

Good Friday

“Already Dead”

Our Redeemer Dallas 2020

Grace, mercy, and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

He was already dead.

In a recent issue of *Modern Reformation Magazine*, executive editor Eric Landry points out that when we say the words “the crucifixion,” everyone immediately knows what we are talking about. Quoting Fleming Rutledge, an American Episcopal priest, he says, “There have been many famous deaths in world history; we might think of John F. Kennedy, or Marie Antoinette, or Cleopatra, but we do not refer to ‘the assassination,’ ‘the guillotining,’ or ‘the poisoning.’”

There’s a reason for that. In John 19, we read that, “Since it was the day of Preparation, and so that the bodies would not remain on the cross on the Sabbath...the Jews asked Pilate that their legs might be broken and that they might be taken away. So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first, and of the other who had been crucified with him. But when they came to Jesus...they did not break his legs” (verses 31-33). Because He was already dead.

This surely came as a surprise. Crucifixion was the worst form of death. In fact, the words “cross” and “crucify” come from the Latin word for torture (*cruciare*). It wasn’t *supposed* to be quick. The cross was a punishment designed to inflict as much suffering as possible for as long as possible.

Yet, in a sense, Jesus was dead before He ever reached the cross. He was dead before He ever took on human flesh and blood. The Scriptures say that Jesus is the Lamb who was slain from before the foundation of the world (Rev. 13:8). Before the light first shone in the darkness, God had a plan to send His Son to redeem those who are under the law (Gal. 4:6). He was already dead the day He was born, this one who would save His people from their sins (Matt. 1:21). He was already dead the day John the Baptizer saw Him and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29). He was already dead when He rebuked Satan in the desert for offering Him a shortcut: the kingdoms of the world and their glory *without* the suffering (Matt. 4:9). He was already dead when the crowds turned away because He told them they would have to eat His flesh and drink His blood (John 6:53). He was already dead the day He rode triumphantly into Jerusalem, weeping over the city that kills its prophets (Luke 19:44). Every day of Jesus’ life pointed to this day when He would willingly drink the cup of God’s wrath for our sin and die.

But Jesus’ death isn’t just another famous death. His death is also *your* death. St. Paul writes, “Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too

might walk in newness of life...For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 6:3-4, 10-11).

In Christ, *you* are already dead. Yes, you were dead in your trespasses and sins (Eph. 2:1). Yes, the wages of that sin is death (Rom. 6:23). But since Christ has already died *for* you, death no longer has any power *over* you. You have been crucified with Christ (Gal. 2:20). Your sins are forgiven. Satan, the Accuser, can no longer accuse you, dragging your old sins out before God. In Christ, *you are already dead*, and you *have* been since before the foundation of the world, when God chose you in His Son that you should be holy and blameless before Him (Eph. 1:4).

There is therefore now no condemnation for you, no death sentence hanging over your head. “For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit” (Rom. 8:1-4). It is finished (John 19:30). The Lamb who was slain from the foundation of the world has poured out His holy, precious blood on you. He has taken away your sin, so that, one day, when He comes again to judge the living and the dead, we, who are already dead in Christ, will *live*, even as He lives and reigns to all eternity. This is most certainly true.

He was already dead. And in Christ, so are you. And now *nothing* can separate you from God’s love, neither life nor death, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation (Rom. 8:38-39). To all these things, you have died, because *He* died, and there is nothing in store for you now but life, life in Christ, life for eternity.

In ☩ Jesus’ name. Amen.