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St. Paul's Lutheran Church
2100 16th Street SW
Austin, MN 55912-1749
Pastor Ted Barthels
Sermon preached on
March 22, 2020
4th Sunday in Lent

Passion History Lessons: Trial and Denial
Hymns: 145; 156; 175; 173:1

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

Sermon Text: Isaiah 53: 8-9

⁸ He was taken from prison and from judgment,
And who will declare His generation?
For He was cut off from the land of the living;
For the transgressions of My people He was
stricken.

⁹ And they made His grave with the wicked—
But with the rich at His death,
Because He had done no violence,
Nor *was any* deceit in His mouth. (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: The Ultimate Sacrifice

That expression brings an immediate response in our thinking. We know what is meant by the ultimate sacrifice. We use it when we speak of members of our armed forces who lose their lives, or those extreme circumstances when many lives were in peril, and some stepped up to save those lives at the cost of their own. For some of us our minds go back to the terror attacks of 9-11. When thousands of people were running for their lives there were those first responders who were running into the inferno to save lives at the cost of their own.

We know that this takes place time and again. In a recent mass shooting, a young college student rushed the shooter, and made that ultimate sacrifice and is credited with the saving of many, many lives that might otherwise have been lost. These are exceptional accounts of bravery and sacrifice. Jesus told His disciples on the night before He died: *“This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends. You are My friends if you do whatever I command you.”* (John 15:12-14)

What this brings before us is the truth of the gospel. While many have forfeited their lives to save the lives of others, there is in fact only one **Ultimate** Sacrifice, and that is the sacrifice that Jesus made on our behalf. This sacrifice became Our Sacrifice before God for it was the all atoning sacrifice of Christ that saved our lives. It required

nothing less than Jesus' death on the cross. On the basis of the words of the prophet Isaiah let us consider --

THEME: Our Sacrifice Unto Death.

I. He Was Cut Off From the Land of the Living

Isaiah 53:8

He was taken from prison and from judgment,
And who will declare His generation?
For He was cut off from the land of the living;
For the transgressions of My people He was
stricken.

In concise words the Spirit leads Isaiah to convey to us a great and astounding truth. The opening words of this verse of Isaiah's prophecy speak of a condemned man. It is the condemned man that is forcibly taken from prison and from judgment. Jesus, though falsely accused was led bound as a prisoner, experiencing what today is known as the "perp walk." The appearance of guilt and shame speaks loudly to all of the person's crimes. Many conclude automatically that the guilt is there for all to see. It is an easy leap to the conclusion that this man deserves to die.

The next line of our text is a bit more challenging to understand. Actually it is a statement of how Jesus stood alone without any one speaking up in His defense, without anyone telling His side of the story before the Jewish High Council, or before

the judgement seat of Pontius Pilate. None of Jesus' contemporaries shouted out, "That's not true! Jesus is a good Man!" There were none that spoke to Pilate of the wonders and miracles of healing Jesus had performed. There were none that testified before Pilate that Jesus spoke of love and repentance and the true worship of God.

Indeed at the time of Jesus' death there were none who fathomed the miracle of love that was being presented before them. No one then was meditating on this death as a miracle of grace, a meditation which it deserved. No one spoke of Jesus' death as being the Ultimate Sacrifice, that Jesus was the one who was going toward the danger, into the fire, the very fires of hell, in order to save the lives of others not only for time but for eternity.

"He was cut off from the land of the living" makes it quite clear that this was a personal sacrifice that went the limit. This was a sacrifice unto death. Again consider that expression the ultimate sacrifice. We all think of laying down one's physical life. And yes Jesus went to the cross and there He gave up His life for us. However we must also remember Jesus' own words from the cross revealing how His was truly the ultimate sacrifice. When Jesus cried out: *"My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"* (Matthew 27:46) we are brought to a deeper understanding of His sacrifice unto death. His sacrifice went beyond physical, temporal death. This death plumbed the depths of the despair of hell, the God-

forsakenness of hell. This is the death He died as our Sacrifice.

Jesus would lay down His life for those whom He loved. But what about those whom He loved? They weren't the innocent. Jesus wasn't going to sacrifice His life to save the innocent. He laid down His life for the guilty. He laid down His life for our transgressions. Again we need to appreciate that this word is a word that conveys willful rebellion against the God's law. Willful rebellion. Not accidental slips into some minor violations of some unknown regulations put in place by bureaucrats. That would be one thing if we had gotten in trouble, in deep trouble over things that were not understood to be wrong. That was not the case. It was for our transgressions, for our rebellion against God, for all those many times when we have done what we wanted even when we knew it flew against all that God has willed and revealed for us in His Word.

A truly amazing truth about this grace is found in one little word in this line of our text. That word is "**My**." God looked down from heaven upon rebellious sinners and said "**My** people." He loved us with an everlasting love, and knew us from before the world began, and chose us to be His holy people. We read of this amazing love and grace in Paul's epistle to the Romans: "*For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die.* ⁸ *But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*" (Romans 5:7-8)

Jesus made the ultimate sacrifice in His accursed death on the cross. But what came after His death?

II. Jesus' Distinguished Burial.

The turn in our text is dramatic. There was one end that came to criminals, especially those who were sent to the ignominious death of crucifixion, and it was not an honorable one. So also their burial was not destined to be honorable. Condemned criminals were left in unmarked graves, often mass graves with dirt and rocks piled up, and left to be forgotten. They deserved nothing better than this.

This was not true for Jesus! This was not to be the kind of burial Jesus would receive.

Isaiah 53:9 And they made His grave with the wicked—

But with the rich at His death,
Because He had done no violence,
Nor *was any* deceit in His mouth.”

They had made His grave with the wicked. The malefactors were wicked men. Jesus was put to death with them on Golgotha, the place of the skull. It was not a glorious altar but a disgraceful cross outside of the city limits where the despised and the shameful and the wicked should meet their end. And there He gave up His life as our sacrifice to God.

But then the Spirit of God would intervene. When it was time for the bodies of the condemned to be removed so that the Passover Sabbath would not be defiled, Joseph a rich man from the town of Arimathea stepped forward. He was a member of the council that had condemned Jesus but he had not gone along with that judgment. He had been a secret disciple, as another member of the Sanhedrin named Nicodemus had been also. They had feared the Jews. They had feared the consequences of being known as followers of Jesus, as disciples of Jesus, but no longer. Joseph came to Pilate to claim the body. Surprising to say the least. People didn't step forward to claim the bodies of those condemned to crucifixion, much less a rich and prominent member of Jewish society AND the Sanhedrin. Pilate gave Joseph Jesus' body and Joseph proceeded to take Jesus' body to the new tomb Joseph had prepared for his own burial. A new tomb was very special, for it had not been defiled with the remains of others.

All this was part of God's plan laid out for Isaiah to record six hundred years before Jesus was even born. It was part of God's plan for Jesus to receive such an honorable burial, the burial that only the wealthy might receive. Why? Because it was not ever to be forgotten that Jesus' death was not because of crimes that He had done but for the crimes of others. *"He had done no violence, Nor was any deceit in His mouth."* (v.9) Jesus was not the violent criminal deserving of crucifixion. He was an innocent man. In all that Jesus taught, in all His life, He had deceived no one. Even when

others would have pressed Him to take on earthly power and glory that was never ever His goal in life. It was always and only to bring the kingdom of God to us, to bring life and salvation to fallen sinners.

That is what God acknowledged in the Jesus' burial. His innocence and yes, His glory is proclaimed by an honorable burial among the sepulchers of the rich.

"O darkest woe! Ye tears forth flow!
Has earth so sad a wonder?
God the Father's only Son
Now is buried yonder.

Oh blest shall be Eternally
Who oft in faith will ponder
Why the glorious Prince of Life
Should be buried yonder." (The Lutheran Hymnal
167:1,6)

AMEN.

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