Good Friday
West Henrietta - 1960

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IN NOMINE JESU

St. Luke 23: 48 And all the people that came together to that sight, beholding the things which were done, smote their breasts, and returned.

I KILLED THE PRINCE OF LIFE

Another Good Friday finds the world less ready than ever before to clai Christ as Savior and Lord. The Cross bearing the dead Christ seems so remote and so useless. Even the few prayers and petitions of the hopeful and the faithful sound weak and thin against the dreadful rumble of new rockets, and new missles, and new boastings about the conquests of space. Boastfully an American writer just recently said that America's creed has outstripped any single religion and that the ideals of its youth are all summed up now in the little sentence, IT CAN BE DONE! Since the writer removed it from the strength of faith it becomes an evil thing. What a miracle could happen for the Kingdom of God if each of us sai this evening, IT CAN BE DONE! What mountains could be brought low and what valle of sin filled up - what glories could shine from your life and mine and what love could the nations know - if we said, IT CAN BE DONE!.... Evidently this is not what the writer meant. He was talking about the race of missles across space and the conquests we have made with our rockets. He boasted of our ever widening range of television, the miracle of instantaneous radio news, the range and power of new bombs. Everything was counted up in terms of man's strength, man's widdom, man's mind and man's will. It is hard to find the way to bring the events of Good Friday into focus when people insist on keeping up with the race which makes bombs a blessing and a boast, and empty Space more precious than people and the blessing of God.

Once more we shall try. In spite of all the progress of modern science and the scores of human events that happen from day to day, there is only one event that shall continue to stand towering o'er the wrecks of time. - It is the day on which the Son of God was crucified. From that day on all history ~~would~~ was be divided into before and after. The world was changed. God had won a great, final, and eternal victory. He had won a victory which was decisive for all men. All men would now have to decide on their attitude over against the Cross. There could be no neutrality. From this moment on He would be either a stone of

stumbling or the Way of Life and to life.

You know the story. Most of you have heard it many times before. The church had condemned the Christ. To execute Him was not within their power. Early in the morning they rushed Him to Pilate, who should pass the sentence of death upon Him. Pilate suspects the truth. He tries to get rid of the case by sending King Jesus to King Herod. That does't work. He gets the case back again He tortures Jesus and thus attempts to arouse pity for Him in the hearts of the people. That doesn't work either. Next he offers the people a choice. He places Jesus next to Barabbas, whose hands were stained with blood. Whom will ye that I release unto you? Surely they will choose Jesus! But instead they cried, Give us Barabbas! - Pilate is finally at a loss, What shall I do with your King? -- Crucify Him! No, Pilate, that water will not wash away your guilt.

They lead Him to Calvary, bearing His Cross. And there they crucified Him. Priests and people mock Him. Rulers and riffraff deride Him. Hardened soldiers and hardened malefactors taunt Him. Out of heaven there comes a darkness that engulfts Him. My God, My God, why? Ask not, Thou Son of Man. Thou knowest. - Yes, I know. It is finished.... Father, into Thy hands I commend My Spirit. Silently He bows His head and gives His soul into the hands of His heavenly Father His body is a corpse. He is dead.

Then, God ~~speaks~~ spoke. The veil of the Temple was rent in two from top to bottom, the earth trembled and shook, the rocks rent, and the graves were opened. And all the people that came together to that sight, beholding the things which were done, smote their breasts, and returned. They were scared stiff. They were without God in the world. Their guilty consciences rose up to accuse them. Pounding their breasts, they went home. Forty-three days later, Peter pointed at these same people and bluntly told them, Ye killed the Prince of Life! Thank God they smote their breasts that day. From hearts filled with terror of ~~their sin~~ what they had done they cried, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then came to them the sweet and ever-glorious message of the This Jesus hath God raised up! Gospel: Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sin!

Are you a part of that crowd that smote their breasts on Calvary that day? Pray God that you are! The Gospel cannot get through to the hearts of men as long as they feel no need for that Gospel. God will not heal as long as men do not recognize their wounds. God will not save until men see their sin. Your sins and mine nailed Christ to the Cross just as surely as if we had swung the hammer ourselves. The voice of an accusing conscience steps up to confront each one of us: Thou art the man! Who nailed Christ to the Cross? You and I. Who killed the Prince of Life? You and I. This is the tragedy of our irreligious ag with its religious sentimentality, that men no longer want to be reminded of the blackness of their hearts and lives. They want peace where there is no peace. They want God without godliness. They want religion without repentance. It is about time we learned to gasp at our sins! May God help all of us to say today, I killed the Prince of Life! Only then will the all-embracing arms of the ~~Re-deemer~~ Savior reach out to enfold you with His redeeming love. Only then will you know the peace of His forgiveness, as He assures you, This I did for thee! Accept this Jesus as your Substitute who died on the cross for you, and though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. The victory of Christ over sin, death, & hell has become your victory. - It is finished!

If we have not learned it before, let us learn from the Crowd around Calvary today the futility of trying to live without God in the World. WITHOUT God there is no law and order, there is no love, no peace, no guidance in the world. We had neither the wisdom nor the power to fulfill His Commandments, and so He gave us Christ in order that all the Commandments might be fulfilled for us by Him. Never forget that whether we have broken one, or all of them, we could not help ourselves unless we recognized the grace of God in Christ, our Lord. God has been our help and everlasting joy. God has brought order into our lives and peace into our souls. God was in Christ on that first Good Friday reconciling the world unto Himself. Let us say it to ourselves again, WITHOUT GOD we are a fish out of water; we are a bird without wings; we are a drop of water blown into a blast furnace; we are a blade of grass stuck into the sand; we are a plane that

has lost its motor, and a rocket that has lost its power! God is the life in you - In Him we live and move and have our being - Christ died for all that they which live might not live henceforth unto themselves but unto Him who died for us and rose again.

Did you hear that? He died for all! He died for you! You are bought with a price - the price of His ~~holy and precious blood and His innocent suffering and death~~ blood, His suffering, His death. YOU BELONG TO GOD! You belong to God by right of redemption. More than you belong to your husband or wife or children, more than you belong to your community or your nation, more than you belong to anyone or anything else - YOU BELONG TO GOD! Only the devil himself would dare to say that this is not true. Only He would dare to attack the doctrine of God and grace and love in Jesus Christ. Only he will try to deprive you of the blessings of worship, the assurance of sins forgiven, the peace of Holy Communion, and the glory of Christ waiting for you in heaven at the end of your days. Be careful now - I have warned you soon enough! Any voice or any man who comes to you and tries to take the assurance of God, as your Maker, out of your heart, or the peace of Christ, your Redeemer, out of your soul, or the blessed guidance of the Holy Spirit, to bring holiness into your life, away from you - that man is a devil and all his words are designed to destroy you and to confuse you!

Have no illusions or delusions about this matter. Man, with all of his rockets, is not going to be able to search out God and storm the gates of Paradise in his own right and claim for himself a blessed eternity. There is no other way to heaven - none that even the wisest man on earth can claim to know - except the way which Jesus pointed out when He said clearly, I am the Way and the Truth and the Life, nonman cometh unto the Father but by Me. Did you hear the words - NO MAN - NOBODY -? Could He make it any plainer? There is no other way! The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost. - In this was manifested the love of God toward us that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for the ungodly. Do you want to know how anxious God is to have you Home where you belong? Look

at the picture which Jesus gives us of the father waiting for his lost son to com home. Look at the way the father runs to meet him and embrace him and to tell hi that he missed him - that he is happy to have him home. Then, Look at the Son of God hanging on the Cross, laying down His life, that you might be His own forever! Listen to Jesus say, - Father, forgive them - I am not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance - And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me - Come unto Me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest.

There is but one eternal and ever-glorious message which Good Friday proclaims. It is this: YOU BELONG TO GOD. By virtue of Christ and His Cross, YOU BELONG TO GOD! He who made the heavens and the earth - who holds all the spac that man criss-crosses with his missiles and his rockets, in the palm of His hand - that God is our Father. That God gave us Christ to be our Brother and our Friend. That God gave us Christ to be our Savior and Redeemer. Tonight as you stand under His Cross say it to yourself as you have never said it before. Say, I belong to God! Then go out and let our darkened and benighted world know it.

Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all.

Amen.