

GOSPEL MESSAGE

April 3, 2026

GOOD FRIDAY

The Victorious Victim

Who is in control on Good Friday? Pilate? Caiaphas? The chief priests? If one person seems to be least in control, it is Jesus. He is passed along from soldiers to Annas, to Caiaphas, and to Pilate, who finally hands him over to be crucified. He is subject to the whims of the crowd and the scourge of the Roman whip.

So many people have power in John's story of Jesus' crucifixion. But in this week of ironies and paradoxes, that power is largely an illusion. The chief priests get what they want, but they are captive to their own envy. Pilate is driven by fear. The soldiers are cogs in a brutal Roman military machine. This is often the case when power is used *over* or *against* others. While the oppressed are the victims, the oppressors themselves are caught in controlling, dehumanizing forces. It is no surprise that Pilate dismisses Jesus' words about truth; he lives in a web of falsehood.

In all these illusions, Jesus' own position is not what it first appears either. He may be mostly passive, but he is not a powerless victim. He is exactly where he chooses to be. Despite appearances, Jesus goes to his death as an act of might. On the cross, he wins the victory of love over all evil. Because he suffers, he appears weak. This seeming weakness, however, is the choice of love that swallows up sin and death in the power of mercy and life.

This is power *for* us. It is power for you, for your salvation. May we reflect deeply on the mystery of this paradox at the heart of the gospel: The cross is not Christ's defeat; it is his victory. Sin and death no longer rule. Jesus is Lord, and he rules with love and forgiveness. This is the gift he gives to the world.

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