Yet, it was also a *good* Friday. The Rev. Willie Thompson explains. For many years, Thompson taught confirmation classes in his church. Without fail, when his students talked about the crucifixion of Jesus, teenagers would ask him, "Why do we call it 'Good Friday,' when there was nothing at all good about it?" Thompson explained that the day itself was as bad as it could possibly be for Jesus. He suffered terribly. He was brutally killed by people he loved, and his death looked like a terrible defeat. But, because Jesus died, Thompson tells the confirmands, the day became good for all of us.

It was a good day because: Jesus took our sins upon himself. Through faith in Jesus, we have eternal life. Through his death, Death itself was defeated. His death and resurrection is a guarantee of our own resurrection. We are free from bondage or slavery to sin. In Christ, we are reconciled to God. Through the blood of Christ, our sins are forgiven. Jesus, in his death, demonstrated sacrificial love. In the cross, we see a model for how we should live in our relations with others.

For these reasons, what was a bad day for one man, was a good day for humankind. And, here's the kicker: Jesus didn't need to do it! No one forced him. As he told his disciples, *I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep...No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have the power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again* (John 10:11, 18). Good came out of the evil on that day, which is one reason why we call it Good Friday.

But there's another reason this Friday is a good Friday. According to Dave Wilton, who studies the origin of words, the "good" in Good Friday has a meaning other than "beneficial, auspicious, happy, positive" and so on. He writes, "In Old and Middle English, the adjective *god* (good) could mean 'pious, devout, morally perfect,' so the *good* in *Good Friday* is a linguistic relic meaning 'holy.'" There it is. Good Friday is "good" because it means "holy." This is God's Friday, a Holy Friday.

This is a holy day for all of the reasons mentioned previously: the forgiveness of our sins, the guarantee of our own resurrection to eternal life, the defeat of death, our freedom from slavery to sin, and our reconciliation to God. The actions of God, in Jesus Christ, make this a very Holy Friday.

How, then, should we observe Holy Friday as a holy day? Some Christians regard Good Friday as a holy day of obligation. For some, this is a day of fasting and abstinence, mostly observed as a "meatless" Friday. In Roman Catholic, Orthodox and Anglican traditions, meatless Fridays are one way that these Christian friends recall the death of Jesus on a Friday.

But are other ways we can make this a holy day by ways other than modifying our diet. To illustrate we turn to Academy Award-winning film director, Steven Spielberg. Two of his films can help us with the question of what makes something holy.

The first film is *Schindler's List*. The film revolves around Oskar Schindler, a German industrialist who allies himself with the Nazi Party to further his own business interests. Schindler expects to make a lot of money producing war materials for the German Army. Schindler ultimately hires Jews to work in his factories, protecting them from deportation and extermination. Schindler is credited with saving the lives of 1,200 Jewish men, women, and children.

Near the end of the film, as the Soviet Army closed in on his factory, Schindler flees, fearing retribution as a war criminal. As he gets into his car, the Jewish foreman of the factory gives him a ring, made from the gold teeth of the factory workers, and inscribed with words from the *Talmud*: "He who saves a single life, saves the world entire."

After the war, the State of Israel declared Oskar Schindler to be a "righteous Gentile" and buried him in Jerusalem. The last scene of the movie shows the survivors and their families placing rocks on Schindler's grave. It's estimated that there are some 7,000 descendants of the Jews Schindler saved. One man saved the lives of 1,200 people, and made possible the lives of 7,000 more. One life changed the course of human history for thousands.

The second Spielberg film is *Saving Private Ryan*. Captain Miller and his squad are sent to find and bring home Private James Ryan, whose four brothers died in WWII. When they find him, Ryan and his comrades are holding a river crossing against the German Army. Captain Miller and his squad join the fight, most of them giving their lives to hold the bridge. With his dying words, Captain Miller tells Ryan to "Earn this!"

At the end of the film, we see old James Ryan standing at Captain Miller's grave many years after the war is over. Ryan says, "My family is with me today. They wanted to come with me. To be honest with you, I wasn't sure how I'd feel coming back here. Every day I think about what you said to me that day on the bridge. I tried to live my life the best that I could. I hope that was enough. I hope that, at least in your eyes, I've earned what all of

Bad Friday

Good Friday, April 14, 2017
The Federated Church, Fergus Falls, MN
Psalm 22

There are good days and there are bad days; and then there are Fridays. TGIF! We love Fridays! For most people, Friday is the last day of work for the week. At 5 p.m. on Friday the weekend begins. On Fridays we live in expectation of all the fun stuff we've planned for Saturday and Sunday! So, for most people, every Friday - any Friday - is a good Friday. There are no *bad* Fridays. It's like an oxymoron. Bad Friday. No such thing.

Well, today is Friday. Good Friday. But a lot of Christians wonder why it's not called *Bad Friday*. After all, this is the day Jesus died! When someone we love dies, we generally don't call it a good day. When someone who's been a mentor and teacher dies, we generally don't call it a good day. When someone who's saved our life dies, we generally don't call it a good day. When someone says, as Jesus does, *My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from helping me, from the words of my groaning? O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer; and by night, but find no rest*, you know that person is not having a good day (vv. 1-2).

For Jesus, things had been going south for some time, but in the wee hours of the morning on this particular Friday, it all unraveled pretty fast. Jesus is arrested, bound and taken to the religious authorities for questioning. And things only got worse. The Roman governor tried to mediate, but ended up washing his hands of the whole affair. A group of mean-spirited people demanded that a known criminal be released instead of Jesus. Pilate had Jesus flogged, but the crowd insisted on crucifixion.

Nothing is looking good about this Friday. Pilate remanded Jesus to the Roman soldiers to be crucified and you know the story. Jesus is nailed to a cross, a death reserved for the most common of criminals, and on the cross, he felt alone and abandoned. *My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?* he said, echoing the words of the psalmist (Mark 15:34).

The acute suffering Jesus endures makes him feel as though he is "poured out like water," that his "bones are out of joint" and that his "heart is like wax" (v. 14). His mouth "is dried up like a potsherd" and his tongue "sticks to [his] jaws" (v. 15). His "hands and feet have shriveled" (v. 16). If ever someone had a bad day, it was Jesus. It was a bad, bad Friday.

you have done for me." Then, he turns to his wife and says, "Tell me I have led a good life...tell me I'm a good man."

John Biguenet, writing in *The Atlantic*, asks, "But don't we all struggle under Ryan's moral burden? And how can Ryan, or, for that matter, any of us, ever pay such a debt - and to whom?...Like Private Ryan, we cannot help but ask what we've done to deserve such sacrifice by others, and beg their forgiveness for what we have cost them. And like James Ryan, all we can do to justify that sacrifice is to live our lives as well as we are able."

On Good Friday we remember the actions of one man – Jesus Christ – who offered his life in order to save the world entire. And we proclaim this to be a holy day, because in Christ our sins are forgiven, we have new and abundant life. We did not earn this new life – Jesus gave it freely – but we can make it holy by living in Christ-like ways.

Today is not a bad Friday. It is a good Friday. It is a holy Friday. And as we live lives that honor God and demonstrate love and Christ-like values and virtues, we ensure that every day, not just Fridays, can be a good day and a holy day.

The psalmist provides the epilogue: *All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the Lord….Posterity will serve him; future generations will be told about the Lord, and proclaim his deliverance to a people yet unborn, saying that he has done it* (vv. 27, 30-31).

Prayer: Gracious God, on this day we gather to remember the suffering death of Jesus. He was despised and rejected, oppressed and afflicted, yet he was prepared to be wounded for our transgressions. We come overwhelmed by the depth of Jesus' love for us, and his commitment to defeat evil, even when that meant his own suffering and his own death. In his willingness to make us righteous, he poured himself out to death, even death on a cross, and so, in response to such love and sacrifice, we commit ourselves as his disciples to overcome evil with good, suffering with wholeness, and oppression with justice. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen

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