

5 Days to Calvary: Holy Week Devotions

Conclusion:

Holy Week is something of a paradoxical river. It flows with remarkable hope and promise while simultaneously revealing depths of betrayal and pain. But embedded in all of it is nothing less than the everlasting and inimitable love of God. Octavius Winslow's famous words are filled with this Easter truth: "Who delivered up Jesus to die? Not Judas, for money; not Pilate, for fear; not the Jews, for envy – but the Father for love."¹

Were it not for the love of God, Jesus would not have been present in the world to begin with.

Were it not for the love of God, sin would have been the final chapter in humanity's story.

Were it not for the love of God, we would only talk about crucifixion instead of *THE* crucifixion.

But for love everything would be different.

And during this season we remember and celebrate because the enduring love of God has come, conquered, and changed everything.

The Apostle John knew this love uniquely. Five times in the Fourth Gospel John is referred to as "the disciple whom Jesus loved" (Jn. 13:23; 19:26; 20:2; 21:7; 21:20). It was this John who had leaned against Jesus during the last supper. This John was – arguably – the only one of the twelve to be present at the cross while Jesus died. And it was this John who, at Calvary, had been given the intimate and trusted responsibility by Jesus to take care of His mother. Over the course of their friendship John loved Jesus and knew he was loved by Jesus.

Knowing all this causes the words of John's first letter to resonate even more powerfully. 1 John is likely one of the latest documents to be a part of the Scriptures, possibly being written around AD 90. This isn't just an interesting historical fact, it means what was included in this letter was written with a great deal of perspective. What John pens here had the opportunity to be tested. What he presents has stood the test of the dilution of time, the scourge of Roman persecution, the scattering of the church around AD 70 and the internal attacks of false doctrine. So, after all of the challenges to the truth and with his unique

¹ Octavius Winslow, *No Condemnation in Christ Jesus* (London: John Farquhar Shaw, 1852), 367

perspective regarding Jesus, John offers one of the most powerful statements about love ever written: “In this is love, not that we have loved God but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins” (1 Jn. 4:10).

The word “propitiation” is a bit of a theological journey, but as simply as it can be put the word means “to satisfy,” as in the satisfaction of a debt. The word indicates the presence of two things: a need and a provision. As we see Jesus both on the cross and emerging from the empty tomb we are confronted with these images: the need and the provision.

Alina Bengé knew it sounded crazy to ask her recently retired father to come bus tables at the Trifecta Grill on St Patrick’s Day in 2019. It sounded crazy because her father, Bill Bengé’s retirement wasn’t from restaurant work but from his work as a doctor. Dr. Bengé was a Harvard trained cardiologist. However, on this holiday weekend, at the request of his daughter, he was the most educated busboy in the history of the restaurant’s existence. And it was a good thing he was. It wasn’t even five minutes after Dr. Bengé got his apron on that an elderly customer began choking on her food and stopped breathing. No one else in room knew what to do. Thankfully someone was still on call. The good doctor deftly performed the Heimlich maneuver and cleared the blocked air passage, and then presumably settled back in to keep the tables clean for the hungry holiday crowds.²

All in a day’s work.

This heartwarming happy ending is more than a story, it’s a parable. The situation was dire. Blocked airway, choking woman, no one who could help. A debt had been created that no one else could cover. Enter the good doctor. Not only was he present because he loved his daughter, but he was more than able to handle the need because of his extensive training and experience.

Love put him in the right position, his qualifications made him the right person.

Enter Jesus.

The unfathomable love of God is why the Son was sent. His unequalled character is why He was able to save. Our debt was significant and beyond our power to satisfy, but our Savior was uniquely qualified and mercifully present, so the need

² Mike Lowe, “Choking woman saved by doctor filling in as busboy at suburban restaurant,” *WGNTV.Com* (3-18-19)

was provided for. Of this satisfaction, this propitiation, there is no doubt. And Holy Week is our yearly reminder to slow down, pay attention, stop carrying everything and re-align our lives with the way things truly are. The love of God seen in the person and work of Jesus Christ has brought salvation. Good Friday has become Resurrection Sunday. Our deficit has been met with His sufficiency. Amen.

Happy Easter.