

So another day given us to savor and ponder upon. And so we begin with a picture, created in our minds -- and move to a word.
So perhaps it's best if you close your eyes.

They bring the one you love to Golgatha – the place of the skull, a hill on the outskirts of town: where thieves, common criminals, and revolutionaries are painfully put to death by crucifixion.

The Romans now quickly do their work. They stretch Jesus' arms. They hold his hand and wrist against the wood – and press the nail until it stabs his flesh.

Then with one heavy smash of the hammer, they drive the nail through -- and pain explodes throughout his body.

They quickly seize the other arm and agony explodes again.

Then raising up his knees so that his feet are flat against the wood, they hammer them fast, too.

You stand there gazing up at your lord and king – seeing his pain and agony - and think – is my soul worth this much?

And you hear him whisper --- “yes, because I love you!”

So today's word is **LOVE** – and you can open your eyes if they are closed.

Today, Jesus mounts the wood of the cross because of his LOVE for me and for you.

And that's the only reason, given the events of this day, that we can call today – GOOD --- the goodness of Good Friday is found in the compassion, the love, the mercy --- that Jesus has for each of us.

That love was apparent throughout Jesus' life --- but became even more so in the last few days of his life.

In the upper room – Jesus washed the feet of ALL his disciples – including the one he knew would betray him – and the one he knew would deny him. He washed ALL their feet.

While in the garden of Gethsemane, after the meal, Jesus said, “My soul is sorrowful even to death.”

And despite his sorrow and distress, he is very patient with Peter, James, and John – whom he has asked to stay awake and pray with him, but they fill the night with snores rather than prayers.

That same evening in the same place, Jesus shows his compassion to Judas, as he addresses him as “friend” even as Judas kisses him and turns him over to the Roman authorities.

After a long night of trials and tribulations: whipping, mockery, and abuse – Jesus is led out to be crucified.

In spite of his suffering, he continues to offer compassion. He comforts his Mother with a gentle look.

He must have smiled at Simon of Cyrene as he took the weight of the cross off of Jesus' shoulders.

What a gracious gift he gave to Veronica, who was courageous enough to maneuver around the centurions to wipe Jesus' bloody face.

He actually stopped and spoke to the woman of Jerusalem – offering them words of comfort.

Even while Jesus was suffocating on the cross, he endures the surging pain to lift himself enough to speak forgiveness and care for others:

-Forgive them, Father, for they know not what they do.

-Today you will be with me paradise.

-Woman, behold your son. Behold your mother.

Throughout it all – Jesus remained compassionate!

Are we compassionate when we are tired, hungry, or thirsty?

Do we have patience for those who do not understand?

Do we forgive our betrayers immediately?

Do we forgive those who mock and abuse us?

Do we forgive those who slander us or kill our reputation?

Do we appreciate large and small favors, gifts and help from others – as Jesus acknowledged Simon and Veronica?

Do we give comfort to others in distress?

Can we accompany others who are suffering?

Are we present to those grieving or dying?

Oh – sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble – were you there when they crucified my Lord?

Lord, help us to be compassionate as you are compassionate. Even in your ultimate sacrifice of giving your life in love for our sake – you showed us that love and mercy to others is still what God offers.

Lord, help us to learn these lessons on this GOOD Friday.