

# Sermon for Good Friday

**Date:** April 15, 2022

**Location:** St. John's Lutheran Church, Austin, MN

**Old Testament:** Isaiah 52:13–53:12

**Epistle Reading:** Hebrews 4:14–16

**Gospel Reading:** John 19:1–16

**Sermon Text:** John 19:1–16

**Sermon Title:** Return to Truth

**Psalm of the Day:** Psalm 22

## Hymns:

LSB 421 – Jesus, Grant That Balm and Healing

LSB 453 – Upon the Cross Extended

LSB 432 – In Silent Pain the Eternal Son

Break Your Hearts (*Tune: LSB 512*)

LSB 425 – When I Survey the Wondrous Cross

LSB 422 – On My Heart Imprint Your Image

LSB 543 – What Wondrous Love Is This

LSB 439 – O Dearest Jesus, What Law Hast Thou Broken

LSB 447 – Jesus, in Your Dying Woes

LSB 452 – O Perfect Life of Love



*Return to Truth*

## Liturgy:

Creative Worship



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**Text: Psalm 22**

My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me? Why are You so far from saving Me, from the words of My groaning? O My God, I cry day by day, but You do not answer, and by night, but I find no rest. Yet You are holy, enthroned on the praises of Israel. In You our fathers trusted; they trusted, and You delivered them. To You they cried and were rescued; in You they trusted and were not put to shame. But I am a worm and not a man, scorned by mankind and despised by the people. All who see Me mock Me; they make mouths at Me; they wag their heads; “He trusts in the Lord; let Him deliver Him; let Him rescue Him for He delights in Him!” Yet You are He who took Me from the womb; You made Me trust in You at My mother’s breasts. On You was I cast from My birth, and from My mother’s womb You have been My God. Be not far from Me, for trouble is near, and there is none to help. Many bulls encompass Me; strong bulls of Bashan surround Me; they open wide their mouths at Me, like a ravening and roaring lion.

I am poured out like water, and all My bones are out of joint; My heart is like wax; it is melted within My breast; My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and My tongue sticks to My jaws; You lay Me in the dust of death. For dogs encompass Me; a company of evildoers encircles Me; they have pierced My hands and feet—I can count all My bones. They stare and gloat over Me; they divide My garments among them, and for My clothing they cast lots.

But You, O Lord, do not be far off! O You My help, come quickly to My aid! Deliver My soul from the sword, My precious life from the power of the dog! Save Me from the mouth of the lion! You have rescued Me from the horns of the wild oxen! I will tell of Your name to My brothers; in the midst of the congregation I will praise You: You who fear the Lord, praise Him! All you offspring of Jacob, glorify Him, and stand in awe of Him, all you offspring of Israel! For He has not despised or abhorred the affliction of the afflicted, and He has not hidden His face from Him, but has heard, when He cried to Him. From You comes My praise in the great congregation; My vows I will perform before those who fear Him. The afflicted shall eat and be satisfied; those who seek Him shall praise the Lord! May your hearts live forever!

All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the Lord, and all the families of the nations shall worship before You. For kingship belongs to the Lord, and He rules over the nations. All the prosperous of the earth eat and worship; before Him shall bow all who go down to the dust, even the one who could not keep himself alive. Posterity shall serve Him; it shall be told of the Lord to the coming generation; they shall come and proclaim His righteousness to a people yet unborn, that He has finished it.

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Grace and peace, in Jesus' name. Amen.

Last Wednesday, our Gospel ended with Pontius Pilate asking a cynical question, "What is truth?" His problem: he was asking the wrong question. The real question is not "What is truth?" but rather "Who is truth?"

Today we look on as the Truth<sup>1</sup> hangs on a cross, bearing the sins of the whole world to reconcile us to God the Father. The incarnate Truth is Jesus who willingly walked this path for you.

This Lenten series has centered on God's call through the prophet Joel calling His people to return to Him. That requires repentance. To admit to your sinful nature, to admit your very real sins, and to come to the One who is:

gracious and merciful,  
slow to anger,  
and abounding in steadfast love.<sup>2</sup>

The One who loves you, who provides for you, and who sent His Son to die for you, because He "relents over disaster."<sup>3</sup> His call today is for you. He calls you to return to Truth, to turn to Jesus. He is your life and your salvation.

The chief priests and the scribes and the whole Sanhedrin Council delivered Jesus to Pilate. They insisted He had done evil and deserved death. Pilate knew what was going on. He was no fool. You don't climb the Roman ladder of power without cunning. He was onto them. He knew they were driven by selfish motivations but he was still backed into a corner. His choices were impossible: Put an innocent man to death or, lose control of the city as the people erupted in a riot.

Everything was working according to plan, but it was not the plan of the chief priests that was working, even if at the moment it appeared so. It was the plan God Himself had put together before the foundations of the world were laid. A plan of salvation which was required because of our fall into sin at the temptation of Satan. A plan that included a battle between the descendants of the serpent and the Descendant of the woman.<sup>4</sup> A plan that required the heel of the Son of Man be bruised. A plan that would finally be complete as the head of the serpent was crushed and death was stripped of its power. This plan would play out on the cross, and Jesus was the focus of the whole thing.

Pilate tried to find a way out. He had Jesus whipped and tortured, mocked and insulted. Beaten to within an inch of His life. How could Pilate stand before the

1 John 14:6

2 Joel 2:13

3 Joel 2:13

4 Genesis 3:15

people and point to Jesus, bloodied and bruised, and say with a straight face, “I find no guilt in Him.”? As if he had been trying to beat it out of Him.

There was a plan, and that plan was already in motion. There would be no changing the outcome. Jesus had to die. “Crucify Him! Crucify Him!” the crowd shouted, but our sins cry out the same thing. Our sinful nature rises up. The Law calls us to repentance but we want no part of it.

“You shall have no other gods.” Fine, I’ll have only one god. It will be me. This man, this “Son of God,” wants first place in my life? No, He must die. “Crucify Him!”

“Do not take the Lord’s name in vain.” Ha! This man has claimed to be Bread from heaven and would make Himself the Son of God and our Savior. He calls us to repentance but we want no part of that. “Crucify Him!”

“Honor the Sabbath Day by keeping it holy”? You can’t tell me what to do. The Church’s call to repentance is too annoying. “Crucify Him!”

“Honor your father and your mother.”

“You shall not kill.”

“You shall not commit adultery.”

“You shall not steal.”

“You shall not bear false witness.”

“You shall not covet.”

“Crucify Him! Crucify Him! Silence Him. Silence His Word! Silence the Truth!!” You chafe at the truth, and God’s call to repent. Your sinful nature wants nothing to do with it, because your sinful nature is:

hostile to God, for it does not submit to God’s Law;  
indeed, it cannot.<sup>5</sup>

Your sinful nature rises up before the Truth and covers its ears as it shouts, “Crucify Him! Crucify Him!”

We may shout to the skies to deafen the sound of it, but Truth is not so easily silenced. The Truth echoes in your ears and in your heart, even as it hangs dead on a cross. The Truth slips past your efforts, and the Word calls to soften your heart. You may cry out in rage, “Crucify Him,” but the Truth whispers gently in your ears, “Yes, crucify Me. That is the only way out of this mess. Someone has to die for you, and I have come for just that purpose. Crucify Me.”

5 Romans 8:7

Look at the cross. Look at the One who hangs on it, bearing your sins, taking your pain, taking your punishment.

His appearance was so marred, beyond human semblance, and His form beyond that of the children of mankind.<sup>6</sup>

He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.<sup>7</sup>

Look at the man. Look at your God. Beaten. Bruised. Bleeding. Suffering. Calling you to repentance.

Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows.<sup>8</sup>

He was pierced for our transgressions; He was crushed for our iniquities.<sup>9</sup>

He dies for you. He carries your griefs, your sorrows, your sin, your guilt. He calls you only to repent. Why? Why did it have to be like this?

It was the will of the Lord to crush Him; He has put Him to grief.<sup>10</sup>

He poured out His soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors; yet He bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors.<sup>11</sup>

Your Savior. Your Lord. The Truth, who died for your sins. Who make intercession for you. Who willingly poured out His soul to death so that you could have life. He is:

the way, and the truth, and the life...

No one comes to the Father except through Him.<sup>12</sup>

So your heart, led by the Holy Spirit, relents and finally calls out, “Crucify Him.” This time not in anger, but because there is no other way. “All your righteous deeds are like a polluted garment.<sup>13</sup>” You can’t fix it. You can’t be good enough. You can’t get good enough. You can’t be without sin. You can’t win your

6 Isaiah 52:14

7 Isaiah 53:3

8 Isaiah 53:4

9 Isaiah 53:5

10 Isaiah 53:10

11 Isaiah 53:12

12 John 14:6

13 Isaiah 64:6

own salvation. Whatever good you might manage to pull off is overshadowed by your sin and your sinful cravings and desires.

How can we be saved?

With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.<sup>14</sup>

In Jesus, with Jesus, under Jesus, you can be saved. All that is required is repentance, and He must endure your penalty. In Jesus God's wrath is satisfied. The required wages for sin are paid in blood and death. Someone had to die. Jesus said, "Send Me."

He lived the perfect life you could not. He took all of your sin on Himself. He took all of it to the cross to satisfy God's wrath. Now He gives you His own righteousness in return, asking only that you trust Him and repent, and leave the real work to Him.

Today, as you "survey the wondrous cross On which the Prince of Glory died<sup>15</sup>" may you hear God's call to return to Lord. Return to Truth. Trust in the One who has promised forgiveness, salvation and eternal life for you.

See, from His head, His hands, His feet  
Sorrow and love flow mingled down!  
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet  
Or thorns compose so rich a crown?<sup>16</sup>

May the peace of God, granted through the holy, innocent, bitter sufferings and death of Jesus Christ, keep you focused on the One who lived, died and rose again to secure your forgiveness, salvation and eternal life, which come to you in repentance.

Hear the word of the Lord.

Return to the Lord.

Amen.

**Proclaim God's Word,  
Encourage one another in faith,  
Witness to God's love and  
Serve all people**



14 Matthew 19:26  
15 LSB 425:1  
16 LSB 425:3

## **The First Words**

Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.”<sup>17</sup>

The Heavenly Father’s beloved Son, with Whom the Father is well pleased, as His crucifixion begins and His suffering excels, pleads with His Father, not for vengeance on, but forgiveness for, those who crucified Him. Do you not hear the wonder of it?

The First Word from the Cross is the very reason Jesus was on the cross, for the forgiveness of sins! From the cross Jesus prays that all those who had any role in His crucifixion would be forgiven as they are led to turn, in sorrow, from their sin and to trust God for forgiveness.

Like those driving spikes into Jesus’ body, nailing Him to posts, you and I are filled with sin. Our sin put Him there. It is the reason He is there. He is there for you, and the soldiers, Pilate, Caiaphas, Herod, Judas, Adam.

There Jesus not only is crucified, but He also intercedes for us all. Our great High Priest’s sacrifice and intercession make possible our salvation and transformation, so that we in turn plead with our Heavenly Father not for vengeance, but forgiveness for those who wrong us in any way.

17 Luke 23:34

## **The Second Words**

Jesus said to him, “Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise.”<sup>18</sup>

Jesus’ prayer for those responsible for His crucifixion was “forgiveness.” Forgiveness given immediately, as one of the sinners for whom Jesus was dying turns from his sin and trusts God to forgive him, for Jesus’s sake.

The criminal, in repentance, who just earlier had reviled Jesus.<sup>19</sup> Now, seeing Jesus’ grace, mercy, and peace for those crucifying Him is led to repent and believe in Jesus as the promised One, the Messiah, his Savior. The faith that the criminal had cried out for the forgiveness that would open to him the Kingdom of Heaven.

That cry was itself immediately answered with Jesus’ very public, but also very individual, absolution or forgiveness. In His Second Word from the Cross, Jesus most-assuredly assures the repentant criminal, on that very day he would be with Jesus in paradise. There would be an end to the suffering.

As we seek Jesus’ forgiveness, in Confession and Holy Absolution, we have the same sure and certain promise, and we are at peace with God and with one another, looking forward to the eternal day of our Lord’s Kingdom.

<sup>18</sup> Luke 23:43

<sup>19</sup> Matthew 27:44; Mark 15:32



## **The Third Words**

Jesus said to the disciple, “Behold, your mother!”<sup>20</sup>

No depth of woe would keep our Lord from exercising care. Jesus lovingly entrusts His mother’s care to the disciple John, Jesus’ mother Mary was to look to John as a son, and John was to honor her like a mother.

In Jesus’ Third Word from the Cross, the Church hears Jesus’ entrusting the care of the Church to Her ministers, who should care for the Church as She looks to them for care.

In the Church, as God’s Word transforms us, making us His children, born of God from above in the water and Word of Holy Baptism, we love Him, and our neighbors, no matter how lowly, poor, or feeble they may be.

In the family of God, for whom our Lord was willing to be betrayed and crucified, we are able to exercise our care for those around us. Behold your children, parents, your brothers and sisters in Christ!

20 John 19:27

## **The Fourth Words**

Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, “Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?” That is, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”<sup>21</sup>

As darkness and death closed in on the crucified Jesus, He calls out the Fourth Word from the Cross. In the words of Psalm 22, the Words we heard as the altar was stripped last night, Jesus cries.

God had made Him who knew no sin, to be sin,  
for our sake, so that in Him  
we might become the righteousness of God.<sup>22</sup>

God the Father saw, not His holy Son, but our sin, and in His righteous wrath God abandoned Him. Unleashed on Jesus was the full force of God’s wrath and Hell’s hate. We could not imagine the horror of such a thing.

Yet, God Son does not lose faith, and continues to call to the Father. In calling out to the Father He is also calling us to faith. Quoting Psalm 22, a messianic Psalm. A Psalm foretelling of the coming Messiah. A foretelling fulfilled in Jesus, nail to that cross.

We are the ones who deserve to be forsaken and abandoned by God. Yet, because Jesus carried the burden we deserve, God does not forsake us. When we call to Him in repentance and faith, we are not alone. God’s promise is true: God will not leave us or forsake us.<sup>23</sup> We need not despair. Nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.<sup>24</sup>

21 Matthew 27:46; Psalm 22:1

22 2 Corinthians 5:21

23 Joshua 1:5; Hebrews 13:5

24 Romans 8:39

## **The Fifth Words**

Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said, to fulfill the Scripture, “I thirst.”<sup>25</sup>

Jesus is there to fulfill the foretelling. He is there to fulfill all that the Bible said He would do, long before He came in that manger. This was one more thing that needed to be done.

Knowing that all was being finished, in the Fifth Word from the Cross, as this prophecy is fulfilled, so is the need to have His lips and throat readied for the cry that is about to come, in His final Words before His death.

His thirst should prompt in us a hunger and thirst for righteousness.<sup>26</sup> A Hunger and thirst for our Lord’s Holy Meal that quenches and calms out soul.<sup>27</sup>

25 John 19:28; Psalm 22:14-15

26 Matthew 5:6

27 John 6:54-56

## **The Sixth Words**

Jesus said, "It is finished."<sup>28</sup>

With His throat quenched and clear, Jesus speaks. He speaks words that are not only for those in ear-shot. He speaks words that are not only for us. These words are words of victory, power, and conquering might. "It is finished!"

As He closes His quote of the Messianic Psalm, like a stamp "paid in full" Jesus' perfect life of love has now finished all that He left His throne above to do, for you.

Jesus perfectly kept the Torah Law that we fail to keep, and Jesus perfectly paid the price for our failure to keep that Law. There was nothing left for Jesus to do, and there is nothing left for us to do, for our salvation. It was done. It is finished.

There were things that still needed to be done:

Jesus would descend into Hell and the third day rise again from the dead, but those declare what He had already done on the cross.

Jesus ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty, but that is where He applies to us what He already has done on the cross.

Jesus will come to judge the living and the dead, but that will be the final realization of what He has already done on the cross.

For us and for our salvation. There is nothing left to do.

28 John 19:30; Psalm 22:31

## The Seventh Words

Then Jesus, calling out with a loud voice, said, “Father, into your hands I commit My spirit!” And having said this He breathed His last.<sup>29</sup>

His final Words from the cross, in prayer, commit His spirit into His Father’s hands. Scripture states, “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.<sup>30</sup>” Indeed, for the sinner, like you:

who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which He was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of grace<sup>31</sup>

it no doubt is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the righteously-angry living God. Yet we, the faithful, as we repent and believe, find God who has poured out His wrath on Jesus, is no longer angry with us, and no longer sees us as sinners.

Like His only-begotten Son, with Whom the Father was well pleased, we can commit our spirits into grace, mercy and peace found in gracious hands of our Heavenly Father. The day will come when we also will breathe our last. May we like St. Stephen, in that moment pray for the Lord Jesus to receive our spirit.<sup>32</sup>

Whether we ourselves pray, or the Holy Spirit prays for us,<sup>33</sup> we, like our Lord Jesus, so depart in peace. Amen.

29 Luke 23:46

30 Hebrews 10:21

31 Hebrews 10:29

32 Acts 7:59

33 Romans 8:26