



Gethsemane as depicted by Carl Bloch (1834-1890)

I will never forget my very first course on campus at Trinity Seminary. It was an introduction to the Old Testament, what some people call a Survey Course; that is, a rather cursory look at the main themes of the Old Testament – you might think about it as Old Testament 101. But, even in this rather breathless study of the first part of the Bible, the Professor paused at the beginning of Exodus 12 and asked, “What did God instruct the Jews to do the night of Passover?” And I answered, “He told them to place the blood of the sacrificial lamb on their doorways. The blood of the Sacrifice marked their doorway to freedom.” And then the professor smiled wryly at me and said, “Hmm...the blood of the sacrifice marked the doorway to freedom...” A chill came over me, as I realized the profound thing the Holy Spirit had just nudged me to say. Because, of-course, it is the blood of **the** sacrifice of these days by which we walk through the doorway to eternal freedom. You see, God had it planned all along.

And, since the Lord God is, we are very sure – since the Lord God is omniscient – since nothing is hidden from Him neither in the darkest past nor in the most distant future, can you imagine what it must have been like all those thousands of years to carry the knowledge of the betrayal of this night and to know for millennia in excruciating detail will happen on Golgotha tomorrow? Well, no of course you can’t imagine something like that. No one could understand that kind of pain.

And can you imagine what it must have been like for God to carefully craft the emancipation of His beloved Israel from bondage in Egypt, plans which took hundreds of years to bring about. Can you imagine what it must have been like to orchestrate all of that knowing full well as we say in one of our Eucharistic Prayers, that God’s much-loved children nonetheless went on sinning against him again and again, railing against him, constantly reviling Him as something less than we thought we needed and deserved.

Can you imagine what kind of heartache that must have caused God? No, of-course you can’t.

And that night in Jerusalem, when Our Lord Jesus, the only Son of God, abased himself by washing His disciples feet, when He also stooped to wash the feet of the very one who was to betray Him, can you imagine what anguish He must have felt? No, of-course you can’t. No one could.

What an amazing thing that from the very beginning, from that first Passover night in Egypt, and even long before, from within the walls of a certain garden where there lived a certain man and woman and there grew a certain tree, even from the very beginning of the story, what an amazing thing that the Lord God, creator of the universe was planning all along a night in another garden where He would finally begin that awful suffering which would bring his children home to Him.

Why? Why would God do all this? Why would he go through all this pain and humiliation and millennial heart-ache, only to then willingly submit to the agony of the Cross? The only answer seems to be that He did it because he loves you so very, very much...In the precious name of the one who died for us, Lord Jesus, Blessed Maundy Thursday. JWB+ 04-04-16