

Good Friday Afternoon  
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The time is late Good Friday afternoon. Two citizens of Jerusalem meet on the street. One says to the other, "Where were you this morning?" "Why, what happened?" "Didn't you hear, they killed Jesus this morning!" "You're kidding! They did what?" "You got it, they crucified Him this morning." "How do you know?" "Well, you know me, I don't like to get involved, but my curiosity got the better of me. It all started last night around 9 p.m. I was passing the Mount of Olives, you know, the garden on the road to the Kidran Valley." "Yes, I know the place, that was one of Jesus' favorite spots." "You got that right. Well anyway, as I was passing, some soldiers and some priests had Jesus tied up and were leading Him away. You know me, I don't like to get involved, but my curiosity got the better of me so I followed, at a good distance of course. I don't like to get too close. They took Jesus to the high priest, Annus at the temple." "They did? How come Annus got involved?" "I don't know, I was too far away to hear. But, you know Annus, he likes to get involved in everything; he's up for reelection as high priest next year, maybe he saw some votes in it."

"Well anyway, they took Jesus to the Governor's courtyard." "Then what happened?" "Again I can't tell you, I was too far away and I wasn't going to get involved; but I heard others talking -- something about being the Son of God." "That's ridiculous, they wouldn't kill him for that. Everyone knows Jesus is a little off base with His love talk; with His repentance routine. But come on, they wouldn't kill Him for that."

"Well anyway, it was close to midnight and I was tired so I went home. I really thought they were making a mountain out of mole hill. But this morning around 8:30 I heard all this commotion right outside of my door. Well, you know me, my curiosity got the better of me, so I went to the window. There right in front of my door, right in front of my door mind you, the soldiers were making Jesus carry this big heavy cross. I was amazed, I couldn't believe my

eyes. Jesus must have had a really rough night. He was all bloody and sweaty and staggering. Do you remember that young woman radical who lives in the next street?" "You mean Veronica?" "Yes that's her, Veronica. Well she ran out and wiped Jesus' face with a towel. Do you know a soldier pushed her away, and she fell and scraped her hands and knees. I keep telling everyone, don't get involved it doesn't pay, you just get hurt."

"Well, anyway, right after that, Jesus fell down and couldn't get up, so a soldier grabbed your neighbor, what's his name, oh yes, Simon. Well he grabbed Simon and made him carry the cross the rest of the way to Golgotha." "He did! What did Simon say?" "Nothing. He was too scared, he just carried the cross and Jesus followed." "Oh that's terrible, that's terrible."

"Well wait, you didn't hear the worse part yet." "What's that?" "They nailed Jesus to the cross!" "Oh my God, you mean they really used a nail! The Romans always tie their prisoners to the cross. How come they nailed Him?" "I don't know, I don't know. Those Romans, they really know how to be cruel." "God, I'm glad I wasn't there; I might have done something stupid and got myself involved." "Anyway it's over, Jesus died at noon time. It's too bad, you know, Jesus wasn't really such a bad fellow. As a matter of fact, I sort of liked Him. He was different. I never understood what He said, but He was likeable. He never hurt anyone. In fact He helped a lot of people." "Yes, I know what you mean. Remember the time He changed water into wine over at Cana?" "Yes, and the time He cured the 10 lepers. Remember the time He restored the blind beggar's sight; and the time He made the cripple walk? Remember when He fed the 5000 people with 2 fishes and a couple of loaves of bread." "Yes, I was there. I never understood how He did that. You know, I met Him one time." "You did! What did He say?" "He told me to sell all my possessions and give to the poor, and then to follow Him. You know I almost did it. I'm glad now that I didn't do it, because He's dead and where would I be now? Even his close friends ran away, and now they have nothing, no fishing boats, no leader, nothing. See, I keep telling you, that's what getting involved gets you

- nothing! Well it's over now; it's going to be a long time before anyone like Him comes along again." "Yes I know what you mean. Well keep your eyes open and lets see what Annus and Pilot get out of this."

There is an old Negro spiritual that we sing during Lent. It asks the question, 'Where you there when they crucified the Lord?' I wonder what your answer might be? If we recognize that the nail that held Jesus to the cross represents our sins: our sins of commission, our sins of omission, our sins of indifference. If we recognize the Gospel of the Passion of our Lord, as the acts of commission, and the story of the two citizens of Jerusalem as the acts of omission and indifference, then you and I were there, you and I are there and will continue to be there; because Jesus is nailed to the cross everyday. Day after day, over and over in an endless line; from the first sin of Adam to the last sin at the end of the world. Our sins form a continuous chain nailing Christ to the cross everyday. The world likes to tell us that sin is old fashioned, that sin does not exist. There are even some good and very religious people who argue that it is just about impossible to commit sin. Why do they say this? Because if we agree, then the crucifixion never takes place, then or now. If sin does not exist, then we are guiltless, and who is so foolish as to say sin does not exist? The question is not whether sin exists at all; but does sin exist for me. Isn't sin what Good Friday is all about? Isn't sin what the crucifixion is all about?

Some will say " I don't do anything wrong." It's always the other person who is wrong. Or we say the other person made me do it. Isn't that what Adam said, "Eve made me eat the apple." Isn't that what Eve said " the serpent tricked me, so I am not responsible."

And that, my friends, is the biggest sin of all, the biggest nail of all, that holds Christ to the cross. OUR PRIDE. To think that we are so guiltless. To think that we are so perfect. To think that we sinners are saints! Only God is guiltless and perfect. Only those who acknowledge their sinfulness are saints in heaven. Wasn't it pride that put Lucifer in hell? Can our pride accept the fact that, if we nail

Christ to the cross with our sins of pride; we can also remove nails from Christ's hands and feet by our humility, our good works and by asking for forgiveness. Humility removes the nails and forgiveness removes the guilt. The curse of mankind, the curse of our society is to avoid responsibility, to avoid being guilty of anything. So we do nothing and we are still guilty, of omission and indifference and non-involvement. The fear of guilt drives us in all directions; some even to suicide, like Judas. It takes courage to ask for forgiveness, it takes courage to be humble. It is weakness to run from ourselves and the reality of what we are, the reality of what we could be. For where can we hide? Our pride cannot hide us, it only covers us with a mask. If we do not want guilt, then let us be humble. If we do not want guilt, then let us be sinless by asking forgiveness and by confessing our sins.

We have one advantage over the two citizens of Jerusalem. We know the outcome of the Good Friday tragedy. we know that Christ's power is strong enough to overcome death; it is strong enough to endure our weaknesses; it is strong enough to remove our guilt and it is strong enough to forgive our sins, even the biggest sin, if we only ask; if we only overcome our indifference. It is our acceptance of guilt, it is our sorrow for our sins, in our resolution to forgive others that we remove the nails from Christ's hands and feet. We free Him from the immobility of the cross. We free Him to work through us. We free Him to be mobile through us. It our humility that makes us an instrument of His peace. It is through a freed Jesus Christ (in us and within us) that we are able to enjoy the true promise of a joyful and happy resurrection; that we are able to enjoy the true meaning of Easter.