

The Smile of God's Love

Sermon 2018-03-30 - Year B - Good Friday - The Rev. Christopher Klukas

Isaiah 52:13-53:12; Psalm 69:1-23; Hebrews 10:1-25; John 18:1-19:37

- Ebola outbreak in 2014. "According to 2016 data from World Bank, the 2014 outbreak infected more than 28,000 people in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea and claimed the lives of more than 11,000 people."
- Dr. Kent Brantly a Christian and a medical missionary, moved to Liberia with his wife and children in 2013 to work with Samaritan's purse as a general practice doctor. He had no idea what was about to happen!
- When ebola struck, Dr. Brantly didn't turn and run away, instead he decided to stay, feeling that God had placed him there for a time such as this.
- Eventually, he became the first American to contract the disease. It could have cost him his life, but God miraculously spared him.
- "thousands upon thousands of lives were saved because of Kent Brantly," said Franklin Graham, president of Samaritan's purse, noting the awareness the doctor's experience brought to the disease.

Sin Sick

- I have some bad news for all of you. You are all seriously sick! It is not ebola, but unfortunately it is something worse. Ebola might kill your body, but this disease can kill your soul as well.
- Sin is like a deadly virus which was first contracted by Adam and Eve and has been passed down through the generations.
- It is a disease which breaks relationships, causes heartache, has countless symptoms, and ultimately separates us from the source of life. God himself.
- God is perfectly holy, and we are not. Our sin caused us to be separated from God, but he never stopped loving us.
- From the moment of that very first sin, God had already devised a rescue plan.
- God knew that we could never build a bridge back to him, so he built a bridge to us.
- Jesus and the Father agreed that Jesus would enter into the creation and become human. And they both knew that ultimately Jesus would have to suffer and die.
- In Paul's letter to the Romans, we learn that "The wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23).
 - We are all sinners, and this is exactly what we deserve.
- God is a just God, he can't just ignore the consequences of our sin, if he did, he would not longer be just.
- But God is also perfectly loving and merciful. The cross is the place where divine justice meets divine love. Jesus takes our disease into himself so that we can be healed.
 - Jesus loves us so much that he was willing to be brutally beaten and whipped, stripped of his garments and humiliated, and nailed to the cross so that you and I might be reconciled to God.
 - If you have welcomed Jesus into your life, your healing has already begun.

- If you haven't, please know that Jesus is the only way you can be saved.
- The rest of that verse about the wages of sin tells us that "*the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord*" (Romans 6:23, ESV).
- All you need to do to accept that gift is say "I'm sorry," "thank you," and "please."
- Anglican Bishop and Bible Scholar N.T. Wright wrote, "Jesus is numbered, voluntarily, with the transgressors: but instead of that making him a sinner too, it means that sinners are rescued. He somehow takes from them the stain of their sin, the pollution they are carrying, and his purity and innocence go out in strength to heal, to forgive, to rescue."¹
- "He has become what we are, so that we might become what he is."²
 - "*For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*" (2 Corinthians 5:21, ESV)
- Jesus cried out from the cross "It is finished" (John 19:3) and so it is.
 - The battle is done, the victory is won, and Jesus rested in the tomb, waiting for the surprise that no one expected. Stay tuned for more details!

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- One more thing.
- Kent Brantly, the ebola doctor, said "Your faith doesn't make you safe," and Franklin Graham notes that "it's his faith that put him in harm's way. It's because of our faith — our faith in Jesus Christ — that we go to these distant corners so that we can be a light in a very dark world."³
- Jesus has smiled on us with his love, he has rescued us, and he allows us to follow in his example, taking up our own crosses, dying to ourselves daily, and passing his love on to others so that they too might be rescued.

Prayer

- "Almighty God, we thank you with all our heart that on the cross Jesus became one with us in our sin, so that we might, despite that sin, share the life of your Kingdom. Enable us, we pray, to be truly grateful, and to live not as unforgiven sinners, despairing in our own weakness, but as your forgiven sons and daughters, rejoicing in your power to save and cleanse and give life: to the glory of your great and holy name. Amen."⁴

¹ N. T. Wright, *The Crown and the Fire: Meditations on the Cross and the Life of the Spirit* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1992), 19.

² N. T. Wright, *The Crown and the Fire: Meditations on the Cross and the Life of the Spirit* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1992), 21.

³ All quotes about Dr. Brantly and the ebola outbreak are taken from:

<https://www.theblaze.com/news/2017/02/23/facing-darkness-new-documentary-details-christian-doctors-harrowing-battle-with-ebola>

⁴ N. T. Wright, *The Crown and the Fire: Meditations on the Cross and the Life of the Spirit* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1992), 22.