



## CHRIST CHURCH CRANBROOK

When I was maybe 10 or 11 years old, my grandmother was in hospice and the family was gathering to say their goodbyes. And I'll never forget walking into that hospital room, just my mom and me. She looked so frail. The room was dim, and for a moment I almost thought I might have been intruding. But then she saw me and a big smile came over her face. She reached out to hug me and we started to talk. She asked how school was going, how my friends were doing. But I was nervous and I quickly ran out of things to say. I noticed a TV over in the corner of the room, so I asked if she'd seen anything good lately. She said, you know, Christopher, I just don't have any interest in television anymore. I guess as a kid that somehow struck me. She said, right now. I just want to be with you. I just want to be with my family and my friends.

My grandparents had always been kind of larger-than-life figures to me. They famously met as teenagers when my grandfather was a lifeguard and rescued my grandmother from almost drowning and fell in love with her on the spot. They were married all their lives. They had a house up in Tahoe that we would spend our Christmases at. They had a campsite in Northern California where we would bring friends from school to fish and hike. They hosted these huge family gatherings where cousins would fly in from all over the country. Yet they were the kinds of people that always had room for the unexpected guest.

And so to see her with all of that having now fallen away, such a big life reduced to such a small room and a simple request to be with those she loved, looking back over her life I see now that had been in one way or another what she was doing all along, creating space to be with those she loved. My grandmother was the wisdom holder of the family, a devoted Christian, the only one, who had taught me so many things, but it was this truth – this truth about life that has stayed with me ever since.

Good Friday, I think is a day for such truths because at the foot of the cross, we too can see ourselves and our lives more clearly. Because it's at the cross where the pretending ends or the distractions stop, and our excuses fall silent. On most other days, we get by just fine with the stories that we tell ourselves about ourselves, the ones that we've spent our life polishing and rehearsing, the ones that help us to feel safe, to help us keep up appearances, that give us a sense of purpose. On most days, we can rely on our roles, our titles, our accomplishments,

our competence, maybe even our charm. On most days, we can hide behind our calendars and our responsibilities, our busyness, to find a sense of self.

But not today. Good Friday is the day when it all falls away, and we are invited to get real and to ask ourselves, who am I? Who am I really? Not the version that's productive or impressive, not the one that works so hard to meet expectations or to earn approval, not the version that wants to be in control or at least pretends to be, and certainly not the one that insists, despite all the evidence to the contrary, that everything is always just fine. Good Friday is the day for the real you, the aching you, the wounded you, the disappointed you, the still grieving you, the fearful you, the exhausted you.

It's a day for that part of you that has also at times, stood, falsely accused before the crowds, bullied and ridiculed, shamed, and perhaps even spat upon. Today is also the day for the you that couldn't fight back, that kept it all in and buried it deep down. The you that allowed the negative and the false narratives to take hold, the protective shields to go up. The shields we create to keep us safe, but that can also keep us separate.

I think the cross invites us into a kind of sacred honesty. To not only name the aches that we carry, but the hopes and the dreams we've given up. And honesty that invites us to sit with pain and with the ones who caused it. To tell the truth about what sustains us and the parts of our lives that no longer do. It's a day to name that which we truly fear and which can make our hearts truly sing. Good Friday does not ask us to be heroic, just honest, because God meets us in our honesty. God can heal honesty. God can bless honesty. God can redeem honesty.

When Jesus hangs on the cross, He's not performing. He's not pretending. He's offering himself fully and honestly, and all the horror, all the brutality, all the shame, laid bare for all to see. His followers who not long ago were arguing about who would sit at His right hand, who would be first or second, have largely fled. The crowds who once pressed in to hear Him have turned away. The powers that be, so threatened by His message and His ministry have moved on. And Jesus hangs on the cross, left not as a symbol of power but as a revelation of God's grace and love because that's all that's left. And perhaps, maybe that's all there ever was, or all there ever needed to be. Grace and love.

The story that disciples had told themselves about themselves and about how this was supposed to end has fallen away. And they're left with Jesus on the cross, embodying the very love and forgiveness in death, that they struggled so much to understand in life. The cross is not God demanding something from us. It's God wanting to be with us once more, even in the dark, the most dark and the most desolate corners of our lives. So that we too might experience a love that will not shrink back, that will never desert us, that does not need us to pretend or to

perform, that even death cannot overcome. And it's when everything else is stripped away but that love that the truth at the foot of the cross can become the birthplace of connection. Where mercy and grace come alive, where reconciliation and healing take root, where imagination and possibility can blossom once more and new and unending life begins.

At our staff meeting last week, Kellie Herdade, our family and youth minister, she offered a meditation by the poet, Oriah Mountain Dreamer, and I thought I might end with it today because it speaks to this theme. Its title is “The Invitation.”

“It doesn't interest me what you do for a living. I want to know what you ache for and if you dare to dream of meeting your heart's longing.

It doesn't interest me how old you are. I want to know if you will risk looking like a fool for love, for your dream, for the adventure of being alive.

It doesn't interest me what planets are squaring your moon. I want to know if you have touched the centre of your own sorrow, if you have been opened by life's betrayals or have become shriveled and closed from fear.

I want to know if you can sit with pain, mine or your own, without moving to hide it, or fade it, or fix it.

I want to know if you can be with joy, mine or your own; if you can dance with wildness and let the ecstasy fill you to the tips of your fingers and toes without cautioning us to be careful, be realistic, remember the limitations of being human.

It doesn't interest me if the story you are telling me is true. I want to know if you can disappoint another to be true to yourself. If you can bear the accusation of betrayal and not betray your own soul.

I want to know if you can see beauty even when it is not pretty every day. And if you can source your own life from its presence.

I want to know if you can live with failure, yours and mine, and still stand at the edge of the lake and shout to the silver of the full moon, 'Yes.'

It doesn't interest me to know where you live or how much money you have. I want to know if you can get up after the night of grief and despair, weary and bruised to the bone and do what needs to be done to feed the children.

It doesn't interest me who you know or how you came to be here. I want to know if you will stand in the centre of the fire with me and not shrink back.

It doesn't interest me where or what or with whom you have studied. I want to know what sustains you from the inside when all else falls away.

I want to know if you can be alone with yourself in the empty moments of life, and if you like the company you keep as much as I do.”

Toward the end of this service, when you come forward to the cross, I invite you to let it reveal the real you. Because it's at the foot of the cross where our truth is both safe and sacred, where our true selves can meet God's true love, and where life, real life truly begins.

***“When Everything Falls Away”- Good Friday 4/3/26  
AudioClerk Transcription***

Amen.