

2016 Good Friday Meditation by Michael Tutton

Father into your hands I commend my spirit; and with these words, he died.

While I'm sad when I read this sentence, I also feel great gratitude.

I'm very grateful to know that Jesus, like me, needs God.

We confess in the Nicene Creed that Jesus is begotten not made, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God. But Jesus is also human. As Jesus is dying, he needs God's hands to hold him as he falls, just as we do.

Jesus confronts death in Chapter 11, when Mary and Martha have lost Lazarus. It makes Jesus so sad.

The gospel says: "Jesus Wept."

Jesus is said to be "groaning in the spirit" as he meets human suffering (John 11.33, 38). It is a moment when the Son is struggling, not unlike many of us.

However, the Son perseveres, and carries out the greatest of the Gospel's signs in raising Lazarus.

He also sets in motion the decision that will lead the Jerusalem councils to seek his death (John 11.50-53).

When we read "Jesus wept" in John's gospel, we realize we have reached a pivot point in Jesus's life story, leading up to this moment of his own death.

The beginning of the Gospel of John tells us that Jesus was with God from the beginning, but nonetheless there are times when Jesus has to have great trust to take a step forward toward his destiny, and healing Lazarus was one of those points where he God fully enters into him and guides him. That is what is occurring at the moment of his death as well.

C.S. Lewis speaks of a miraculous process underway in the Gospels where "the great enters the little." Jesus's dependence and yet union with God is very moving, as he lets the great enter the little.

I have this photo that Cathy took of my three-year-old daughter, Jenny, that I keep at my desk. It shows us as we're floating in the tea-coloured waters of a shallow

Cape Breton lake, and I'm holding her as she floats with her water wings, and her head is thrown back and floating on the water.

We're not looking at each other. Her eyes are closed, I'm looking off. But from the resting expression on her face, you can tell she knows she's fine, and I know I'm fine and we're just there, and my arms are underneath, just in case.

We're depending on one another, we're enjoying being with one another, even if we have differences. And when I look at that photo, sometimes I wish I could see her in person at that moment.

Sometimes as I remember Jesus saying to his father he is committing himself to him, I wonder if he missed his father and wanted to return to him.

I recently viewed a video about Raffaella, a woman with Down Syndrome who lives in a L'Arche home in Bologna, Italy. It talks about how she takes care of her aging father. In her video, she says she's sad her father has grown old and needs a wheelchair. And she regrets the loss of things they did together, like dancing flamenco.

She says: "I like to caress his face, to give him my hand and for him to caress my face. I love my father. I need him and he needs me."

It's important to know that God and Jesus and the Spirit are a relationship, flowing in and through one another.

C.S. Lewis, the author of the Narnia stories, says Jesus is dying and going down a road that God in His own nature has never walked. Through Jesus, God shares in retreat, submission, and now death, because God has become man.

It is good to know that God loves us so much that God is willing to do this for us, and so to assist us to return to Him and to be healed as a result. And then to work in the world and to commit to fulfilling our responsibilities to bring Jesus' kingdom to this time and place.

So on this day – and in this sentence – Jesus dies. He falls into the hands of his father and can rest there.

But the life-giving forces unleashed in this moment of death are going to release the Father's nature into a broken world.

They're going to allow each one of us to become what John's gospel calls "children of God," (1.12) as we will strive to remember we too need God.