Sir, we remembered what that deceiver said while he was still alive: 'After three days I will rise again.'**

The enemies of Jesus absolutely did NOT want this outcome. But were they really worried about Jesus rising from the dead? No, not really. Maybe way deep down inside they were, but it appears from their own words that they were more afraid that the disciples would steal Jesus' body and say that He rose from the dead. They told Pilate, **So give a command that the tomb be made secure until the third day. Otherwise his disciples might steal his body and tell the people, 'He is risen from the dead.'** And **this last deception will be worse than the first."**

Is this what the disciples were plotting and planning? No! His disciples did not expect this result (Jesus' resurrection) at all, even though they should have since He told them over and over again that He would suffer, be crucified, and rise again on the third day. They weren't planning an elaborate heist of Jesus' body, or a conspiracy of epic proportions. No, they were mired in sadness and despair. They were terrified and hiding, locking themselves in a room together because they were afraid that they might be the next ones put to death. They thought Jesus, their teacher, friend, and Savior was dead for good.

The one result that His enemies did not want to happen, and the result that the disciples were absolutely not expecting *actually* happened: Jesus rose again, just as He said He would! This proved that He was who He said He was: The Son of God. It proved that God had accepted Jesus' payment for our sins, and His resurrection from the dead guarantees that we too will rise from our graves on the last day. Hallelujah!

As we commemorate Jesus' death on Good Friday we do look beyond the cross to the empty tomb of Easter Sunday. We know how this story ends, and it is truly good! But on Good Friday we most definitely pause here and look to His cross. Let's not skip past it, or turn away from its ugliness. Let's remember to meditate on and embrace the bitter, yet beautiful irony we see there. On the cross we see both Law and Gospel converge: We see the seriousness and punishment for sin—our sin—and we see the grace and forgiveness of God—our forgiveness, our victory, and our salvation! Glory be to Jesus! Amen.