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St. Paul's Lutheran Church
2100 16th Street SW
Austin, MN 55912-1749

Pastor Ted Barthels
Sermon preached on
April 2, 2014
5th Midweek Lent

Scripture Lessons: Psalm 14 Passion: Jesus Is Condemned
Hymns: 172:1-5; 143; 151:1-5; 565

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

Sermon Text: John 19:23-24

Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took His garments and made four parts, to each soldier a part, and also the tunic. Now the tunic was without seam, woven from the top in one piece. 24 They said therefore among themselves, "Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be," that the Scripture might be fulfilled which says:

"They divided My garments among them,
And for My clothing they cast lots."

Therefore the soldiers did these things. (NKJV)

This is the Word of God!

Sanctify us, oh Lord, through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

In Christ Jesus, our crucified Savior, dear fellow Redeemed.

INTRO: *Remarkable incidents from Jesus' Passion*

This evening we go to the cross for the incident from Jesus' passion for our Lenten meditation. While Jesus languished there upon the cross many remarkable things happened, and surely all of them are deserving of our meditation. One cannot read the Passion History without being struck by the many things that were said by Jesus' enemies, and by the Lord Himself, or the miracles that took place while Jesus suffered, and when He died. For this evening's meditation we have chosen the Roman soldiers --

THEME: Casting Lots for Jesus' Clothing.

Some might regard this incident as almost a footnote compared to all the other things that were taking place there at Calvary, but it has a powerful message for us regarding our salvation, revealing for us the deep degradation of our sin and also the surety of our salvation. Let us first consider how this incident speaks to us concerning –

I The Degradation of Our Sin.

Do you see the hardness of the human heart in the greediness and cold self-interest of the Roman guard? Man's inhumanity to man is reflected well in these men. They had stripped the Lord bare of His earthly possessions, and nailed him to the cross. They had driven the spikes through His hands and feet, and raised his scourged and beaten body onto the cross where every movement brought agonizing pain, and accentuated the wounds Jesus had already endured. As soon as this was done they turned their attention away from all the sufferings of the cross, to who should get what of the Savior's meager possessions. There were four guards there, and each was awarded a part, who got what hardly matters. The degradation of it, that Jesus meant nothing to them beyond a piece of clothing for which they might get a few pennies!

That's a glimpse of what we are. Seriously, by nature that is what we are. Cold, self-absorbed, greedy for material gain, and thinking little of the Lord who suffered so much at the hands of sinful men. Oh, I know you would like to deny that you are like that at all. But we are. We all are. We are self-absorbed. There is not a single one of us that hasn't for some moment of self-fulfillment of pleasure or gain, reaching out for the thing that our flesh desires, hasn't forgotten the Savior's pain. "Oh, but it's different," some might claim, "because it isn't happening right in front of us like it was with the Roman guard." But that's just it. The passing of time has not changed the facts of what Jesus endured. The passing of time has not diminished the price that the Lord Jesus paid in His sufferings, in His holy precious blood that we might be redeemed. Time has diminished its impact upon our consciousness, and that my friends speaks to the coldness of our sinful hearts. You see we have no excuses. These Roman soldiers acted in the ignorance of unbelief. They neither knew who Jesus was, nor why it was necessary for Him to suffer. They had no understanding of the greatness of His love for them. They were coldhearted to be sure, but from dead hearts.

We have heard the full report. We know Jesus not only as the Son of Man, but also as the Holy Son of God. We know, and yet we act as if this is old news, and not every bit as significant in every moment of my life as it was in that moment when the Roman guard greedily grabbed for Jesus' clothes. And yet we behave with such coldness that time and again

in our lives we treat sin as if it were a little thing. In Jesus' humiliating and shameful death we see the degradation of our sin. Stripped of His clothes He was shamed before the world, shamed because of our sin! Stripped of His clothes the deep wounds from the scourging and the brutal beatings, and the bitter woe were laid bare for all to see. He was regarded by the world as a vile offender. It is sin that is vile, my sin that brought this woe on Him. If you hate the way the soldiers treated Jesus with such lack of regard, don't forget it when the Tempter comes to you, and entices you to serve yourself, that is to serve your sinful desires. We are without excuse!

What love we see in our Lord! We know that He could have destroyed not only the Roman guard that was treating Him with such cold disdain, but all His enemies present at the cross. With a single word the earth could have opened and swallowed them up. But that was not His will for them. He suffered for them also that they might have forgiveness and life. He remained upon the cross and He shed His holy precious blood to pay the full price for their sins, and ours. He **“endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God”** (Hebrews 12:2).

What we gain from all this is –

II. The Surety of Our Salvation.

It is time for us to return to our text and take note of how John was directed by the Holy Spirit to record this incident in the passion of our Lord Jesus.

John 19:23-24 “Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took His garments and made four parts, to each soldier a part, and also the tunic. Now the tunic was without seam, woven from the top in one piece. 24 They said therefore among themselves, “Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be,” that the Scripture might be fulfilled which says: “They divided My garments among them, And for My clothing they cast lots.” Therefore the soldiers did these things.”

The Scriptures were fulfilled. Jesus realized the important significance of the all that the Scriptures had foretold concerning His Passion. Back in the Garden of Gethsemane Jesus made reference twice to how the Scriptures needed to be fulfilled. He would not detract from the Scriptures by asserting His own will or His own self-preservation. When Peter chose the way of violent resistance, Jesus put an immediate stop to it, citing the Scriptures.

Matthew 26:52-54 “But Jesus said to him, “Put your sword in its place, for all who take the sword will perish by the sword. 53 Or do you think that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He will provide Me with more than twelve legions of angels? 54 How then could the Scriptures be fulfilled, that it must happen thus?”

And again when Jesus turned His attention to the armed mob that had come out to arrest Him, it is revealed for us that this was all part of God’s plan. God knew centuries beforehand what would happen, and revealed these things to the prophets. So, by inspiration, Matthew concludes:

Matthew 26:56 “But all this was done that the Scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled.”

So it was also at the cross with the Roman soldiers, not that they cared or even knew what the Scriptures had foretold, but there it was written by David in Psalm 22, the psalm that opens our eyes to so much of what Jesus endured for our salvation.

Psalm 22:18 “They divide My garments among them, And for My clothing they cast lots.”

Everything the Scriptures foretold concerning the sufferings and death of Jesus were fulfilled. If only one thing fit, perhaps it could be called coincidence. If a couple things seemed to fit one might think that quite extraordinary, even a bit freaky, but everything took place even as the Lord had revealed up to a thousand years before through David serving as prophet. David prophesied concerning the events that God laid out, using yes, even wicked men, and pagans at that, to secure our salvation.

The evidence is clear beyond any doubt, this Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God which was to come into the world that we might live through Him.

This speaks to the surety of our salvation. God has done it all for us in Christ! Every word of God is true! All that was foretold has been completed, and so we are assured that “**we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son**” (Romans 5:10).

TLH 151: 6 Thou has suffered great affliction and hast borne patiently
Even death by crucifixion, Fully to atone for me;
Thou didst choose to be tormented That my doom should be prevented.
Thousand, Thousand thanks shall be, dearest Jesus unto Thee.”

AMEN.

And the peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.