**Reflection for the Market place – Good Friday 2018**

**Who is this man?**

Why did he face such brutal and inhuman treatment?

Crucifixion! Crucifixion!

How on earth can a man who is crucified be called a Saviour?

So! Who is this man? He is known as Jesus Christ! Je-sus Christ! The Chosen one, the Messiah.

How can this be? He was despised, rejected. They scourged him to the point of death. They mocked him.

So, who is this man?

Only a few days earlier he was welcomed, heralded, praised as the blessed one, the King of Israel.

What shameful and deceitful fickleness!

Yet, despite all this, astonishingly, we are told that he bore our sufferings. Yes, bore our sufferings so that we would be healed.

This man, this Jesus healed us through his wounds.

How can this be? What does this mean?

**Walter Wangerin, Jr. tells the story about a RAGMAN.**

**Adapted from *The Ragman*, a story by Walter Wangerin, Jr.**

A young handsome and strong man walked through the alleys of the city, pulling a cart, filled with clothes. As he walked he called out *"Rags! New rags for old, I'll take your tired, old rags. Rags!"* He was a wonder to see: six feet-four, with arms like tree limbs, hard and muscular, and whose eyes flashed with brightness.

As he walked the Ragman saw a woman sitting on her veranda, sobbing uncontrollably into her handkerchief. Her shoulders shook. Her heart breaking. The Ragman asked her, *"Will you give me your rag; I'll give you another."* Slipping the handkerchief from her eyes, he gave her a linen cloth so clean and new that it shone. Then, as he walked away, the Ragman put her tearstained handkerchief to his own face and began to weep, to sob as grievously as she had done. Yet she was left behind without a tear. *"Rags! Rags! New rags for old!"* he cried. A little later the Ragman came across a little girl whose head was wrapped in a bandage, her eyes blank and empty. A single line of blood ran down her cheek. The Ragman looked on the child with pity and drew a lovely bonnet from his cart. *"Give me your rag, and I'll give you mine."* He removed the bandage and tied it to his own head after setting the bonnet on hers. With the bandage went the wound! Down His face ran a darker, richer flow of his own blood! *"Rags, rags! I take old rags!"* Cried the sobbing, bleeding Ragman.

As the sun reached its zenith, the Ragman started running. *"Do you have a job?"* The Ragman ask a man leaning against a pole. *"Are you crazy?"* The man sneered. Pulling away from the pole he revealed that the right sleeve of his jacket was empty. *"So give me your jacket, and I'll give you mine."* Said the Ragman. The one-armed man took off his jacket, so did the Ragman. Astoundingly the Ragman's arm stayed in his jacket, and when the other put it on, he had two good arms, thick as tree limbs; but the Ragman was left with only one.

By now the Ragman, weeping uncontrollably and bleeding freely, pulling the cart with one arm, stumbling with exhaustion, ran on even faster. Eventually, worn out, the Ragman came upon a landfill, a garbage dump. He climbed the hill, cleared a little space, then he sighed, lay down, pillowed his head on a handkerchief, covered his bones with a jacket, and died.

The air went silent as though afraid to breath and stayed like that from Friday through to Sunday morning. And there, with a gasp, that bright cheerful morning, was the Ragman, folding his clothes, a scar on his face, but alive! And besides that, healthy! He was ready once again to dress anyone prepared to accept the new clothes he offered for our rags!!

**Like the Ragman,** Jesus takes our pains, our hurts, our sufferings, and, just as he did on that First Good Friday, he embraces them all and, in return, pours out forgiveness and then rises again to new life.

This is what he now offers us, . . . . offers you, . . . . . offers to all. **New Life.**

And because this man, Jesus Christ, is God, there is no limit to the life and love he offers and he offers this to everyone, everyone.

This new life, Jesus offers, will set free the hidden riches, the hidden gifts in our lives, hidden from us by our pain and suffering which now, TODAY, Good Friday, Jesus takes from us and transforms into life.

**Yes! Yes! Yes! Jesus Christ is Lord and Saviour. . . . AMEN!**