GOOD FRIDAY
March 31, 1972
Rolling Meadows, Illinois

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IN NOMINE JESU

St. John 19: 17, 18: SO THEY TOOK JESUS, AND HE WENT OUT, BEARING HIS OWN CROSS, TO THE PLACE CALLED THE PLACE OF A SKULL, WHICH IS CALLED IN HEBREW GOLGOTHA. THERE THEY CRUCIFIED HIM.

We STAND TONIGHT in the SHADOW of the CROSS on which our Lord POURED OUT His SOUL into DEATH. That CROSS is NOT pretty to LOOK at. It says so much ABOUT US -- and it says even MORE about HIM. The CROSS is not only RUGGED - - it is also UGLY and REPULSIVE.

The CROSS was indeed an "EMBLEM of SUFFERING and SHAME" - - it was an INSTRUMENT of TORTURE and TORMENT. CRUCIFIXION was CRUEL, HEARTLESS, and INHUMANE. The CRUCIFIED became a TARGET for POPULAR SCORN. He and everything about Him were reduced to the OBSCENE. There was TORTURE - there was SUFFERING - there was DEHYDRATION and FEVER - there were STRETCHED MUSCLES and DISLOCATED JOINTS - there was UNRELIEVED PAIN - there was NUMBNESS from the BREAKDOWN of the WHOLE SYSTEM - there was EXHAUSTION of VITAL RESOURCES - - - and finally, there was DEATH.

It was THERE - on such a CROSS - that God's OWN SON, "His DEAREST and BEST," DIED for a WORLD of lost SINNERS.....And that is why YOU and I have come to HOLD the CROSS so DEAR.

On a hill far away stood an old rugged cross,
The emblem of suffering and shame;
And I love that old cross where the dearest and best
For a world of lost sinners was slain.

As He HANGS there - CRUCIFIED - SUFFERING - BLEEDING - - - - - He has NO ATRACTION.* There is NO BEAUTY - He is MORE like a ROOT in a DRY GROUND - a SCRUB in the DESERT. APPEAL? NO - His appearance does NOT attract you. CHARM? NO! He REPELS you. You want to HIDE your FACE from Him. You think He is

He is despised by the world!

ACCLAIMED with JOY by His PEOPLE? Just the OPPOSITE. "HE IS DESPISED AND REJECTED BY MEN." He is a Man of SORROWS - ACQUAINTED with GRIEF - PUNISHED and BRUISED - SLAUGHTERED like a LAMB.

The whole HUMAN RACE should have STOPPED in its TRACKS and gone down on its KNEES before the CROSS in ADORATION and THANKSGIVING. Instead, we can COUNT on our FINGERS the FEW who got the MESSAGE POWERFULLY enough to stand up and be COUNTE Our Lord - the Lamb of God COME to TAKE AWAY the SIN of the WORLD - DIES ALONE.!

There is a GLORY there - - but it is a glory that is KNOWN and SEEN ONLY through the EYES of FAITH. It is the GLORY of God's Son come to REDEEM US from our SIN. It is the GLORY of TRIUMPH over all of the FORCES of HELL and all the DEMONS and the HOSTS of them. It is the GLORY of EVERLASTING LIFE. And it is THAT glory that YOU and I have come to TREASURE - by God's GRACE in His CROSS.

Oh, that old rugged cross, so despised by the world,
Has a wondrous attraction for me;
For the dear Lamb of God left His glory above
To bear it to dark Calvary.

At the CROSS of JESUS, God is at His BEST. That is seen in CONTRAST to the FACT that MAN is at his WORST. There you see man's DARKNESS and GOD'S LIGHT - Man's DECEPTION and God's HONESTY - Man's LIES and God's TRUTH - man's RUTHLESSNESS and God's GENTLENESS - man's POWER and God's WILLINGNESS to be WEAK and HELPLESS - man's FIENDISH PLANNING and God's SPONTANEITY - MAN'S CRUELITY and God's MERCY - man's HATE and God's LOVE.

And what a WONDERFUL LOVE it is! It is UNSPARING and EXTRAVAGANT. It holds

NOTHING BACK. It GIVES ALL. It LOVES NOT ONLY the GOOD - the BEAUTIFUL - the WHOLE - - - but also the BAD, the MARRED, and the SICKS. It DECENDS into the LOWEST depths of DESPAIR to LIFT MEN in HOPE and LIFE. It goes where LIFE is MOST estranged and ALIENATED to RECONCILE MEN with GOD - and MEN with EACH OTHER. It FORGIVES the WORST and SAVES to the UTTERMOST.

In the old rugged cross, stained with blood so divine,
A wondrous beauty I see;
For 'twas on that old cross Jesus suffered and died
To pardon and sanctify me.

The CROSS is God's GOOD NEWS to us MEN. The cross says that GOD CARES. He CARES enough to GIVE HIS OWN SON into this WORLD of ours - to GIVE Him UP in DEATH. THE CROSS KILLS - and God's Son finds it out for Himself.

This is God's way of DOING THINGS. The CROSS of Christ is the GIFT of God that keeps on GIVING and GIVING and GIVING! This is GOD. This is the WAY HE IS. He is PATIENT and KIND.

Men often RECOIL from that CROSS, saying, "It is TOO GRIM and HOPELESS. Give me a more ROMANTIC VIEW!"

Life is NOT tolerable WITHOUT HOPE. But the CROSS says there is HOPE. That is why we call this day, "GOOD FRIDAY." It is GOOD - because His MORNING has BROKEN INTO our NIGHT to SCATTER our DARKNESS and GIVE us LIGHT. He has TOUCHED our SICKNESS with His HEALING MERCY.

And what must be our RESPONSE ? Only that we LIVE and LOVE and DIE for that GOODNESS and GRACE given us BY CHRIST.

To the old rugged cross I will ever be true,
Its shame and reproach gladly bear;
Then He'll call me some day to my home far away,
Where His glory forever I'll share.

CHORUS

So I'll cherish the old rugged cross
Will my trophies at last I lay down;
I will cling to the old rugged cross
And exchange it some day for a crown. Amen.