

Sermon for Good Friday
Luther Memorial Chapel, Shorewood, Wisconsin
Pastor Michael Larson
4/10/2020



Readings: Isaiah 52:13-52:12; 2 Corinthians 5:14-21; John 18:1-19:42

Almighty God, graciously behold this Your family for whom our Lord Jesus Christ was willing to be betrayed and delivered into the hands of sinful men to suffer death upon the cross; through the same Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Grace, mercy, and peace be unto you from God our Father and from our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Have you ever noticed how popular the cross is? It's at the top of just about every church steeple. We have them also in our homes and over our beds. We even wear the cross around our necks. We are the inheritors of a 2000-year-old tradition of rightly focusing on the cross, and focus on the cross we should! The cross is where Jesus suffered for us and died for our salvation.

At the same time, we shouldn't let the strangeness of the cross escape us. After all, just think about the symbols of other faiths which seem to be, well, a little more upbeat, you might say! How about the six pointed star of David for the Jews? What about the crescent moon for Islam? For Buddhism they've got the lotus blossom. Those sound nice and pleasant.

But for Christians, let's face reality. Our symbol, our emblem, is a sign of torture and death. And that's just plain strange when you take a moment and look at it all with fresh eyes. The cross is an upright wooden stake on which condemned people were executed – rebels and enemies of the state. Roman authorities used the cross to torture, to shame, and to kill the very worst criminals and most vile offenders. Spikes were driven through the hands and feet of the victims. They would writhe in pain and agony just in order to breathe. Just in order to fill their lungs they would have to push up by their wounds in the feet and painfully pull up by the wounds in their hands, just to get a breath in. How excruciating. How gruesome. How awful.

Let this sink in then when St. Paul says things like: “For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.” Ever consider how strange the content of that message was for those first hearing it?

Paul preached of a crucified King, a crucified Savior, which he himself admitted was stumbling block, an absolute scandal to the Jews and utter foolishness to Gentiles.

Having the cross in mind and it's centrality, that's why Paul would also say things like “I'm not ashamed of the gospel...I'm not ashamed of this crucified Christ...this Crucified Lord of Glory...this mystery hidden from before the foundation of the world, this mystery of Christ. Why am I not ashamed? Because it's the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile.” That's the way the apostle spoke of the cross.

I have the privilege to teach internationals here at LMC. I and all the volunteers make a habit of always pointing to the cross in conversation when we confess who God is, who we are, and what He has done for us. Often times, well, usually, there's confusion about the necessity of the cross. The thinking goes, "If God is so powerful and loving why not just make a blanket statement from heaven that everyone's sins are forgiven." That, is why the punishment? Why the crucifixion at all?

It's a good question, because for six long hours Jesus hung there before a gazing crowd, naked, and bleeding from head to foot - His head pierced with thorns, His back lacerated with scourging, His hands and feet torn with nails, as he was mocked and reviled by His cruel enemies to the very last. Why go through this terrible ordeal?

Well, here's the thing. God is not really responsible for the brutality of the crucifixion. Instead, the crucifixion is the consequence, the result of sinful man. This is because sin and all of its ugly manifestations of wickedness have real consequences, and therefore, our redemption (how we're saved) is not a matter of God "turning a blind eye" to our rejection of Him. God won't wink at sin and look the other way. His love won't allow it! Instead, in this redemption God actually takes the consequences of man's sinfulness. This is what St. Paul means when he says that "For our sake God made Him (that is, Jesus) to be sin itself, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God." He become the enemy, the vile offender, the worst criminal the world has ever known.

We must all remember that our Lord's sufferings were vicarious. He's not up on that cross suffering for His own sins, but for yours, for mine!

The Scriptures teach us that Christ "bore our sins in His own body on the tree," that He "suffered for sin, the just for the unjust" He was made a curse for us. He was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities. The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all and by His stripes we are healed.

The cross of Jesus was absolutely necessary! Because what you see there in the cross of Jesus is the sin of the whole world. The dysfunction of it. The full magnitude of human sinfulness all coming down violently upon this holy and innocent Son of God until it kills Him.

He hung there naked, disgraced, ridiculed, and shamed – the same condition our sins should have earned us. But before He breathed that last breath from the cross he spoke a word not of defeat but of victory. He cried out, “It is finished.”

The sun stopped shining to witness this strange and awful sight. The earth shook, the rocks split, and the temple curtain was torn in two. The cross bridging the gap between God and rebel man. Sin conquered by the love of God.

The cross – the crucifixion is the glorious symbol of our faith. It is the heart of the Gospel; it’s very content and its message. Let us say with the Apostle: “I’m not ashamed of the Gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes,” and “far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Behold, the life-giving cross on which was hung the salvation of the world. O come, let us worship Him! In the name of Jesus. Amen.

Litany of The Passion

Lord, have mercy.

Christ, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

God the Father in heaven

Have mercy.

God the Son, Redeemer of the world,

Have mercy.

God the Holy Spirit,

Have mercy.

Jesus, Son of the living God,

Have mercy.

From all evil,

O Jesus, deliver us.

From sudden, unprepared, or evil death;

From the snares of the devil;

From anger, hatred or ill-will;

From everlasting death,

O Jesus, deliver us.

By the mystery of Your incarnation;

By Your most holy life and conversation;

By Your most bitter Passion and death;

By Your agony and bloody sweat;

By Your thrice-repeated prayer;

By Your bonds and stripes;

By Your sacred body, buffeted and smitten;

By the spitting upon Your adorable face;

By the false judgment pronounced by Caiaphas;

By Herod's disdain of You;

By the shameful stripping of Your garments;
By Your painful crown of thorns;
By Your purple robe of mockery;
By Your most unjust condemnation;
By Your bearing Your own cross;
By Your footprints to the place of death;
By the tearing off of Your garments;
By the cruel straining of Your sacred limbs;
By Your dread crucifixion;
By the anguish You did suffer;
By Your prayers and tears;
By the insults You endured;
By the shedding of Your most precious blood;
By Your patience and humility;
By the love with which You loved us to the end:
O Jesus, deliver us.

We poor sinners implore You to hear us:
O most loving Jesus.

That being dead to sin, we may live unto righteousness;
That we may not glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ;
That we may take up our cross daily and follow You;

That Your blood may cleanse us from dead works to serve the living God;
That looking on Your example, we may follow Your steps;
That being partakers of Your sufferings, we may be also partakers of Your glory:
We implore You to hear us, O Jesus.

To give comfort and relief to all who suffer from this pandemic, from worry and fears:

We implore You to hear us, O Jesus.

Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world,
Have mercy.

Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world,
Have mercy.

Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world,
Grant us Your peace.

Our Father ...

Let us bless the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Hymn of the Day: Sing, My Tongue, the Glorious Battle 454



1 Sing, my tongue, the glo - rious bat - tle; Sing the end - ing
 2 Tell how, when at length the full - ness Of the ap - point - ed
 3 Thus, with thir - ty years ac - com - plished, He went forth from
 4 Faith - ful cross, true sign of tri - umph, Be for all the
 5 Un - to God be praise and glo - ry; To the Fa - ther



of the fray. Now a - bove the cross, the tro - phy,
 time was come, He, the Word, was born of wom - an,
 Naz - a - reth, Des - tined, ded - i - cat - ed, will - ing,
 no - blest tree; None in fo - liage, none in blos - som,
 and the Son, To the e - ter - nal Spir - it hon - or



Sound the loud tri - um - phant lay; Tell how Christ, the
 Left for us His Fa - ther's home, Blazed the path of
 Did His work, and met His death; Like a lamb He
 None in fruit thine e - qual be; Sym - bol of the
 Now and ev - er - more be done; Praise and glo - ry



world's re - deem - er, As a vic - tim won the day.
 true o - be - dience, Shone as light a - midst the gloom.
 hum - bly yield - ed On the cross His dy - ing breath.
 world's re - demp - tion, For the weight that hung on thee!
 in the high - est While the time - less a - ges run.

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