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St. Paul's Lutheran Church  
2100 16<sup>th</sup> Street SW  
Austin, MN 55912-1749  
Pastor Ted Barthels  
Sermon preached on  
March 13, 2022  
2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday in Lent

O. T. Lesson: Isaiah 52:13-53:3

Hymns: 390; 159; 151:1-5; 151:6-7

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

Sermon Text: Matthew 27:41-42

“Likewise the chief priests also, mocking with the scribes and elders, said, <sup>42</sup>“He saved others; Himself He cannot save. If He is the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe Him.” (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: Consider your words carefully --

You may have heard more than once in your life that you ought to pick your words carefully to be sure that you are saying what you really intend to say, what you ought rightly to say. You may be saying something more or different than you intended or desired to communicate. That is what lies at the heart of our sermon series these Lenten Sundays. We are considering the veiled truths spoken by individuals who perhaps should have known what they were saying, but actually understood only the very surface truth of their own words.

Now, we have the benefit of living when all things have been completed, and the Holy Spirit has “**unveiled**” the truth of what was said. The Holy Spirit has opened our hearts to believe the wonders of grace that are to be found in the gospel truth of Christ crucified. We confess that truth with the various creeds and confessions of the church. We hear the truth read

to us. We speak the truth. Do we perceive and marvel at the truth that enters our ears and hearts, and that is spoken by our lips?

This time spent on the Passion of our Lord every year is precious and important. We pray the words of the hymnwriter. “*Jesus, I will ponder now on Thy holy passion.*” (TLH 140:1) This is a time for pondering truths greater than we can comprehend, with the prayer that the Holy Spirit will continue to lift the veil from our hearts that we might grow in grace and in our knowledge and appreciation of the message of Christ crucified.

This morning we consider the veiled words of the chief priests as they stood at the foot of cross, not to mourn, not to support, but to mock and jeer Jesus:

**THEME: “He Saved Others; Himself He cannot Save.”**

The jeer thrown at Jesus had an element of truth even His enemies were willing to grant –

### **I. He Saved Others.**

There were many gathered out at Golgotha on the day Jesus was crucified. Calvary was just off one of the main roads leading into Jerusalem. The Romans liked to have public places for crucifixion sites. They wanted people to see what happened to those who angered Rome. But this was different. These weren't just people passing by that happened to see these three men hanging on crosses as they continued on their way with a bit of a shudder at the grotesque scene. This crowd came out to watch Jesus die. There wouldn't have been so much interest in the other two, but Jesus had both enemies and disciples as well as family gathered out there at Calvary. While family and followers of Jesus mourned at the Lord's crucifixion, the chief priests, the PRIESTS, as well as scribes, that is masters in the law of God, and elders of the people, those who were supposed to be respected by the people, they gathered at the foot of Jesus' cross to mock Him in His agony. Among the taunts thrown at Jesus were the words found in our text “*He saved others; Himself He cannot save. If He is the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe Him.*” (v.42)

Let's consider the veiled truth in those first few words: “*He saved others.*” What were these enemies of Jesus thinking? What were they acknowledging despite their animosity? They were acknowledging at least this much, that Jesus had done good for people, indeed for many people. He had saved others. He had saved people from the dread disease

of leprosy, and from demon possession, and all sorts of other diseases. The gospel accounts of Jesus' ministry list but a few of Jesus' many miracles, reporting that many, many others were healed by Him. Jesus healed the paralyzed man. Jesus had raised the dead to life again! The most recent such miracle was only weeks earlier in Bethany where Jesus raised Lazarus from his tomb on the fourth day after Lazarus had died. On this final trip to Jerusalem Jesus had restored the sight of two blind men in Jericho. **He saved others!** Even Jesus enemies confessed this truth with their taunts, even though they failed to see what the miracles revealed, that Jesus was the Christ!

The **unveiled** truth goes so much further. Think of those to whom Jesus had also announced the forgiveness of sins and thereby gave them the hope of everlasting life. Remember the paralyzed man that had to be lowered to Jesus through a hole in the roof. "*When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven you."* (Mark 2:5) And again think of the man crucified right next to Jesus, and the assurance of salvation granted this criminal. "*Jesus said to him, 'Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.'*" (Luke 23:43) Jesus saved others in a far greater manner than His enemies knew or believed.

This is the unveiled truth with which we are blessed. That proclamation that Jesus saved others, well, it includes **us** as well as those who were alive in the days of Jesus' ministry. Indeed, it includes countless thousands going back to the beginning of time who placed their hope in the promises of God, all the way forward to our day, two millennia following Jesus' crucifixion. With the shedding of His holy precious blood, and His innocent suffering and death, Jesus saved us.

## **II. He Wouldn't Save Himself.**

The taunt from the chief priests was, "*Himself He cannot save!*" (v.42) They challenged Jesus to come down from the cross. They didn't believe that was even possible! The **veiled truth** was that Jesus was nailed to the cross, large spikes had been driven through the base of His hands and through His feet. He wasn't going anywhere until He was dead! One cannot help but hear a sense of glee in their voices as they looked at Jesus scourged and beaten with thorn crowned head on the cross. No, they didn't like the indictment nailed above Jesus' head that proclaimed He was the King of the Jews, but they rejoiced to see Him stuck there on the cross and dying. "*Himself He cannot save.*" If He would come down, then they would believe in Him? What would they believe about Jesus if He did come down from the cross?

It makes one wonder if this wasn't the devil's final pitch to defeat Jesus in His mission. Get Jesus on the cross, where He is to fulfill His mission of redemption, and then tempt Him to come down from the cross, to show these arrogant fools His almighty power! The devil knew who Jesus was and the extent of His power. The devil knew that Jesus was fully capable of coming down off the cross, as capable of that as striking down His enemies even from the cross. As the Christ Jesus could not save Himself. As the Christ the cross was the altar of sacrifice where He, as the spotless Lamb of God, paid the price for the sins of the world, where He gave Himself into death that the curse of death might be dispelled once and for all.

The **unveiled truth** is that Jesus **would not** save Himself. The unveiled truth was Jesus was in control, fulfilling His mission of salvation given to Him by His Father in heaven. The timing was not set by the chief priests and scribes. On other occasions Jesus had walked right through the midst of those who would hurt or kill Him, because His time had not yet come, but Luke reports: ***“when the time had come for Him to be received up, that He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem.”*** (Luke 9:51) The chief priests had determined that it not happen during the feast of the Passover. However, the Lord had determined that was exactly the right time for the true Paschal Lamb of God to be offered for the sins of the world.

He could not save Himself and us. He chose to save us! Even though it weighed upon His soul so heavily that His sweat was like great drops of blood falling to the ground in Gethsemane, yet He prayed, ***“Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless **not My will, but Yours, be done.**”*** (Luke 22:42) Jesus went forward to meet His enemies and gave Himself into their hands. God picked the time and the place, and used the machinations of evil men to fulfill His purpose of salvation in the death of His Son. **He saved others, He saved US! Himself He could not save!**

*“Thou hast suffered great affliction And hast borne it 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.”*

(The Lutheran Hymnal 151:6)

**AMEN.**

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