

Connecting with the Sunday Readings

Fifth Sunday in Lent **Gospel Word**
John 12:20–33

As we draw closer to the passion and death of Jesus, we are invited to think about why *death* is such an important part of what must happen to Jesus. A question that Christians often ask about **Good** Friday is, “Why is it **good**?” Why does Jesus say that we should take up our cross and follow him? How is this connected with the image of the seed falling into the ground, dying, and then yielding much fruit? Doesn’t this indicate that death and life are deeply connected, and are not opposites? So, how is death connected with life? These are serious questions, but as we get closer to Holy Week, the tone (and spirit) of the Church’s readings takes on more weight. Heavy questions are good for us.

—by David Thomas, PhD, Co-Director, The Bethany Family Institute

Living the Word

Part of the reason for the question of why **Good** Friday is called **good**, is connected to our thoughts and feelings about suffering in our own life and death. Life is something that we can invest in. We can work hard to make our lives better. In our culture, that might mean making a good living, having power to make important decisions, having freedom to do things we enjoy, and being able to buy what we desire. Mostly, it’s about. We might even include on our “want list” some very good things like a good relationship with God, and eternal life with God.

But the tone of the Gospel reading suggests that making our lives better follows a paradoxical path. The paradox comes when we hear the words of Jesus saying that for us to live we have to die, and for us to receive we have to give. Jesus would have to die before there could be a Resurrection. It is through his death and Resurrection that a new creation begins. Death is not final; it is the passage to the next part: eternal life with God. The seed must die for the fruit to come forth.

One-line Prayer

Dear God,
Help us to understand that in giving of our lives to you, we receive a greater portion of life back in return.
Amen.