

Friday, April 19, 2019 – Good Friday
Good Friday in Seven Words: “Jesus is Lord, even over my death”

Colossians 1: 13-14

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Dialogical Structure

Adapted from CSL “The Gospel in Seven Words”

Grace, mercy and peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Amen.

Jesus is Lord. That’s the simplest way to put it. He is Lord over all things. He’s the Lord of life. He’s the Lord of love. He’s the Lord of heaven and earth and everything in between. He’s the Lord of all that is seen and all that is unseen. He’s the Lord of the past, and the Lord of the present, and Lord of all that is yet to come. Make no mistake, friends in Christ. Jesus is Lord!

This was one of the earliest Christian confessions. Those who knew Jesus, who understood his mission and believed his message, insisted that he wasn’t just a teacher or a leader or a worker of wonders. The earliest Christians, and all true Christians ever since, have believed with their hearts and confessed with their mouths that Jesus Christ is Lord (Romans 10:9–10).

It’s easy to say that when life is going well, right? It’s easy to confess that Jesus is Lord when the sky is blue and birds are singing and all is right in the world. At such times, we gladly and naturally confess that Jesus is Lord.

But, as you know very well, such times are actually quite rare. Life isn’t as it should be. God’s good creation has been subjected to another master. Another ruler. Another lord. To this lord we all bow in helpless submission. I’m speaking of the dark lord death. His reign began way back in the beginning with the sin of our first parents. It encompasses all people of all times and all places. The dark lord death rules this earth and everyone it—rich and poor, powerful and weak, famous and common. Despite our most valiant efforts and our most brilliant minds, none of us can outwit or outsmart or outlast death. Well, tonight is Good Friday. And if Good Friday is anything at all, it is clash of lords. An epic battle. A grand confrontation. The lord of this world versus the Lord Jesus Christ. On this night Jesus went head to head with death itself.

I’m not going to sugarcoat it. The ruler of this age is mighty. He has a claim on us all. Unless the Lord Jesus returns first, he will have his way with us. We will die. Which makes me wonder: have you thought much about your death? We generally avoid the subject. But at times it is thrust upon us. You attend a funeral, and you wonder what they would say about you. You

have a near-death experience, and you realize your own funeral could have been just days away. You go through a time of deep depression, when life becomes almost unbearable, and you can hardly see a way forward.

At such times, our own death comes to mind, and we can't help but wonder: Who will show up at our funerals? Who will speak out? Who will break down? I know, it's a sobering thought. It's much easier, much neater, much more comfortable to ignore our impending death. Such contemplations make us rightfully uneasy. Who wants to think about such things? But you didn't come here tonight to skirt around the important matters. No, tonight you came here because some things must be discussed. Some things must be considered. Some things—like death— must be faced.

That's what Lord Jesus was doing on Good Friday. On this day, some two thousand years ago, the Lord Jesus came face to face with death, and it was a frightening thing to behold.

It was frightening for several reasons. First, it was frightening because Jesus's death was painful. The hand of the servant that struck him in the face. The whip that flogged his back. The crown of thorns, the weight of the cross, the pierced hands, the dry mouth, the struggle to breathe. Jesus's death was painful.

Jesus's death was also humiliating. The false charges brought against him with no defense. The mocking of the soldiers who dressed him in a purple robe and bowed to him. The shame of standing before the crowds barely clothed. The jeers and taunts and challenges—"he saved others, why doesn't he save himself." Jesus's death was humiliating.

But worse than the pain, and worse than the humiliation, was the separation. The crowds that praised him on Palm Sunday were long gone. The disciples who vowed to die with him had deserted. His own people knew him not and demanded his death. And when he finally hung on that cross, suspended between heaven and earth, he was forsaken by the Father and he gave up his Spirit. There on Golgotha Jesus was completely, and utterly, and categorically alone.

It's the separation that makes death so scary, I think. It's what makes us avoid thinking about our own death. It's a frightening thing to consider facing the great unknown all alone.

When we think about Jesus's death, we don't think so much about his reign as Lord. He certainly didn't look like the master on Good Friday. But there was more than meets the eye in this epic clash. And that "more" is this: in *his* death Jesus was reigning as Lord over *our* death.

That's what Paul wrote to the Galatians. "I have been crucified with Christ," he told them (Galatians 2:20). Paul was there. And so were we. Not physically. Jesus hung and hurt alone. But the miracle of the gospel is that, through faith, we were there, too. His pain was our pain. His humiliation was our humiliation. His separation was our separation. His death was our death. And in joining us to his suffering, he reigned for us as Lord. That's how he brought death under his submission. That's how he conquered our greatest enemy. Through his death, he won for us life. And the result is this: "Jesus is Lord, even over my death."

That's the gospel in seven words tonight. "Jesus is Lord, even over my death."

Do you realize what that means? It means we've already died. It means *you* have already died.

When we think about Jesus's death, we are really thinking about our own death. When we look at Jesus's cross, we see our own cross. When we hear the tomb slam shut, we hear our own tomb close for good. "Through his death," Paul wrote to the Colossians, "he has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son" (Colossians 1:13).

We've already been delivered. And, therefore, we do not fear. We do not cower. We do not pay homage to the dark lord death. He still makes us uncomfortable. The sting remains. Death will continue to claw and scrape until the Lord Jesus returns in his glory. And he'll get his pound of flesh. Even, perhaps, from you and me.

But we will never experience the complete and total separation. And neither have our loved ones who died trusting in the Lord Jesus. Neither they nor we will ever feel the pain and humiliation Jesus suffered on that first Good Friday. Their sins and our sins have already been removed. In Christ's death, we have already died. And through faith in him, we are already rising at the command of Lord God Almighty.

Tonight, on this Good Friday, we confess good news. We proclaim the gospel of Jesus simply and surely and with hope in our hearts. The lord death no longer reigns. For "Jesus is Lord, even over my death." In Jesus' name. Amen.