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St. Paul's Lutheran Church
2100 16th Street SW
Austin, MN 55912-1749
Pastor Ted Barthels
Sermon preached on
April 3, 2019
5th Midweek Lent

Passion History Lessons: Jesus Is Condemned
Hymns: 390; 151:1-4 371; 554:1,5,6

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

Sermon Text: John 19:23-24

²³Then 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. ²⁴They 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 Crucified, God our Savior, dear fellow Redeemed:

INTRO: They even took the clothes off His back!

There is perhaps no other incident in the life of Christ that so emphatically lays before us the depths of Jesus' poverty than does this action of the soldiers who carried out the

sentence of execution by crucifixion. Earlier in His ministry Jesus had warned an individual that desired to be one of Jesus' disciples that "*Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head.*" (Matthew 8:20) Jesus owned no great estate. Earthly wealth was of no importance to Jesus. Pretty much all Jesus owned was the clothes on His back, and now even these others took for themselves, as they hung Him naked on the cross.

This act of taking the clothes of the condemned was part of the punishment so that the condemned were not only exposed to the elements but exposed to shame, being publicly degraded before the world. With Christ it is symbolic of a far greater degradation that was inflicted upon Him, not by men, but by His Father in heaven.

However, the act of His clothing being taken and, right there before Him, being meted out and divided among the Roman soldiers brings a sense of reality of the extreme depths of Jesus' humiliation and the absolute abject poverty endured by our Savior. "*For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich.*" (2 Corinthians 8:9)

This evening our memento of Jesus' Passion is one of those articles of clothing which was taken from Jesus on the occasion of His crucifixion. There was one article of Jesus' clothing which was special, not the common clothing for the common man. This was the garment worn under the outer cloak or robe. What was special about this garment was that it was not made of separate pieces of cloth that were then sewn together. It was woven one piece from top to bottom, one continuous seamless cloth.

Let us consider the significance of --

THEME: Laying Claim to the Seamless Garment of Christ.

As we view these events we gain far more than the soldiers who actually split up the last of Jesus' earthly possessions. We gain

I. The Confidence of Scripture Fulfilled.

These four soldiers sitting at the foot of Jesus' cross had no knowledge of Scripture, and cared even less what the Scriptures of the Jews might or might not say. They were doing what they were ordered to do. They had nailed this guy to the cross and were standing guard lest anyone attempt to interfere with the execution or offer aid or comfort to the condemned. While they were going about their duty they might as well benefit themselves in any way they could. Moved by avarice and greed they proceeded to take for themselves the small pile of clothes sitting at the foot of Jesus' cross before anyone else helped themselves or claimed them.

For the most part it was an easy process, one could take the head gear Jesus may have worn. Another could take the girdle or belt, yet another the cloak or outer garment, while the last would lay claim to a new pair of sandals. But then they ran into a little snag in the whole process. Not only had they each now received a part of Jesus' possessions, the one item they had left was of greater value than the rest, a woven, seamless garment. To divide it would mean to tear it and it would be ruined; they would gain nothing. What they agreed upon was they would cast lots for it, and one would be selected by lot to lay claim to Jesus' seamless garment. There were different ways to cast lots in common practice in those days, and which it was they used is of no significance. What is important to us, indeed of tremendous significance is that it was a matter of casting lots that determined who would come into possession of this rare article of clothing.

One might wonder what impact this dealing among these Roman soldiers could possibly have on us, living two thousand years later. After all there were no miraculous or

supernatural attributes to any of Jesus' clothing. These men took them home and wore them or sold them, or bartered them away for something else of more value to them in their lives. The different articles of Jesus' clothing were lost to Jesus, and there is no doubt that they all went the way of the world. They were worn by someone else, worn out and then used as rags or simply discarded.

The significance for us is pointed out for us by John in the fact that these Roman soldiers fulfilled the Scriptures, showing by the authority of the Word of God that Jesus is the Christ. What no one could know, what many had failed to understand about Jesus God had revealed centuries earlier through the prophetic writing of King David, "*They divide My garments among them, And for My clothing they cast lots.*" (Psalm 22:18)

The knowledge of God concerning the events surrounding Jesus death is described in vivid detail in this 22nd Psalm, with this specific detail standing out in bold relief by what John witnessed as he stood by the cross of His Lord. Without doubt this confirms again that Jesus is the Christ who came into this world to save sinners.

More than this, all that the Scriptures declare concerning the Christ is confirmed. Salvation is in and through Christ alone. Against all the machinations and maneuvers of man one fact stands out -- God is in His heaven and He is in control. God is faithful. His words and promises are true! So we possess the seamless garment of the Word of God!

This memento of the Lord's seamless garment encourages us in --

II. Laying Claim to a Far Greater Seamless Garment.

The seamless garment for which the soldiers gambled has been written about in novels and even been the subject of movie speculation, but that garment, as nice as it might

have been, as much “to do” about it as people would like to make, was nothing more than a piece of cloth which deteriorated with time and has most certainly passed into oblivion. But as we gather at the foot of cross of Christ we are reminded of another wonderful and absolutely perfect seamless garment. It was a garment Jesus talked about in one of His parables. (Matthew 22:1-14) In the parable of the wedding feast only those were allowed to enter into the east who were appropriately attired with the wedding garment their host had supplied for them. As the soldiers gambled for Jesus’ seamless garment Jesus hung upon the cross finishing a greater and more glorious garment which we now possess, not by mere chance, but by the Spirit calling us to faith in His name.

This is the garment of Jesus’ righteousness completed for us by Jesus’ sufferings and death on the cross. This robe of His righteousness is our very life. In one our hymns we sing -

*“Jesus, Thy blood and righteousness
My beauty are My glorious dress;
Midst flaming worlds in these arrayed
With joy shall I life up my head.”* (The Lutheran Hymnal 371:1)

What we sing in these words is true. In the fires of the judgment of this world we shall be looking up to the heavens to the glorious reappearing of our God and Savior Jesus. We shall be prepared to meet Him! No matter what this life may bring, no matter what the world may do to us, adorned by the robes of Christ’s righteousness we are secure for time and eternity!

We possess the victory which was revealed to John in Revelation

Revelation 7:9-10, 13-14 *“After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white*

robes, with palm branches in their hands, ¹⁰ and crying out with a loud voice, saying, 'Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!' ...

¹³ Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, 'Who are these arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from?'

¹⁴ And I said to him, 'Sir, you know.'

So he said to me, 'These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.'"

People of every nation, of every race, or every language under the sun, have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of Jesus at the foot of the cross.

A Seamless Garment is our memento of Jesus' sufferings and death.

When we consider the circumstances and events that took place at the foot of the cross, we marvel. We marvel at the hand of God whose plan for our salvation was revealed in such detail through the prophets. His plan was brought to pass in perfect fulfillment of all the Scriptures. We are blessed with a wondrous confidence of the sure and certain truth of all the Scriptures say and declare.

We are also blessed with the knowledge that we possess a perfect seamless garment of righteousness which Christ has prepared for us. Adorned in this seamless garment of Jesus' righteousness we have forgiveness of sins and access to the heavenly mansions where He has a place prepared for us to dwell with Him forevermore.

AMEN.

"Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, To receive power and riches and wisdom. (Revelation 5:12) Amen.

(The congregation response is hymn 367:4 printed following the sermon in your bulletin.)

**“Worship, honor, power, and blessing Thou art
worthy to receive; Loudest praises, without ceasing,
Meet it is for us to give. Help, ye bright angelic
spirits, Bring your sweetest, noblest lays; Help to
sing our Savior's merits, Help to chant Immanuel's
praise.”**