



## **Good Friday – Death and Darkness. Insights From The Universe Story**

**By Niamh Brennan**

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When Jesus died on Good Friday, when his spirit left his body, the skies clouded and darkness fell over the land. This was a symbol of the light having gone from the world. But the light never leaves the world and darkness is never extinguished. They are both needed equally. They each express something of the Divine nature that permeates our world and of the depths of mystery in this Universe. God is not expressed in light alone, but also in darkness. Good Friday is a day of darkness, a day associated with death. It is a day when we are invited into our own mortality, to contemplate the transient, brief nature of life and to ask what does it mean to die.

All beings, including galaxies, including stars, including Earth, have a life span. They are born, they live and they die. This remains one of the most difficult aspects of existence for humans to understand, that we are not eternal, that one day we will take our final breath and no longer be present to the world as we are now. No longer be able to feel water on our skin or to bend down and smell the reviving scent of the lily, no longer be able to hold a loved one close to us, feel the warmth of their breath, listen to their heartbeat. Our body will be inert and lifeless, matter without spirit and gradually matter without form.

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To experience the death of someone we love and the grief and loss that accompanies it, remains too, one of the most painful aspects of existence. There is a finality to death that we struggle to understand, how something can be gone, never to be experienced again in the way in which we remember, in the way that is dear to us. But death is vital to life. It is the price we must pay for existence. In its darkness and sorrow, it's bleak blanket of certitude, lies one of the truths of life, that life without death would not be life at all.

Without death nothing new could emerge. There could be nothing new created. It would be a world that is the same, constantly, with no variation in beauty or sound or shape. A world without diversity, no new mornings, no new seasons, no new moments, no change. Death gives way to life. It enables life to continue. Life, not in the sense of my own individual life, but Life in the sense of this great Divine adventure started some 14 billion years ago. Life that continues to change and evolve becoming ever more beautiful and ever more differentiated and ever more sacred. Life that began in single celled organisms and developed into multi-cellular beings, that in turn developed into reptile and mammal. Life that now sings and dances and plays. Life that now thinks. Life that now prays. If we revere life, then we must also revere death. One births the other.

And what of darkness, to all of us who love the light, what of darkness? Darkness can reach places that light cannot. In darkness the seed begins to grow unwatched by human eye. It is where the unborn baby is nourished and fed and begins to form. It is the mystery from which life emerges and it is the place where God dwells completely. Darkness brings to us the mysteries of this Universe. It takes away our certainty and confidence and the way we swagger through the world when it is lit up, making us more gentle, more tentative, more searching and more dependent. Because we cannot see we use other senses and become more and more relational. Darkness takes us from the distractions of this busy, bustling world and calls us deep into ourselves, to where the river runs that stirs us. Darkness takes us to where we may learn who we are.

On Good Friday, the skies clouded and darkness fell over the land. Hands torn from the nails that pierced them and blood trickling from his side, a weary Christ, heart dampened with human sorrow, drew his last breath. He bowed his head and gave himself in trust to a future that was unknown, to that which could only emerge from his death. And just like the star whose light is extinguished in death, and just like the star who has to die in order for anything else to be born, in that moment, the death of Christ, there was utter darkness. The world in transformation.

And this is Good Friday, the world in transformation. It is a day that invites us to enter into ourselves and into the darkness of the mystery of life. It is a day that invites us to die to ourselves and to our own desires, so that the desire of the One who is greater than us, can be born.

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