



Transforming Love

Easter 2025

Devotion 3 – The Transformative Cross: Good Friday

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On a Friday close to Easter four years ago, I endured my darkest day.

Having been released from the Intensive Care Unit, I lay in a hospital bed, with tubes everywhere, recuperating from an emergency operation to rectify a serious complication from bowel cancer surgery. I still hadn't fully recovered from major surgery five months earlier to treat an unrelated sarcoma. I have never felt so sick or vulnerable as I did that Friday.

Late that afternoon, my adult children walked into my room with dreadful news. My wife, Annette, had passed away in her sleep at home. Annette had bravely endured her own cancer battle over several years; but no one expected her to die when she did. Our shock and grief were added to my suffering.

That Friday was the worst day of my life.

You have likely had dark days too. Even if you haven't suffered much yourself, others close to you will have and we live in a world where loss, pain and grief are common. There are many dark days. And on such days, it may seem absurd – even offensive – to speak of God's love.

Yet on my dark Friday, as my family and I talked together, I remember reading some words that had been an encouragement to Annette and me – words written by the Apostle Paul, who experienced so much suffering himself:

What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all – how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?... I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8: 31-32, 38-39).

In these words, Paul encourages us to look to another Friday – the Friday of the Cross – and to let that event transform how we look at and live through our darkest days. As we look back to "Good Friday" we see the declaration of God's love for us and the depth and breadth of that love.

The sentence was unjust. The suffering was brutal. The setting was so dark. And yet through eyes of faith we see God "gave him up for us all". Not just the best of us, but all of us. This is how much God is for us. Even on history's darkest day, God gave his best for us.

Since God so loved us on that day, let us be assured that God loves us on every day, no matter how dark the day. If God loved us to the extent of the Cross, surely nothing can separate us from that love. Knowing that offers us what we need to endure all our days. On my dark Friday, in my suffering

and grief, I found comfort and hope in God's love, expressed so strikingly on the Cross. *Since God is for us...*

The Cross of Jesus Christ doesn't prevent us experiencing loss, suffering grief and pain, or having unanswered questions, but it does provide assurance that in and through it all we are loved by God and not even the worst of things can separate us from God's love for us in Christ Jesus. This assurance can transform how we live, whatever our next Friday brings.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. John writes, "God is love" (1 Jn 4:8). Have there been some times when you have questioned that because of something you or others have experienced? What "proof" of God's love does John offer in 1Jn 4:9-10? How does this speak into the situations you experienced?
2. Read Romans 8:28-39. Has this passage been helpful for you in such times? How has your understanding of this developed as you've journeyed with God? How would you use Paul's statement to comfort or encourage a Christian friend who was going through a tough time?
3. In what ways has the Cross of Jesus Christ transformed you? Has it changed how you view yourself? How does it affect how you view and treat others? Does it transform what you think or feel about some global issues? How does that speak into issues facing emerging generations and the world today?
4. Paul writes that God "*gave him up for us all*" (Rom 8:32). John comments, "*Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.*" (1Jn 4:12). What is the link between these two statements? How might accepting the truth of the Cross transform your relationships with others (family, friends, work & class mates, neighbours), particularly those you find difficult to love?