

At this time of the year, I'm reminded that the full range of human experiences are present in the Easter story. Easter is the celebration of the fulness of life – it's the celebration of birth, growth, hardship and triumph – it's truly the story of birth, death and resurrection. In my meditation last week, I talked about the relationship between the cross and the eternity of God's love for us. The great mystic dame Julian of Norwich talks points to this same connection when she prays to God – when she allows herself to see the glory of heaven standing behind the suffering of the cross – standing behind the passion of Christ (and his love for us).

In a way, Good Friday is the celebration of this passion – in Jesus we see a faith and a love that is truly unbreakable – a love that is unstoppable. The eternity of God's love present in human form.

“...they took Jesus; and carrying the cross by himself, he went out to what is called The Place of the Skull, which in Hebrew is called Golgotha. There they crucified him, and with him two others, one on either side, with Jesus between them. Pilate also had an inscription written and put on the cross. It read 'Jesus of Nazareth, the king of the Jews'...”

As I say every year, it could be argued that Jesus was the victim in this story – a helpless man dragged to his death by evil men – ignorant men – weak men.

But, this just isn't true. Jesus was not without strength and power. While robbed of his liberty, his clothes and even his life, Jesus held onto his faith in God and his love for humanity. Yes, faith and love gave him power and he held onto that power even at the end, after everything else was taken. And, that's why we say that this Friday is good.

In a way, I think many people living around us in the world today are struggling with this Good Friday experience. The outbreak of the Covid 19 virus in our community has robbed us of many blessings – some have been robbed of their liberty – sick in hospital or isolated at home. Many are now feeling the full effect of the social distancing measures that are now keeping us apart. Many are struggling with feelings of loneliness – cut off from family and friends. (We're seeing a rise in the number of people reaching out for help – struggling with mental health issues.)

According to recent reports, quite a number of people also seem to be struggling with their finances at the moment – some have lost jobs – others have lost superannuation – many are now struggling to pay the bills and feed their families. In these uncertain times, many are struggling.

We're hearing reports of the strain and stress of this virus on our health care workers – we're hearing reports from around the world of overcrowding in hospitals and medical staff working without face masks and protective clothing. We're hearing stories about fatigue and stress. Again, these are Good Friday experiences.

Like the Good Friday story, it could be argued that all these people are victims of the Covid 19 virus – victims of a spreading sickness in our community. But, I think there are other stories that need to be shared in these difficult days – stories about care and compassion that can fill us with renewed hope – stories that celebrate the triumph of the human spirit.

When I hear stories about the heroic work of doctors and nurses working in overcrowded hospitals – stories about the lives that are saved – stories about their grief when lives are lost – when I hear these stories I see evidence of God's grace.

When I hear stories about food delivered to the frail and disadvantaged living in our community – when I hear about these acts of service and genuine concern – I'm reminded that the grace of God is still present in these difficult days. As I said in one of our earlier meditations, government support

for the unemployed and mortgage assistance for struggling families – these are all visible signs of a community guided by the grace of God.

Like Jesus, all of these people show us the eternity of God's love in human form. As we continue to struggle with the sickness and the suffering that we see around us, we are reminded today that God's grace endures. Like the passion of Christ on the cross, we are reminded that the love and care and compassion that we share are visible signs of grace, wrapped up in human flesh. In these difficult days, I pray that we will follow in the footsteps of Dame Julian of Norwich – I pray that we will look through the suffering of the cross to catch a glimpse of the glory of God's love that stands behind it. May the Lord bless us and guide us in these difficult days.

The Lord be with you.