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St. Paul's Lutheran Church
2100 16th Street SW
Austin, MN 55912-1749
Pastor Ted Barthels
Sermon preached on
March 21, 2018
6th Midweek Lent

Scriptures: Psalm 143, Passion History: Calvary
Hymns: 376; 156; 158; 558

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

Sermon Text: Matthew 27:45-54

⁴⁵ 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?"

⁴⁷ Some of those who stood there, when they heard *that*, said, "This
Man is calling for Elijah!" ⁴⁸ Immediately one of them ran and took
a sponge, filled *it* with sour wine and put *it* on a reed, and offered it
to Him to drink.

⁴⁹ The rest said, "Let Him alone; let us see if Elijah will come to
save Him."

⁵⁰ And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His
spirit.

⁵¹ Then, behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to
bottom; and the earth quaked, and the rocks were split, ⁵² and the
graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints who had fallen
asleep were raised; ⁵³ and coming out of the graves after His
resurrection, they went into the holy city and appeared to many.

⁵⁴ So when the centurion and those with him, who were guarding
Jesus, saw the earthquake and the things that had happened, they
feared greatly, saying, "Truly this was the Son of God!" (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: "I can't even look at you right now!"

Have you ever been so mad at someone that you turned away? It's beyond the glaring mad. It's the mad with a deep sense of hurt attached to it. I am willing to guess that everyone here, at one point in your life or another, has felt that kind of anger, that kind of hurt, that kind of bitter disappointment. Yes for that kind of hurt and disappointment to be connected with anger it has almost got to be because someone you trusted, someone you loved, someone to whom you had shown kindness, perhaps even great kindness betrayed that love and that kindness.

With royalty in this world the turning away of the king's face from a subject, or a rival, well it is was almost certainly a death sentence. God turning away His face from anyone would portend the most severe consequences befalling that individual. Is this what awaits us in the final judgment, that God is so disgusted with us that He turns His face away from us, that when He does look upon us it is with only wrath and indignation? With all of His merciful kindness toward us, and all of our shameless, selfish sinfulness toward Him, how could it be any other way?

We find a most gracious answer to that question revealed when we see --

THEME: The Redeemer of the World Forsaken.

I. My God, My God, Why Have You Forsaken Me?

Darkness covered the earth. One could engage in a long debate as to whether this darkness was regional or global. It was not an eclipse. It was more than that. It was longer than that. Luke reports in his gospel that the sun was darkened. This darkness was pervasive, and it lasted three hours, from noon to three p.m. It was at three o'clock that Jesus cried out those telling words: "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" that is, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" (v.46)

There are two important matters for our consideration in Jesus' cry. First, do we appreciate what it means to be forsaken by God? Yes, I opened with the thought that God would turn His face away from us, and that would indicate the most serious consequences, but exactly what are those consequences? No one alive on this earth fully comprehends the serious nature of being forsaken by God. While this earth remains the Lord still sends His rain and His sunshine upon both the wicked and the good. (Matthew 5:45) He still sustains all things, He still blesses all the earth with His providential grace. He does this because it is not His desire that the sinner should die but that the sinner would still turn from his sin and live. (Ezekiel 33:11) The Lord sustains this world with all its evil because He looks for repentance. Peter expressed this truth so well when he wrote "The Lord is not slack concerning *His* promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance." (2 Peter 3:9)

To be forsaken by God must then be unearthly, indeed what we do not lightly prefer to as "hellish." To be forsaken by God is to experience the full curse of the law, that death which goes beyond physical death, that death which goes beyond the spiritual death of unbelief, that death which is only known to those who have been forsaken forever in hell, "where 'Their worm does not die And the fire is not quenched,'" (Mark 9:48)

where "there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." (Matthew 22:13) This is what our blessed Savior, the eternal Son, Jesus Christ the righteous experienced as He languished upon the cross.

And now we need to ask with Jesus, "Why?" Why was Jesus forsaken by God? Why was Jesus stricken, smitten by God and afflicted?" (Isaiah 53:4) It was not simply a mistake, a wrongful conviction. Jesus had never sinned, and one could make that argument, that it was all mistake, but it was no mistake. It was absolutely intentional, purposeful. I said "purposeful" and not "on purpose." I said "purposeful" because Jesus Christ the righteous enduring the wrath of God was the only way for God's purpose to be fulfilled.

By the grace of God the Holy Spirit you have been brought to understand the answer to Jesus' question.

“My burden in Thy Passion, Lord, Thou hast borne for me,
For it was my transgression Which brought this woe on Thee.
I cast me down before Thee; Wrath were my rightful lot.
Have mercy, I implore Thee; Redeemer spurn me not.”

(The Lutheran Hymnal 172:4)

II. How Does One Respond to this Anguished Cry?

Our text records the response of those who stood by watching at the foot of the cross. Maybe we would use the word “clueless.” It is actually a pretty good fit. They continued in their ridicule, their laughter, their mockery. To them this was all pretty much a big joke. Tragically, too many still think lightly of what Jesus endured, or simply fail to comprehend at all what this entailed, that the Redeemer of the world was forsaken. Clueless. That is where man will always end up by nature, for with personal reflection no one can find the answer that can only be found in the divine justice, and in the incomprehensible grace of God. It comes to us only by the light of the gospel being shined on our dark hearts.

Then we see the greatness of God's love for us. Then we see the greatness of Jesus' love for us. Then we see how wondrous His grace must be toward us, that He would endure this, being forsaken by His Father; God, forsaken by God that we might have redemption, peace and life in His name. Yes, then we fall on our knees before the cross in humble awe of the greatness of this salvation.

III. By the Redeemer of the world being forsaken we are blessed.

How great was that blessing! Our text reports that crying out again with a loud voice Jesus yielded up His spirit.(v.50) He died. He had to die. He had to endure the full curse of the law for us. He had to go to death and the grave for us. He died that we might live. He died that we might be brought before God in peace. The moment Jesus died the curtain in the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. Yes, no longer was that separation caused by our sin in

place. At different times in our Lenten meditations I have already referenced this miracle and its gracious significance. Now we do so from the other direction. Now God looks down upon us in grace.

In the Aaronic Benediction, the blessing we use most commonly on Sundays, one of the aspects of that blessing with which Aaron was to bless God's people was "The Lord make His face to shine upon you." It is a wondrous picture of God's face shining with love, and good favor, with joy as He looks down upon His people, as He looks down from heaven upon **you**. It is truly incomprehensible for us that this should even be possible considering how we treat the Lord, sinning day after day. We are all guilty of dismissing the importance of God in our daily lives, and we do this when we forget to thank Him in our table prayers, or think we have more important considerations in life than coming before the Lord's presence, and praising Him for all His blessings of body and soul. We are all guilty of giving the Lord short shrift. Yes, it is beyond amazing that the Lord makes His face to shine when He looks down upon us. We might say He smiles down upon us and looks upon us as a loving Father beholding His dear, dear children. We need to ask, we absolutely need to know how this is even possible.

It is only possible by grace through faith in Jesus. We are so blessed with God's favor because we see Jesus, the Redeemer of the world forsaken.

AMEN.

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