

## Good Friday 2021

2020 did not go as planned.

2021, I have to say, is not going as I had planned.

You know, the older I get, and the more I think about it, my life hasn't gone as planned.

In 2008 we planted a church in London Ontario. There had been group of churches praying and planning and dreaming of a church. That must have planted the seeds and prepared the soil because it took off. By 2010 we were planning our first build. In 2011 we had renovated a warehouse to use as our ministry center. And the weekend of our grand opening an adjacent warehouse caught fire, and it all burned to the ground. Things were no longer going according to plan.

In 2018 I was on the ground in Littleton, going about our business. Then I got a call. And almost before I knew it I was moving my mission focus to Highlands Ranch and standing again on the shoulders of people and prayers and hopes and dreams that went before me, Connections was launched. God changed my plans, again.

At the start of 2020 we were working on our next steps. The 2020 vision like every church in the world. And then the rumors of a virus and talk of a pandemic and soon, plans were not just changing. Plans stopped. The plan was no plan at all. Nobody really knew what to do or what was going to happen.

To be honest it can be discouraging. It can be a bit exhausting. One step forward, two steps back. A break through here... and then a break down there.

On the day I am recording this, Tuesday, March 23, News is breaking of yet another mass shooting here in Colorado. 10 people were killed yesterday at a King Soopers in Boulder. We know one of the victims, the first police officer to arrive on the scene, shot and killed. The names of the other nine have yet to be released. But already we know that a nation is reading the headlines. A state is in shock. A community in the midst of tragedy. And we know that with ten victims that hundreds, hundreds of people will be affected. Hundreds of lives are forever changed and it hasn't even really sunk in yet. There will be tears, and weeping. Investigations and trials. The impact of this vicious, violent and evil act will send ripples out for years and years to come.

And this just as there is all the talk of the mass vaccinations, herd immunity, a flattened curve, kids going back to school, business opening, churches worshipping...

It doesn't feel like a setback.

It feels like the bottom has fallen out.

And for those closest to the victims, it has.

When we come to Good Friday it can all seem a giant set back. In fact it seems like the bottom has fallen out and it's all been, and it's all been shot to hell. Literally, shot to hell.

- Jesus is betrayed.
- Arrested.
- Put on trial.
- Condemned.
- Beaten.
- Marched through the streets of Jerusalem to a hill called Golgotha.
- And there he is nailed to a cross.
- And there he dies.
- He is taken down and laid in a tomb just before the sun sets.

## Good Friday 2021

It doesn't feel like a step back. Not even a few steps back. It it seems like the whole thing blowing to pieces! It feels like Lemony Snickers a series of unfortunate events, but worse. If you've read any of the series, or seen the show, it is exactly what the title points towards, a series of tragic and unfortunate events that seems never ending. The cross can hit is like a series of tragic events that lead to the most criminal death of the most holy man to ever live.

Except that is not Good Friday at all!

Good Friday is not a series of unfortunate events.

Good Friday is not a step back from the plan of God and the trajectory of Jesus' life.

Every step and stage of Good Friday is a step forward in the fulfillment of God's glorious plan.

Every step closer to the cross is a step for our salvation.

Every step forward is a station that fulfill a prophesy in the foreshadowed and predefined purpose of God!

That's why it's called GOOD FRIDAY. Good Friday!!! It sounds ignorant at best. Insensitive is more like it. But down right offensive! Good Friday?! The day that Jesus is crucified is GOOD FRIDAY!

Yes. The shocking answer is yes, it is GOOD FRIDAY. It's Good Friday because it's all part of the good and glorious plan of Salvation! It's good Friday because the old covenant is being fulfilled and the new covenant breaking forth. It's good Friday because the sins of the world are being atoned for. It's good Friday because your sins, and my sins, are being washed away. It's good Friday because the death you and I deserved is itself dying on the cross.

It's good Friday because, In the now immortal words of Shadrach Meshach Lockridge,

***It's Friday, but Sundays Coming!***

It's Friday, the day of the cross, but Sunday, the day of resurrection, is coming!

Read back over John 18-19 on you own and take note that nothing is a shock or surprise or a set back for Jesus. Take note how each and every step is ordained by God and fulfilled by Jesus:

- Jesus leads them to the Garden.
- Soldiers come and Jesus announces his name.
- Peter intervenes and Jesus stays his sword.
- Jesus stands before the religious leaders and declares that he is a king.
- Pilate declares he has the power to kill, or save Jesus.
- Jesus declares he has no power except that which God gave him.
- As he is hanging on the cross he calls upon John to care for his mother.
- From the cross forgiving those who crucified him.
- And declaring, "It is finished" with his final breath.

This is anything but a series of unfortunate events.

This is the very wisdom and power of GOD.

This is the plan of salvation!

As Good Friday is a day for somber reflection on the cross of Jesus, I want to finish with a brief walk through the stations of the cross. Followers of Christ have found great meaning and great insight by walking with Jesus from the Garden of Gethsemane where he prayed, to the tomb where he is laid. It has evolved over time. What I find most instructive was a revision of the stations made in the 1990's called the "scriptural stations."

**1st Station of the Cross: Jesus on the Mount of Olives (Luke 22:39-46).**

Jesus prayed on the Mount of Olives for His Father to take the cup from His hand that meant His death on the cross; it demonstrated the humanity of Jesus ([Luke 22:39-46](#)).

**2nd Station of the Cross: Jesus is betrayed by Judas and arrested (Luke 22:47-48).**

Judas not only became one of the most despised characters in history when he betrayed Jesus; he also became a haunting reminder to every Christian that there have been times they have fallen to temptation to sin.

**3rd Station of the Cross: Jesus is condemned by the Sanhedrin (Luke 22:66-71).**

The Sanhedrin council, made up of seventy priests and scribes and one high priest, demanded that Pilate execute Jesus. This incident serves as a warning for all Christians to be careful not to exalt ourselves by self-righteously judging others.

**4th Station of the Cross: Peter denies Jesus (Luke 22:54-62).**

When Jesus was arrested, a number of those present at the time accused Peter of being one of Jesus' followers ([Luke 22:54-62](#)). As previously predicted by Jesus, Peter denied knowing Jesus three times.

**5th Station of the Cross: Jesus is judged by Pontius Pilate (Luke 23:13-25).**

Even today, the message of salvation by the power and choice of God, not by our own efforts, is unpopular. Human beings in their fallen nature always want to achieve their own salvation, or at least have a part in it, so we can claim at least a part of the glory. But salvation is of the Lord, who shares His glory with no one ([Isaiah 42:8](#)).

**6th Station of the Cross: Jesus is scourged and crowned with thorns (Luke 22:63-65).**

Over five hundred years before Mary gave birth to Jesus, Isaiah prophesied that Jesus would be wounded for our transgressions ([Isaiah 53:3-6](#)) and bruised for our inequities and that by His stripes we would be healed.

**7th Station of the Cross: Jesus takes up His cross (John 19:17).**

When Jesus took up His cross, He was carrying more than wood. Unknown to the many spectators that day, Jesus was carrying the sins of mankind, facing the punishment those sins deserved, which He was about to suffer on man's behalf. Jesus exhorts us in [Matthew 16:24](#), "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me."

**8th Station of the Cross: Simon of Cyrene helps Jesus carry His cross (Luke 23:26).**

[Simon of Cyrene](#) might be considered a victim of circumstance. He had most likely come to Jerusalem for the Passover festivities and probably knew little about the proceedings at hand.

**9th Station of the Cross: Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem (Luke 23:27-31).**

Even while suffering great pain and personal humiliation, Jesus' concern was not for Himself, but for the lives and souls of those who faced the danger of eternal damnation because of the sin in their lives.

**10th Station of the Cross: Jesus is crucified (Luke 23:33-47).**

It is difficult, over two thousand years after the fact, to imagine the horror of the moment as those closest to Jesus were forced to helplessly stand by as the spikes were driven through His

hands and feet into the timber on which He would take His last breath in human form ([Luke 23:44-46](#)).

**11th Station of the Cross: Jesus promises His kingdom to the believing thief (Luke 23:43).**

It is possible that the thief being crucified next to Jesus was able to grasp the concept that life was not ending for Jesus, but that He was transcending the physical world into eternal promise from which He came to provide for humanity.

**12th Station of the Cross: Jesus on the cross speaks with His mother and disciples (John 19:26-27).**

Jesus, in His dying moment, was still putting the needs of others before His own as He selflessly committed the care of His mother to His beloved disciple John ([John 19:27](#)).

**13th Station of the Cross: Jesus dies on the cross (Luke 23:44-46).**

At the moment of Jesus' death, the curtain in the Temple, which separated men from the holy of holies, tore from top to bottom. This was terrifying for all the Jews who witnessed the event, who did not realize it signified the end to the Old Covenant and the beginning of the New Covenant.

**14th Station of the Cross: Jesus is laid in the tomb (Luke 23:50-54).**

After Jesus died and was taken down from the cross, He was laid to rest in a tomb provided by a man named Joseph, from the Jewish town of Arimathea ([Luke 23:50-54](#)). Joseph happened to also be a member of the Sanhedrin, but was opposed to the trial and crucifixion of Jesus.

Jesus' great sacrifice not only became the atonement for man's sins, but it also became the victory that would defeat and overcome death and the curse of sin.