

A Worship Minute.....
-by Chris Armstrong

The Goodness of Good Friday. What a supreme paradox. We now call the day Jesus was crucified, Good. Many believe this name simply evolved—as language does. They point to the earlier designation, "God's Friday," as its root. (This seems a reasonable conjecture, given that "goodbye" evolved from "God be with you.")

Whatever its origin, the current name of this holy day offers a fitting lesson to those of us who assume (as is easy to do) that "good" must mean "happy." We find it hard to imagine a day marked by sadness as a good day.

Of course, the church has always understood that the day commemorated on Good Friday was anything but happy. Sadness, mourning, fasting, and prayer have been its focus since the early centuries of the church. Many Christians have historically kept their churches unlit or draped in dark cloths. Yet, despite—indeed because of—its sadness, Good Friday is truly good. Its sorrow is a godly sorrow. It is like the sadness of the Corinthians who wept over the sharp letter from their dear teacher, Paul, convicted of the sin in their midst. Hearing of their distress, Paul said, "My joy was greater than ever." Why? Because such godly sorrow "brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret" (2 Cor. 7:10).

I like to think the linguistic accident that made "God's Friday" into "Good Friday" was no accident at all. It was God's own doing—a sharp, prophetic jab at a time and a culture obsessed by happiness. The commemoration of Christ's death reminds us of the human sin that caused this death. And we see again that salvation comes only through godly sorrow—both God's and, in repentance, ours. To pursue happiness, we must first experience sorrow. He who goes forth sowing tears returns in joy. At the same time, of course, Good Friday recalls for us the greatness and wonder of God's love—that He should submit to death for us.