**In His Custodial Kingdom**

Based on [John 18-19](https://biblia.com/books/esv/Jn18)

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Good Friday

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Excruciating, has the word “crucifixion” in it. And in itself crucifixion is a horrible way to die. But there is a pain greater than that which can kill the body. Agony is not only physical. Agony pains the soul. Agony includes the pain of love. And there is agony in knowing that those you love are being routed by evil intentions, enslaved to sin, destined to die and die eternally. Watching your loved ones dwell in danger...that is pain.

A few weeks ago a father from Cochrane Alberta sent out an impassioned plea for his missing daughters--one and five years old. They were staying with their mother, but he had just been awarded full custody of them. There must have been a concern for their safety where they were. He sent to have them returned to him, but they weren’t returned. They went missing on March 12. The mother, who had them at the time of their disappearance, says she doesn’t know where they are. The police think they were likely abducted by their grandmother and aunt. To my knowledge, they are still missing. Today is three weeks.

The father who has full custodial rights does not know where his little daughters are, who they’re with, whether they’re safe. Is the stuff nightmares are made of. That would be agony. I think of my own little girls and of what it would be like not knowing whether they are safe or in danger, not being able to reach them, hug them, protect them. Looking at pictures. Helpless to reach them. I would rather suffer a thousand thousand violent excruciating deaths than have to endure that. That is agony.

Consider that God has custodial rights over every man, woman and child in the world. To him, every full grown man and woman is his treasure, and as vulnerable and helpless as a little child. You are an adult, but compared to God, you are as helpless as a little child is helpless compared to you. When you think of a little child suffering, it is painful. If you think of your own little child suffering, it’s agonizing. And when you are helpless to help--and all you can do is be anxious for them, it is excruciating.

God has custodial rights. He is the Father of all his children. But his children were taken. His children were stalked by the devil, seduced by sin, and abducted and taken to the valley of the shadow of death.

But unlike a helpless father, there is something he could do...something he did do. He sent his son to suffer and die in order to set his children free and draw them back to him. Rather than let us die in the hands of the devil and leave us slaves to our sin...he suffered everything...and in so doing disarmed the devil, disabled death, returned us to his kingdom of grace and set us free.

You are a child of God. What have you done to deserve so great a love and so sure of a salvation? Nothing. You were born, and born again, and neither is to your credit. Yet, you are the joy of the Lord. Your captivity to the devil was more excruciating to him than his own crucifixion. That is why he died...for the joy set before him, he endured the cross, scorning its shame.

Our hearts go out to that Cochrane man, who is still in agony over his missing little girls...an agony that he can do nothing about. But there is one who knows all things, sees all things, allows all things and limits all things. The man’s daughters are not missing from the eyes of God. God sees, he knows, and he works out all things for the good of those who love him. He always has a way. We are never helpless in this life, for God is our helper. Even though we were buried in sin so deep we could not escape, he found a way to us...and his cross and his blood and his death into which we were baptized...delivers us from evil and has brought us back into his full custodial kingdom.