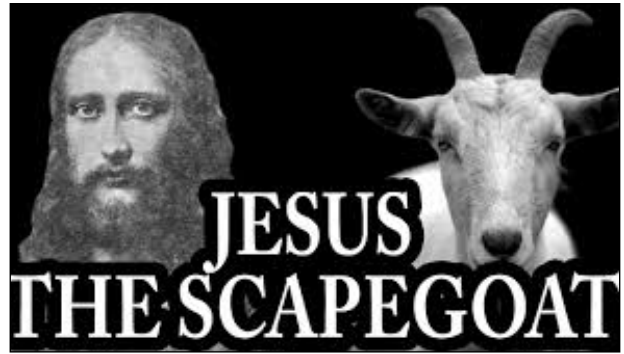

GOOD FRIDAY

10 April 2020



This mystery can only make sense - *A Scapegoat* get blamed for things that happen so we all feel better. He is someone who is blamed for something he is not guilty of and takes the punishment. He suffers while bringing relief to the accusers. **Where does the term scapegoat come from?** It comes from the Scriptures. Despite witnesses, his defence falls on the deaf ears of his accusers.

Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor said to the chief priests and the crowds, **“I find no basis for an accusation against this man.”** (Luke 23:4) He washed his hands as a symbolic gesture indicating his refusal to take the blame of executing an innocent man.

The criminal on the cross next to Jesus is a character witness, insisting **“This man has done nothing wrong”** (Luke 23:41).

The Roman centurion who watched Jesus die declared, **“Certainly this man was innocent”** (Luke 23:47). What led these three men to believe that Jesus is innocent?

Eve the Scapegoat. Eve ate the forbidden fruit and caused Adam to fall. It wasn't his fault. Jokes are still told about Eve and the *Adam's Apple* today. Even though Adam made the decision with eyes wide open. Eve is the scapegoat and she was to be blamed.

Abel the Scapegoat. Cain is not getting God's favour like his brother Abel. So instead of fixing himself which demand too much work, he will be Abel instead. It is easier to assassinate another than to really put in the work towards personal growth. Abel became the scapegoat.

“Ironically, it usually takes suffering to break down our ego and pride. Once exhausted by trying to save ourselves, we often must hit bottom before we are desperate enough to change, to let go of our pride and control and surrender in humility to Christ our Saviour.”

- Melanie Jean Juneau

Abraham's Scapegoat.

Abraham builds an altar, placed his son on the altar and raised the knife to kill him as a sacrifice, asked by God. Exactly at the pinnacle of the drama, God stops Abraham, and applauds Abrahams' uncontested

faith and obedience. Providentially, a ram caught by its horns in the thicket nearby – Isaac is set free, and the ram is going to be the substitution.

Fast forward ... we see this again ... It's human nature to create scapegoat out of an individual or groups, to shift blame for all that go wrong in a society, regardless of who is truly guilty.

Emperor Nero targeted the early Christians by accusing them of setting fire in Rome. His scapegoating led to the torture and execution of thousands in the new faith who were killed for sports, eaten by animals, even lit up and burned alive as torches.

The Jewish Leaders scapegoated the Christians – killing Stephen and even James – as we see in the Acts of the Apostles. The lives of the numerous martyrs and saints of the Church are testimonies of insane and horrendous treatments of scapegoating Christians.

Adolf Hitler using public propaganda, hate speeches and anything else he could get his hands on. The Jews living as immigrants, minding their own business, and 6 million innocent women, men and children were killed. Hitler needed a scapegoat.

The Majority Hutu in Rwanda scapegoated the Tutsi minority, resulting in a mass slaughter of almost a million Rwandans during the 100 days period from April to July 1994.

The 21st century is no different.

The blame game is still the preferred *modus operandi* of those who wish to deflect blame and dodge accountability for their own guilty actions. It is so much easier to scapegoat an individual or groups rather than to admit one's own wrongdoing and fix the problem in a constructive way.

Jesus, our Passover Lamb, was sacrificed for our deliverance



*"...For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us."
(1 Corinthians 5:7)*

The Office – Family – Ministry - Church Scapegoats. Whenever something happened that we knew we were going to get into trouble for, the scapegoat was always a choice. When we need to rally people on our side, having a scapegoat can be greatly beneficial. Spotlight someone else's short-coming and the spot light is not on our own short-coming!

Satan the Scapegoat. When we are tempted to commit sin, something along the lines of, "*Satan's attacks are so strong*" or "*I gave in to the Devil*"? Have we ever said or thought such things? These statements and in numerous situations *may* even be true. Satan and his demons are real spiritual threat to us.

On hindsight, is Satan leading us to sin? Or if it is nothing more than that we sin because of our own human falling. Certainly, it is very possible for it to be *both*. Can it also not be that we scapegoat Satan to allow ourselves the luxury of not taking personal responsibility for our own actions.

Even the existence of temptation itself does not always have the devil as its source of existence. After all, contrary to popular belief, neither Satan nor his demons are omniscient, omnipresent, or all-powerful. They are infinitely weaker than our Lord, just like we are.

For God
so loved
the world,
that He gave
His only begotten Son,
that whosoever believeth on him
should not perish,
but have
eternal
life

John 3:16

Blame the Devil if and when it is appropriate to do so, but be sure to blame yourself as well, for we are more accountable in such scenarios than he ever could be.

“Remember that the devil has only one door by which to enter the soul: the will.”

-St. Padre Pio

JESUS WAS THE ULTIME SCAPEGOAT AND THE ONLY TRULY INNOCENT ONE.

As we look to the Cross on **this Good Friday**: What would be the measurement or yardstick of Jesus’ love for us? Jesus loved us and died for us from **“Head to Toes” 100%!**

From “Head to Toes” Jesus loves us! That is the powerful message of ***JESUS, THE ULTIMATE SCAPEGOAT!***

The bottom line is that Jesus Christ has redeemed us in the totality of our personhood: Soul & Body. Or, to put it another way, Jesus redeemed each of us literally from the top of our head to the tip of our toes.

• **Jesus’ head** was crowned with thorns, for our sins of mind and speech: for the angry thoughts, the violent thoughts, the lustful thoughts, the selfish and greedy thoughts - and for the words that come out of our mouths because of those thoughts.

• **Jesus hands** were pierced with nails, for all the sins we have committed with our hands. There’s an old saying, *“Sow a thought, reap an action.”* Jesus’ head was crowned with thorns for our bad thoughts, and His hands were wounded for the sinful actions that proceed from those thoughts.

•**The skin on Jesus back** was literally torn to shreds in the scourging they gave Him before the Crucifixion. Because of those wounds we can be forgiven for the times when we have turned our backs on God, and on members of our families, and on other people in need.

•**Jesus heart** was pierced with a lance, to bring us forgiveness for the times that we have not loved God with all our heart. For the times we have put other things - and other people - before the Lord. For the days we have said we were “too busy” to pray.

•**Jesus feet** were nailed to the cross for the times we have failed to avoid the near occasion of sin in our lives: for the times that our feet have taken us into - and not away from - situations where we knew we would be tempted to do things that we shouldn't do.

Have you ever been a scapegoat? All of us have to some degree. We have all *suffered* because someone needed to dump the blame on us, someone had deep seated shame – and needed a convenient ‘other’ to whip on. The world is not a better place.

When we are scapegoated – don't return hate for hate, but return love and grace. That's how we continue to heal the world.

On this Good Friday, above all else, is a day to be grateful - extremely grateful. It is a day to thank God for choosing to redeem us in such a powerful and meaningful way.

Jesus became our scapegoat transferring guilt and punishment from the guilty to the innocent One of God! May the graces of Good Friday transform our lives.

