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St. Paul's Lutheran Church
2100 16th Street SW
Austin, MN 55912-1749
Pastor Ted Barthels
Sermon preached on
March 6, 2016
4th Sunday in Lent

Lessons: Isaiah 53:10-12, Passion: Jesus' Trial before the Sanhedrin

Hymns: 155; 172:1-4; 143; 172:8 (242)

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

Sermon Text: Matthew 27:45-46

Now from the sixth hour until the ninth hour there was darkness over all the land. ⁴⁶ And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" that is, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" (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, fellow Redeemed:

INTRO: Jesus said!

That expression captures our attention, and it should. We give high regard to the words of our Lord as we study the Scriptures, even as we understand that every word of God

is pure, and divinely inspired, and written for our learning. As we study the teachings of Jesus we find His words often give us a special insight into the gospel and how the Lord Himself brought us our salvation.

Our Sunday meditations this Lenten season are based on short statements that Jesus made that are connected to the Lord's passion. Most of the passages selected were uttered in those hours of Maundy Thursday and Good Friday when Jesus was enduring the sufferings of the wrath of God against the sin of the world. This morning we are basing our meditation on the fourth of the seven words which Jesus spoke from the cross.

The first three words from the cross reveal the depth of Jesus' love and grace, even in the midst of the anguish, and enduring the abuse of mockery thrown at Him from many of those gathered at the foot of the cross. Beginning with this fourth word from the cross Jesus turns His thoughts upward to His Father in heaven, revealing the measure of the wrath of God which Jesus endured while He suffered crucifixion.

May the Holy Spirit open our hearts to appreciate the wonder of salvation revealed by Jesus when He said:

**THEME: My God, My God, Why Have You
Forsaken Me?**

If we are to appreciate what it took for Christ to redeem us we need to consider –

I. What it Means to be Forsaken by God.

This is a great challenge for us for we cannot relate to this on any level. To be literally forsaken by God is beyond human experience in this life. God has not completely abandoned anyone in His creation. **“He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust”** (Matthew 5:45).

That is not what we see happening with Jesus on the cross. It is more than symbolic that for those last three hours of Jesus’ suffering the sun stopped shining. It was from this darkness of soul as well as the physical darkness that Jesus called out the words foretold by David in the 22nd Psalm: **“My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?”**(v.46).

So it was that Jesus the Son of Man was abandoned by God. God forsook Him, having nothing to do with Him. The greater mystery of this is how God the Father forsook His Son, His only begotten Son, the Son of whom He declared, **“My beloved Son”** (Luke 3:22). Now Jesus, the true Son of God from eternity, was the object of God’s wrath and displeasure. Jesus was subjected to the full intensity of the curse of the law which is the complete separation of soul and body from God in hell. Yes, in these hours of darkness Jesus endured that God-forsakenness that is reserved for the devil and his fallen angels in hell, the spiritual sufferings that will be endured by those who will not believe in Jesus’ merits for deliverance.

That God forsook God magnifies the extent of that event so that Jesus’ spiritual sufferings in those hours of darkness are more than equivalent to the sufferings of hell for eternity, by angels or sinful men.

We know Jesus was holy, so it is incumbent upon us to answer the question:

II. What Is The Cause of this Judgment?

It was God's judgment to forsake Jesus, and without doubt it is the worst of all the sufferings which Jesus endured while languishing on the cross. Since we can relate to physical pain and suffering we tend to dwell on the injustice that Jesus was condemned to be scourged and crucified, that Jesus was sentenced to death. But this goes beyond the pale. This is a depth of sufferings, a condemnation that we cannot grasp. What would cause God to make this judgment, to lay this punishment upon Jesus?

As children of God we know the answer. As children of God we can quickly recite the answer. We read in Ezekiel, "**The soul who sins shall die.**" (Ezekiel 18:20). And again we know what is written in the Epistle to the Romans: "**The wages of sin is death.**" (Romans 6:23).

These passages are short and to the point, but it seems that point doesn't make a very deep impression on us so much of the time as we continue to sin. We are lost and condemned creatures who incite God to great wrath. That wrath is what we see poured out upon Jesus in the darkness of those hours on the cross that caused Jesus to cry out loudly for all to hear: "**My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?**" (v. 46).

"Alas! And did my Savior bleed,
And did my Sov'reign die?
Would He devote that sacred head

For such a worm as I?

Was it for crimes that I had done
He groaned upon the tree?
Amazing pity, grace unknown,
And love beyond degree!

Well might the sun in darkness hide
And shut his glories in
When God, the mighty Maker, died
For man, the creature's sin."

(The Lutheran Hymnal 154:1-3)

We cannot escape the conclusion: "**He bore our sins in His own body on the tree**" (1 Peter 2:24).

Finally we need to understand:

III. Why Jesus?

It is all about the glorious gospel truth of the vicarious atonement.

Why Jesus? Because He was and is our brother. He took on our flesh and blood so that He could be our substitute, being born under the law. Not only did that mean that He was expected to keep the law, but He was also the One chosen by God to endure the punishment prescribed by the law.

Being also true God Jesus was the one sacrifice that could be offered for sin, once for all, for all men for all time. As a result of the Savior willingly submitting Himself even to this God-forsakenness, we have been saved. We read of this in --

Galatians 2:13 “Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, ‘Cursed *is* everyone who hangs on a tree’).”

He was cursed, and we are redeemed. He paid the price that we owed God, the price of His life’s blood. He paid the price! We are bought and paid for by Jesus, our Redeemer. That is what it means when we call Him our Redeemer; He paid the price, endured the wrath of God in our place so that we would not be under the wrath of God. The result of this, the benefit of Jesus enduring being forsaken by God is that **we have peace**.

Romans 8:1-5 “*There is* therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. ²For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus **has made me free from the law of sin and death**. ³For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God *did* by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: **He condemned sin in the flesh**, ⁴**that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us** who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.”

Jesus freed us from the curse the law demands be laid upon us. Jesus fulfilled the righteous requirement of the law. He endured the wrath of God in our behalf. There is no condemnation left in our future, either here in time or hereafter in eternity for all those who put their trust in Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross. All that is left is peace. **“Having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, ²through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which**

we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God”
(Romans 5:1-2).

And so as we call to mind this word of Jesus in our meditations upon His passion it should indeed invoke some rather conflicting emotions within our hearts. We should be shocked by the reality of God’s wrath against our sin. We should be stunned by the wonder of God’s grace that He would inflict this punishment upon His beloved Son instead of us. We should be moved to tears of appreciation and love by the salvation which Jesus secured for us lost and condemned creatures, that we might have life in His name. The God-forsakenness has been removed from us and replaced with eternal life and peace.

Praise Jesus’ glorious name!

AMEN.

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