

Homily
Good Friday, 2011
Church of the Good Shepherd, Charlestown, NH

Let us pray: Direct us, O Lord, in all our doings, with thy most gracious favour, and further us with thy continual help; that in all our works begun, continued, and ended in thee, we may glorify thy holy Name, and finally, by thy mercy, obtain everlasting life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

There are many things we do not know about the life of Jesus. Although we celebrate his birth on December 25, scholars often disagree about that particular date. Some place it in March, others in February, some even say that it must have occurred in the Summer months because that would enable a young child to survive more easily in the drafted confines of a stable.

We don't really know when most of the miracles were performed. We can guess. And some do just that, as if the precise time and place were essential to an understanding of the miraculous presence of Jesus.

Yes, there are moments in the life of Jesus that we can date with some accuracy. But there is one particular moment that we can identify with absolute certainty. And that is this day: Good Friday. It was the feast of the Passover. Pontius Pilate was the Procurator of Judea. We can trace the calendars all the way back in time and find the moment when Jesus, God Incarnate, was nailed to a tree and left to suffer an agonizing death. But time becomes even more precise. We learn what happens on the sixth hour and the ninth hour. Time

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closes in on us as we watch with an almost empirical accuracy – a

kind of accuracy often missing from the Bible – we watch the death of Jesus.

The gospel requires this slow and relentless journey to the death on the cross. We are required to follow, to observe, to witness with clarity what has happened. We cannot gloss this over. We cannot – should not – look away as these events unfold. Though these actions and events are terrible to watch, we must do so. We have been brought here to the foot of the cross. We have been brought to this place to witness the last painful moments of the God who has created us and who loves us. That same God has been put to death – by us. We have been brought to this place to witness the end.

Some want to rush through the Good Friday events because they are simply too painful, to impossibly difficult to endure – if we approach them fully.

Those of us who know the story, know there will be an Easter. But we must always remember that, on that very precise day long ago. This was the end. We must understand that singular fact. Painful as it is, we must embrace it.

Jesus was crucified on a rough and painful wooden cross. The arms that would embrace the world He loved were stretched into a form that made them useless. The world would reject the love that was offered.

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And so, on this particular day, recorded on the calendars of the world for all time, we watch. We watch and wait as the light of the world dims and goes out.

Amen.

