

**Good Friday**

**April 13<sup>th</sup>, 2020**

**St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church**

**Arlington, MN**

*Today we witness our Savior's death on the cross and rejoice at why.*

**M:** Let us pray.

God Most Holy, look with mercy on this your family, for whom our Lord Jesus Christ was willing to be betrayed, be given over into the hands of the wicked, and suffer death upon the cross. Keep us always faithful to him, our only Savior, who now lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

**OLD TESTAMENT: Isaiah 52:13-53:12** *We have an eyewitness to the crucifixion. He is Isaiah. God used him to prophecy all that occurred on Good Friday. Isaiah tells us of the suffering Jesus endured, even adding details that are not included in the New Testament. He tells us how God forsook him. But he also tells us in wonderful words why Jesus did this for us, so that the punishment that brings us peace was on him; by his wounds we sinners are healed.*

See, my servant will act wisely; he will be raised and lifted up and highly exalted. Just as there were many who were appalled at him--his appearance was so disfigured beyond that of any man and his form marred beyond human likeness—so will he sprinkle many nations, and kings will shut their mouths because of him. For what they were not told, they will see, and what they have not heard, they will understand. Who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? He grew up before him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground. He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth. By oppression and judgment he was taken away. And who can speak of his descendants? For he was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of my people he was stricken. He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death, though he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth. Yet it was the LORD'S will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the LORD makes his life a guilt offering, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the LORD will prosper in his hand. After the suffering of his soul, he will see the light[of life] and be satisfied; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities. Therefore I will give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoils with the strong, because he poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors. For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

**GOSPEL: John 19:17-30** *Isaiah prophesied it. Let's now witness it ourselves, the crucifixion of our Lord Jesus Christ as he offers himself as the lamb of God to take away the sins of the world.*

Carrying his own cross, he went out to the place of the Skull (which in Aramaic is called Golgotha). Here they crucified him, and with him two others—one on each side and Jesus in the middle.

Pilate had a notice prepared and fastened to the cross. It read: JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS. Many of the Jews read this sign, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city, and the sign was written in Aramaic, Latin and Greek. The chief priests of the Jews protested to Pilate, "Do not write 'The King of the Jews,' but that this man claimed to be king of the Jews."

Pilate answered, "What I have written, I have written."

When the soldiers crucified Jesus, they took his clothes, dividing them into four shares, one for each of them, with the undergarment remaining. This garment was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom.

"Let's not tear it," they said to one another. "Let's decide by lot who will get it."

This happened that the scripture might be fulfilled which said,

"They divided my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing." So this is what the soldiers did.

Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, "Dear woman, here is your son," and to the disciple, "Here is your mother." From that time on, this disciple took her into his home.

Later, knowing that all was now completed, and so that the Scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said, "I am thirsty." A jar of wine vinegar was there, so they soaked a sponge in it, put the sponge on a stalk of the hyssop plant, and lifted it to Jesus' lips. When he had received the drink, Jesus said, "It is finished." With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

**THE SERMON:** Matthew 27:45-50

### **The Greatest Battle Ever Fought**

***From the sixth hour until the ninth hour darkness came over all the land. About the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?"—which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"***

***When some of those standing there heard this, they said, "He's calling Elijah."***

***Immediately one of them ran and got a sponge. He filled it with wine vinegar, put it on a stick, and offered it to Jesus to drink. The rest said, "Now leave him alone. Let's see if Elijah comes to save him."***

***And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit.***

I love history and if you ever want to sit down and talk history, I am there. History lovers are always debating what are the most important battles in history. Some would argue for the Battle of Marathon where the Greeks drove the Persians off their shores. If the Greeks lost, maybe it would have been Asian thought that influenced western civilization rather than Greek. Some may say that Waterloo was huge as it finally brought an end to Napoleon. I personally think the Battle of Vienna in 1683 should be near the top of any list. The Ottoman Turks were about to sack Vienna when a mixed European army relieved Vienna and drove the Ottoman's away. Vienna's capture would have given much of Eastern Europe to the Turks. Closer to home you may include the Battle of Antietam in our own US Civil War. Though the North barely won, it all but guaranteed that England would not side with the Confederacy.

All of these have had an influence on history, but there is one battle that is clearly the most important battle in all of history. It was fought on a small hill outside of Jerusalem. This was it, the big battle. Your future, my future and the future of every man and woman and child who ever ever lived all hung on the outcome of this battle. It was a battle between God and Satan.

*I. Jesus enemy, Satan, attacked Jesus relentlessly.*

Satan means “enemy,” and he lived up to that name. He viciously attacked Jesus every step of the way. Often he hid behind others like Herod who murdered all the boys in Bethlehem in the hopes of killing Jesus. When Jesus preached in his hometown, the crowds refused to believe Jesus and Satan prompted them to stone him to death, but God prevented it. Satan used the Pharisees and Sadducees to lie and trick the people into not listening or believing Jesus. Demon possession seemed to be at an all time high in the hopes of distracting the crowds. Satan tempted him, too, in the hopes the sinless Son of God would sin and thus be unable to save the world. He even used Peter to try to prevent Jesus from going to Jerusalem to die for the sins of the world. It may have been Peter’s words, but Jesus recognized it was an attack from Satan when he said to Peter, **“Get behind me, Satan.”** A war was being fought between Satan and Jesus and these are some of the battles.

Even on Good Friday, Satan did all he could to defeat Jesus. He moved the crowds to demand his death. He used the crowds to mock Jesus on the cross. Maybe he could get Jesus so mad he would retaliate or give in. How tempting it must have been for Jesus when they challenged him to prove he is the Christ by miraculously coming off that cross? I would have done it if for no other reason than to stop the pain. But Jesus didn’t. Crucifixion itself was not invented to execute criminals humanely. Everything about it was to inflict as much pain or suffering as possible. Imagine the suffering Jesus endured. He had been awake now for thirty hours or more without rest, having to endure the trials, whippings, beatings, and as Isaiah predicted, even the tearing out of his bear. He no longer looked human. He was exhausted. He couldn’t even carry his own cross. Joseph had to carry it for him. Satan inflicted physical pain on Jesus.

Imagine the emotional pain Satan inflicted. Jesus prayed that God would forgive them, yet how it must hurt to have his love and prayer thrown back into his face as they pounded the nails into his hands. He so much wanted to save them, but in return they mocked him and called him names. The soldiers callously gambled for his clothes beneath the cross. How the memory of Judas betrayal and Peter’s denial must have saddened him.

Satan threw everything he had at Jesus. You and I would have buckled. We would have given in and said, “Enough. It isn’t worth it,” and walked away. We would have been filled with a mix of hate and self-pity and hurled curses at all those bullies. But Jesus didn’t do that. He stayed. Then came the worse part. God the Father’s anger will soon be directed at Jesus. You know how God the Father feels about sin and sinners. He drove Adam and Eve out of the garden and sentenced them and all mankind to the death penalty. He destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah. He destroyed the world with a flood. But now the Father’s anger will zero in on Jesus like a guided missile.

**“About the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, “Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?”—which means, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”**” We know from the Bible and catechism class that God is Triune, one God, yet three distinct persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, not three Gods, but one. You can’t take one person away and still have God. God cannot be separated like that, yet at that moment, God the Son was forsaken by God the Father.

How could this be? Twice God declared from heaven that Jesus is his Son whom he loves and with whom he is well pleased. And Jesus loved his Father just as much. He loved the Father with all his heart, not part of it, but with all of it. In love he obeyed God perfectly. Jesus is the only one God can say, “Well done. I am pleased with you.”

Yet, look at what happened. Jesus looked and he did not see his Father. In fact, he couldn’t even call him Father. The relationship has been broken. And he asked a question. Why did God forsake him? Jesus knew the answer. So does the Father. I suggest he asked the question for us as if the question came from our own mouths. Why did God forsake the one who loved him perfectly? Why did God abandon him? It is because this sinless, perfect Jesus became sin for us.

Friends, we see what sin is and what it does to us. As the hymn, *Stricken, Smitten, and Afflicted*, puts it: “If you think of sin but lightly Nor suppose the evil great, Here you see its nature rightly, Here its guilt may estimate.” Sin separates the Holy Father from the sinner. At this moment Jesus was experiencing what sin is. He was experiencing the total separation from God. He was experiencing hell.

## II. But Jesus won!

Even at this sad moment, the mockers started up again. ***“When some of those standing there heard this, they said, ‘He’s calling Elijah.’ Immediately one of them ran and got a sponge. He filled it with wine vinegar, put it on a stick, and offered it to Jesus to drink. The rest said, ‘Now leave him alone. Let’s see if Elijah comes to save him.’”*** But the end is near, and things begin to happen quickly. First let me jump to the gospel of John and share with you something very important. ***“When he had received the drink, Jesus said, ‘It is finished.’”*** And now back to Matthew. ***“And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit.”***

The tone changes. Jesus would once again address God as “Father” as he committed his spirit to the Father. He can because God’s anger has been satisfied. Justice has been administered. And because that anger was directed towards Jesus and he paid for it with his life and hell itself, he cried out, “It is finished.” It is done. Sin has been paid for, your sin, my sin. Remember how Jesus taught us how to pray? Remember which words he said we should use? He said, “Pray, ‘Our Father.” Because of Christ and the cross, there is no separation between us and the Father.

As the Easter hymn puts it, “The Strife is O’er, the Battle is Won.” Jesus and Satan fought many skirmishes, but this is the big battle, and he won. With the words, “it is finished,” it is finished. Satan is mortally wounded, and though he is still thrashing about, he can no longer win. And the gates to heaven he thought he had shut tight are now flung wide open. Mankind has been fully redeemed, or bought back.

When we review what happened on Good Friday, there is a part of us that wishes Jesus wouldn’t die. We think to ourselves, “Save yourself Jesus. We are not worth it.” But we don’t say it, do we. In fact, we watch intently like the deep fly ball that might be a home run. We even quietly cheer him on. Jesus is our only hope. Without him we will suffer what our sins deserve. We would look around and plead to the Father, but he will not be there. But Jesus did all of this for us. We beg him to do this. We pray he succeeds. We cheer him on.

Well, Satan wanted to hurt Jesus, and he did. The people got what they wanted and Jesus died. But Jesus also got what he wanted, to lay down his life for us. And the Father got what he wanted. He gave up his son for us. That is how much he loves us. Heaven is our home. It is prepaid. There are no hidden fees. There are no extra charges for carry-ons. There is no fine print or hidden clauses. It is finished. Amen.