

Good Friday  
April 22, 2011

"It is finished." John 18:30

Crucifixion At The Crossroads

It seems our journey has come to an end. Here  
We meet a crossroads.

But remember the beginning?  
In the beginning was the Word.  
    The word was with God.  
    The word was God  
He was in the beginning with God  
    And all things came into being through him  
    And without him not one thing came into being.  
In him was life and the life was the light of all people.  
The light shines in the darkness  
    And the darkness does not overcome it.  
He was in the world, and the world exists through him  
    and yet the world did not know him.

As divine Word incarnate He remains to us unrecognizable  
Jesus. With outstretched arms,  
Jesus lifted high upon a cross for all to see at the end of this road.  
    Here. The end of God's love for God's people at the end of God's world.  
    Here. The one who loves his own loves them  
        to a bitter end.  
    Yet I wonder when and where and why does love end?  
    Can love run its course and simply leave us empty, finished?

There was a man.  
His first love ended like this: A letter arrived by mail  
    from the girl he loved who had gone off, gone away.  
This letter smelled unusually like a letter,  
    And not like her nor her perfume.  
    He immediately sensed bad news.  
    And there it was, sixth line down:  
        "I do not love you anymore."  
    And it was finished.

There was a woman.  
Her greatest love, her marriage ended like this:  
    As their nightly argument entered its second hour,

And while she sat on the stairs and asked why, why, my God, my God, why  
He could not stay there or with her any longer.  
He finally spoke the truth they both knew, but rendered them both hopeless, powerless:  
"I do not love you anymore."  
And it was finished.

Can any nail be driven deeper than these words  
of ultimate rejection penetrate?  
Are any words more terminal than  
"I do not love you anymore."

If we were to take love  
And drive it out of town, as we do to others we reject,  
And nail it to a cross at the busy intersection where heaven and earth cross,  
Raised it up for public execution,  
to suffer the death we wish for criminals and other threats;  
If we were to say to God by our actions if not in so many words:  
"I do not love you anymore."  
Would that be the end of God and of God's love?  
Would love be finished? Done?  
Who could survive, much less abide, that rejection?

Then too our love for God ends, runs out, empties.  
If not in words, in deed, we have said:  
"I do not love you anymore."

Here we are at a crossroads.  
Our love has run its course, and it is finished here.  
We are done with God.  
God's love for us and for this world, too,  
runs its course, runs out and come to its final end.  
Jesus speaks his last word: "It is finished."  
And the life goes out.  
We are finished.  
There is nothing left to say.

Yet, God dares speak to us, again.  
God speaks the word that gives meaning  
to the end that God has in mind for you and me  
and for this world.  
"I love you," says God. And there is life and light.  
Life like light sent out in waves, flowing, flooding,  
Inexhaustible gift, love with conditions, pure love, God-love.

The end of God-love, its completion and fulfillment,  
God-love's goal and final end  
    Is that no single one will be left to be  
    an end unto themselves,  
But in the end, we find that God still holds us tight in love  
    Speaks to us, a word:  
    "I love you."

Jesus' dying love reveals the Father's life-giving love  
    In the beginning and in the end.  
Jesus' dying love transforms this moment of the end  
    With a word that speaks the new beginning,  
And changes the meaning of what is finished here.  
Now: Jesus fills to overflowing, perfects and completes  
The end that God has always reserved as living, loving purpose  
    For us. For you.  
God speaks the word that sounds the end and raises us up  
    To live again, alive in him  
Even after first loves fail,  
Even after long-loved marriages dissolve,  
Even after all love runs out.  
God speaks to raise us up alive  
    Even after love and lovers breathe their last  
    and go to rest in dust and ash.

After it is finished  
It is not yet ended.  
God's word and love, Jesus Christ, Our Lord – dies here for us.  
But God will not leave his own beloved Son to die alone.  
    Nor will he leave us ever to the dust, but  
    Jesus' end is our life, and by God's gift and promise,  
    That's our end too – to live God-raised to abide as we always did,  
    In the arms of God, alive in the God who kisses us and says:  
    "I love you now, and I always will."  
    "I love you now, and I always will."