Good Friday
Tre Ore
Community Church
Rolling Meadows -- 1981

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IN NOMINE JESU

St. Luke 23: 46 THEN JESUS, CRYING WITH A LOUD VOICE, SAID, "FATHER, INTO THY HANDS I COMMIT MY SPIRIT!" AND HAVING SAID THIS HE BREATHED HIS LAST.

What happens when we die? That's a subject for theological, and philosophical, and medical discussion. What happens when you die? What happens when I die? Surely the question cannot come any closer to home than this -- but it can! The Christian Gospel abandons all evasions -- all short-circuits -- all subterfuges ----- and it probes beneath even our personal encounter with what some call the "Grim Reaper" or "Blessed Release." The Bible faces the question: WHAT HAPPENS WHEN GOD DIES? ..... GOD BECAME A HUMAN BEING --- and the INCARNATION is a relentless assault on everything that makes sense. A BABY Whose "Swaddling clothes" are dirty and need changing --- a MAN being executed as a deterrent to other potential criminals ----- CAN THIS REALLY BE GOD?

We would like the Bible to be tidier. Why must it confuse us with "I AND THE FATHER ARE ONE" and "FATHER, INTO THY HANDS I COMMIT MY SPIRIT?" Isn't it preposterous for GOD INCARNATE to ask WHY GOD HAS FORSAKEN HIM? Couldn't GOD -- while dying -- think of something more edifying than "I THIRST?" How can our minds stretch enough to take in "THEY KNOW NOT WHAT THEY DO" and "ALL THESE THINGS WERE DONE ACCORDING TO THE SCRIPTURES"

Why doesn't the Bible go away and leave us alone?

Yet here -- on GOOD FRIDAY -- are GOD'S OWN DYING WORDS: "FATHER, INTO THY HANDS I COMMIT MY SPIRIT." ..... And notice that this PRAYER was not spoken quietly -- it was "CRIED WITH A LOUD VOICE!" "FATHER, INTO THY HANDS I COMMIT MY SPIRIT." WHY THIS CRYING WITH "A LOUD VOICE?" Surely GOD HIMSELF should go "gentle" into that "Good Night." WHY WON'T GOD PULL HIMSELF TOGETHER AND BE GOD?

The answer is that the DECIBELS OF JESUS' CRY bridge the gap between the envent and report of it. WHEN GOD DIED HE WAS NOT DISTRESSED.-- He was simply taking care that history be a record of what happened. He was disarming the sceptics in advance. ..... This prayer: "FATHER, INTO THY HANDS I COMMIT MY SPIRIT" comes from PSALM 31: 5. It is the Night ~~Time~~ TIME Prayer before going to sleep:-- something like "Now I lay me down to sleep." The Psalm says: "INTO THY HAND I COMMIT MY SPIRIT; THOU HAST REDEEMED ME, O LORD, FAITHFUL GOD."

This is the GOOD NIGHT PRAYER! JESUS IS IN ISOLATION! His disciples "FORSOOK HIM AND FLED." The scene at CALVARY is one of STARK LONELINESS! ..... There is no more devasting curse than loneliness! If a person is radically lonely and fears there is no remedy --- faith, hope, or love --- the "things that abide" ---- that becomes simply unbearable! They pray to God for guidance and then curse God for guiding them! They imagine utopias and then abandon all hope! They suspect all love is coercion! They

the ramblings of Job's friends: "I HAVE HEARD MANY SUCH THINGS; MISERABLE COMFORTERS ARE YOU ALL"(Job 16: 2).

Let me say it as carefully as I can: IT IS BECAUSE GOD INCARNATE KNOWS BITTER LONELINESS that "FATHER, INTO THY HANDS I COMMIT MY SPIRIT" rings true! God's Death is no easy passing over! It is no falling asleep or pie in the sky! THIS IS GOD'S DEATH! "GOTT SELBST IST TODD" --- and the Evening Prayer before going to sleep remains true for all of us: "FATHER, INTO THY HANDS I COMMIT MY SPIRIT." Amen.