

SERMON FOR GOOD FRIDAY 2022

TEXT: JOHN 19:30, HEBREWS 12:2

THEME: THE JOY OF JESUS

30 When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, "It is finished," and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

Look to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

In the name of Jesus:

Olena is a mom who lives in Poland and cleans for a living. She was one of a few women on the night train moving east. The lights on the train were turned off, so that the train would avoid detection from enemy patrols. The corridors of the train were only illuminated by the lights from cell phones, offering a glow in the darkness, giving news of the ongoing war, or reading messages from loved ones who were now seeking protection in bomb shelters. The train was packed with men who were on their way to the front lines to fight the Russians in the present war in Ukraine. The cars would move along the track, at a speed no greater than 30 miles per hour, slowing down when there was the sound of bombs or missiles landing nearby. The trek was a five day journey of almost 2100 miles round trip, beginning at the Polish border,

going to the brink of the enemy lines, only to return to Poland mission not accomplished.

Oleana was on the train in order to retrieve her 12 year old son, Nazairy, who was left behind enemy lines, in enemy territory in the opening onslaught. Olena kept up on all of the reports from the war zone.

Her mother discouraged her from making the trip, telling her that it was too dangerous. Wait in Poland until things calm down, mom told Oleana. The boy is relatively safe with us. But then Olena got a message that the bridge, five miles from her home, was blown up. The shelling was increasing. Olena needed to go see her son, to be with him during this time. She called taxi companies but none were going into a war zone. A man overheard her plight and said that he would drive her back home for \$ 100. She, being desperate, gave him the money and he then took the cash and drove off without her.

With no other options available, Oleana waited at the train station, hoping to purchase a ticket. After waiting at the train station for 24 hours she learned that there was one seat left, so Olena bought the ticket and found herself on the way back home, into a war zone, ignoring her mother's warnings and the warnings of others. She went because she loved her son. She wanted her son back. When she was asked why she went, Oleana simply

replied, “ You go because your child is there, because in that moment, there is no fear.”

There is no happy ending to this story, at least not yet. The ending still needs to be written. Olena still waits for an opportunity to be reunited with her son, Nazairy. Transportation was halted soon after that train set off for the journey, and with that, the train returned to its place of departure. Nazairy remains safe at home with his grandparents. He spends his days playing computer games and helps out in the family garden. When it is safe to do so, he visits his uncle and 19 year old cousin who live nearby. At night he watches the news with his grandma. He looks out the window occasionally and sees Russian troops riding in trucks with a big white Z painted on the front of the vehicles. When he is out, he leaves them alone, following the family’s advice, “if you leave them alone they will leave you alone.”

The latest news is that Olena may try another trip back to retrieve her son. The cost of a ticket, though, on the train has gone up to over \$1000. But Olena will try again to bring her son out of that war zone. Why would she do this? Because, Olena says, without Nazariy, there is just emptiness. You go because your child is there, you go because in that moment, there is no fear. How can you go on? I just don’t know. I just don’t know where I can find joy

when I am without my child.” So Oleana continues on, seeking to save her son caught in the middle of a war zone.

Such is the love a parent has for a child. On a much greater scale, such is the love that the Father has for you. The Bible says that while we were yet sinners, God the Father loved us. God loves sinners. God loves you. And that is the reason why Christ came down from heaven, to be your Savior from the power of sin, Satan, and death. Christ left His heavenly throne, leaving behind His glory and honor, to become like us in every way yet without sin. Jesus, though He was the Son of God didn't count it as an advantage, but rather He emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men, and being found in human form he humbled himself to the point of dying on the cross. (Phil. 2: 5-8). Jesus suffered every attack and every temptation that the Enemy called the Devil could throw at Him. But through it all, Jesus remained faithful, He was tempted as we are tempted yet without sin. Finally Satan in rage threw all He had at Jesus. Nailed to a cross, forsaken by all, even the Father, Jesus tasted death on the cross joyfully for you. As the prophet Isaiah writes: Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. He was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed. The

Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; He was like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, he poured out his soul to death, he bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors” (Is 53).

That is why Jesus gave His life willingly on the cross, for He was willing to be forsaken on the cross, suffer hell on the cross, to die an eternal death on the cross so that you would not spend an eternity without Him. Jesus did this out of love, willingly, giving up His Spirit and declaring that nothing else needs to be done to bring sinners into a relationship with the Father. Jesus has done it all. It is finished!

Jesus did this for the joy that was set before Him, the joy of calling you His brother and sister, a child of His Heavenly Father. For the joy that was set before Him, Jesus endured the cross, despised the shame, and is now seated at the right hand of God.

So now whoever you are and whatever you have done, your sins have been washed in the blood of the Lamb. Now there is no emptiness. Christ fills you with His Spirit. And nothing will separate you from His love.

Jesus has said that in this world you will have trouble, trials and tribulations. We live in a world that is akin to living behind enemy lines. The Devil is called the Prince of the Air, and he prowls around seeking any and

everyone he can devour. But Jesus in His death and resurrection has conquered the enemy. He has made you one with the Father, you are called children of the Father, all because of Jesus. So when the enemy Satan attacks, you have One who has defeated the enemy now and forever. Jesus' comforting words are not to be anxious, not to be afraid. God loves you and forgives you. Jesus has risked all, even death on the cross, to reunite you with the Father. The mission of your salvation has been accomplished! It is finished! You belong to Him, now and forever!

Amen