

“Feel All the Feels” of Good Friday

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A phrase often heard today is “feel all the feels,” meaning allow yourself to experience the full range of emotions that accompany big moments rather than pushing them aside. Many of life’s most pivotal experiences hold contrasting emotions. The birth of a baby can bring abundant joy alongside deep exhaustion. The passing of a grandparent may bring grief for our loss but also peace in the promise of a reunion.

Good Friday can also stir up a similar mix of emotions. On this day “He gave His life to atone for the sins of all mankind (*The Living Christ*).” As disciples of Jesus Christ, we may feel profound **love** from the Savior who gave His life for us, **sorrow** for the suffering He endured, and **rejoicing** in the victory He secured through His atoning sacrifice. Let’s consider each of these emotions and why they can deepen our worship on Good Friday.

Love & Gratitude

Who wouldn’t want those in their family or church group to feel an outpouring of love from the Savior? Good Friday offers a beautiful time to soak in the Savior’s love by discussing the event that he defined as his greatest act of love. He taught, “Greater love hath no man than this, than a man lay down his life for his friends (John 15:13).

When my children were young, I felt unsure how to commemorate Good Friday if I only thought of the sad part. In fact, I found myself wanting to skip past it. That perspective changed as I began to directly connect the Savior’s death with His love. Love is something that even young children can understand. 1 John 4:10 NIV contains a beautiful truth, “This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.”

Simple activities can help us connect the Savior’s death with His love. Adults may want to take time mediating on the Savior’s love shown in His sacrifice. Youth or children might create a small craft featuring both a heart and a cross, or bake cookies or bread shaped like hearts and crosses as a reminder that the Savior’s sacrifice was an expression of love.

Sorrow & Suffering

While I cherish focusing on the Savior’s love, I feel like I have not fully worshipped on Good Friday unless I also make space to reflect on what the Savior willingly suffered.

Scripture records the brutal mocking He endured, the scourging ordered by Pilate, the sharp nails driven into His hands and feet, the crown of thorns pressed upon His head, the six long hours on the cross as He struggled for breath, and finally His death.

Around the world, many countries commemorate this day in big ways. Some communities hold public processions reenacting the Savior carrying His cross. Others designate Good Friday as a day of mourning, eliminating work and festivities. Some congregations conclude a Good Friday service at 3 p.m, the traditional hour of His death, and allow several minutes of silence to symbolically sit and pray at the foot of the cross.

What might be appropriate in our own homes or church settings? It can be meaningful to display or discuss items that remind us of elements of the Crucifixion like a large nail, fine purple cloth, a cup of vinegar, a cross, and a crown of thorns, white cloth like the burial clothing. Similar to how we read Luke 2 at Christmas, we can read together one of the crucifixion accounts (Matthew 26, Mark 15, Luke 23 or John 19). Reading the Savior's suffering can be hard and also healing. For those of us experiencing tremendous pain and heartache, only the suffering Savior helps.

Victory & Rejoicing

Though Good Friday events are solemn, they do not leave us without hope. The scriptures describe signs at the Savior's death: three hours of darkness, an earthquake, and even graves opening. Another sign of His death was the temple veil tearing in two.

This veil, which was woven from thick high quality material in shades of red, blue, and purple (Exodus 26:31) was far larger than many of us may imagine. Within the temple, it separated the holy place from the Most Holy Place, where only the high priest could enter. Its being torn in two teaches a profound truth: because of Jesus Christ's atoning sacrifice, we can all enter the presence of God.

We do not need to wonder who ultimately wins. Scripture makes it clear that through the cross, Satan is conquered. Hebrews 2:14–15 NIV explains that through His death, Christ broke “the power of him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil...” Another passage declares, “We have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus...opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body” (Hebrews 10:19–20, NIV).

It is no surprise that Eliza R. Snow wrote of “the triumph of the cross.” (Eliza R. Snow, cited in “Lucy Mack Smith, History, 1845,” 334, The Joseph Smith Papers, accessed August 25, 2020,

<https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/lucy-mack-smith-history-1845/343>.)

Jesus has won! While Good Friday is not a time for loud celebration, it is appropriate to rejoice in the reality of the Savior's victory, both on a cosmic scale and in our personal lives. He is both the Redeemer of the world and our individual Savior. The adversary's power in our own lives diminishes the closer we are to Jesus Christ. What a beautiful truth to ponder on Good Friday.

Take Time for Each Emotion

Love, sorrow, and victory are deeply felt emotions. Rather than avoiding them, we can let each draw us closer to Jesus Christ. As we intentionally make space to feel these emotions, whether on our own or with others, we can honor the sacred events of this holy day in a worshipful way.

By choosing to "feel all the feels" of Good Friday, we can be filled with gratitude for Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, who loved us enough to suffer and die for us.