GOOD FRIDAY

The seventeenth in a series of sermons entitled “Good News for Young and Old” preached by Dr John Thiel, Pastor of Holy Cross Lutheran Church, “Where the Good News never stops”, cnr Charles and Florence Sts, Murray Bridge

**Basis:** Hebrews 10:16-25  
**Date:** Friday 10th April, 2009 (G F)

1. The way certain days and dates are remembered eg black Friday etc  
   **September 11**

   It is interesting to me how bushfires are remembered by giving special names to the days on which bushfires occurred. More recently we have been very much aware of the Victorian bushfires now known as Black Saturday. Over two hundred people died in these fires and many houses and other buildings were destroyed. Before that in 19… we had the Ash Wednesday fires, which received the title “Ash” because they occurred on the first day of Lent Ash Wednesday. Many people died in these fires. Then there were the fires which made a lasting impact on me because of the sign on the old Adelaide-Murray Bridge road, which said, “Remember Black Friday.” Somehow I knew Black Friday referred to bushfires, but it wasn’t until I looked it up on the internet that I realized that these fires occurred in Victoria and the Adelaide Hills on January 13th, 1939. Prior to that there were the fires known as Black Thursday on February 6th, 1851!

   Most people know the meaning of the term “September 11” following the terrorist attacks on American targets on that day in 2001.

2. This day has come to be known as Good Friday – though no-one knows the origin of the term

   Today we gather together to commemorate a Friday which has been given the title “Good.”

   No-one seems to know exactly why this day came to be known as Good Friday. Some say it was first known as God Friday. Others tell us that it certainly had other names earlier in Christianity, including Black Friday.

   This day is the most disgraceful day in the history of the world. God sent his beloved only Son Jesus Christ into this world. He lived in this world with love, wisdom, concern and care, and good deeds. But on this wretched day, human beings executed the only person ever who deserved no punishment and no penalty. We executed God!

   I therefore ask, “How can ‘good’ be a suitable word to describe this day?”

3. Reasons why it is good

   Our Bible reading from Hebrews points out some of the good features of this day.

   (1) we have forgiveness of sins
Because of Jesus’ death, forgiveness of our sins has been won. The words from Jeremiah have been fulfilled: “I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more” (Jeremiah 31:34).

Hebrews puts it this way, “Our hearts have been sprinkled clean from an evil conscience.”

The thirsty Murraylands are scorched and dry. Even trees are dying. The river is low. Farmers are understandably desperate. The thirsty land could well symbolize our sin and lack of hope.

But Jesus’ death has made forgiveness rain down on our spiritual lives. It is splashing all over us. We who are starting to forget what rain sounds like, a being washed clean with and abundance of God’s grace. It’s raining and it’s pouring!

(2) we have the way to eternal life

What logically follows from the forgiveness of sins is the assurance of eternal life.

The Old Testament people’s temple had a place known as the holy of holies, representing the presence of God. There was a curtain in front of this part of the temple, past which only the High Priest could go on the Day of Atonement. Carefully offered sacrifices had to be offered.

But at the time Jesus died, the curtain in the temple was torn in two. Our text says that “we have confidence to enter the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain” (vv 19,20). The way to God is now open. By his death Jesus has torn through the dividing curtain. We may have confidence in where we are going.

Nelson Mandela sat in prison for many long years. Now he has been released and afforded the respect which is his due. The heavy clanging prison doors have been flung open. In the same way, the doors of our caged life have been flung open. Flung open to eternity. We can proceed right out of this mortal life into eternal life!

4. How to celebrate it and hold it as good

The concluding words of our text could be entitled, “Don’t take it for granted”: “Let us hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who has promised is faithful. And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching” (vv23-25).

Our faith is so good it’s worth hanging onto. Like the person in the parable who found the pearl of great price and sold everything so that he could possess that pearl. That’s why the thing we most prize is “Jesus Christ the crucified.” That’s why we “cherish the old rugged cross.” We have a fantastic faith. Let’s hang onto it. Let’s hang onto it even tighter than a mountaineer clings to the rock face when he is climbing. This is valuable. This is not to be let go!

An essential way of holding on to our faith is meeting together for worship including word and sacraments. As that day approaches we should meet more not less! We need to encourage each other and spur each other on to love and good deeds.
To do these things is to acknowledge this Friday as “Good”!

5. **May we appreciate anew the most special allocation made to any day ever!**

So we have our elevenths and we have our black days, and even ash days, but the day which seemed to be the most unjust day ever, is the day which for us will always fully deserve the title, “Good”! Amen.