



SERMON 850

Good Friday

April 18, 2014

941st Week as Priest

767th Week at St Dunstan's

32nd Week at Epiphany-Tallassee

IS GOD DEAD?

Grace to you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

I don't know why this day is called "Good." There is nothing I can see to lend it such a name. Our Lord was beaten, mocked, and crucified on a cross. He died a bloody, horrific, senseless death. There is nothing good about this Friday.

The front cover of the April 8, 1966, edition of Time Magazine asked the question, "Is God Dead?" Modern theologians were declaring that the usefulness of God had worn out, that the old tired reasons for believing in a Supreme Being were no longer pertinent to today's society. They said that God was dead, for all practical purposes—meaning that humanity had no need of such belief, of the practice of religion, or of such a recipient of prayers.

Well I can tell you that on this day, 2014 years ago, God did die. And I do not mean a spiritual death, or a magic act, or a fraud perpetrated on an ancient people and carried through to this day. No, God did die. A physical suffering unto death.

His name was Jesus, and he was born in Bethlehem and raised in the village of Nazareth. Some parts of the story are unclear, but it seems that his mother Mary was betrothed to an older man by the name of Joseph, but this man was not the father of her child.

The boy Jesus lived a typical life in Galilee. His father was a carpenter. He had brothers and sisters. His family observed the Law, the 613 commandments of Judaism. At the age of eight days, he was presented for circumcision. At the age of 12 years, he was taken to the Temple in Jerusalem. And then there was a period of almost 20 years when we heard nothing from him.

Then one day he appeared out of the wilderness, proclaiming the Coming of the Kingdom of God. He was baptized by his cousin John in the River Jordan, and he spent the next three years going about the countryside, healing and teaching, working wonders, and performing miracles. Some say he raised a man from death.

And then he rode a donkey into the holy city Jerusalem and was proclaimed the Messiah, the Anointed One. In a few days, he was arrested, convicted, and killed by the Roman government, with the assistance and enthusiasm of the Sanhedrin, the Temple magisterium.

This is the day that Jesus of Nazareth was taken down from the cross. His body was washed and wound with a burial cloth, and he was laid in the tomb of a man named Joseph.

If the story ends there, then you and I are completely defeated. We are humiliated and foolish, and entirely hopeless. If that's all

there is to the story of Jesus of Nazareth, then we are a people most to be pitied.

512 words