

Good Friday
“Wrapped in Superstition”
(Luke 23:50-55)
March 29, 2024
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Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, our text for this Good Friday is from our Gospel reading, Luke 23:50-55.

“50 Now behold, there was a man named Joseph, a council member, a good and just man. 51 He had not consented to their decision and deed. He was from Arimathea, a city of the Jews, who himself was also waiting for the kingdom of God. 52 This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. 53 Then he took it down, wrapped it in linen, and laid it in a tomb that was hewn out of the rock, where no one had ever lain before. 54 That day was the Preparation, and the Sabbath drew near. 55 And the women who had come with Him from Galilee followed after, and they observed the tomb and how His body was laid.

So far the text...

Last night we heard Jesus speak of the New Covenant that He institutes and graciously gives. It is covenant, an unbreakable testament, that gives life to the world. But, in order to establish this covenant, it had to be written with His precious blood. The Testator had to give His life. Jesus had to experience death, both spiritual and physical. This is the reality of Good Friday. Jesus, the Son of God, and Son of Man, died and He was wrapped in linen cloths as is the custom of a Jewish burial. Tonight we focus on that reality and what that means for us. We focus on how this day and all our days are good days in Jesus. For we look up at the One lifted on the cross and believe that He is the Son of God, our Savior. And in faith the venom of our sin cannot harm us, for Jesus received the venomous bite of the serpent. Jesus heel was mortally bruised so that Satan’s head would be crushed.

To understand the reality of Jesus’ death, and remove all superstition, we hear once again Jesus’ very word that we read from Psalm 22 at the close of the service last night. We read Jesus very thoughts as He described the physical pangs that He suffered, the reproach of the people, and most terribly the reproach of His Father.

**“I am poured out like water,
And all My bones are out of joint;
My heart is like wax;
It has melted within Me.
15 My strength is dried up like a potsherd,**

**And My tongue clings to My jaws;
You have brought Me to the dust of death.**

**16 For dogs have surrounded Me;
The congregation of the wicked has enclosed Me.
They pierced My hands and My feet;
17 I can count all My bones.
They look and stare at Me.
18 They divide My garments among them,
And for My clothing they cast lots.**

The unbelieving dogs, the congregation of the wicked, Satan's congregation, surrounded Him, staring at Him, enjoying the spectacle of His life slowly slipping away. **"He trusted in the Lord, let Him rescue Him; Let Him deliver Him, since He delights in Him!"**

Jesus strength is physically gone, poured out like water, hands and feet pierced. And He is alone. Though He cries out to His Father for help, He receives none. For this is the depth of His suffering that bearing our sins, He is rejected, abandoned and forsaken by His God. Jesus speaks as a true Man. Though He has done no wrong, He is cut off from His God who has **"From My mother's womb... been My God."** This is the spiritual death that Jesus was suffering. It makes no sense to Jesus. He recalls in Psalm 22 how Old Testament believers called on God and God heard them.

**"Our fathers trusted in You; They trusted, and You delivered them.
5 They cried to You, and were delivered; They trusted in You, and were not ashamed."**

Why not Jesus? Instead God brings Jesus to the dust of death, Jesus says in Psalm 22. The world itself is shrouded in darkness as Jesus Himself willingly allows the evil of the world to engulf Him.

And then comes a most important phrase in Psalm 22. Verse 21 and 22 say **"You have answered Me. 22 I will declare Your name to My brethren;
In the midst of the assembly I will praise You."**

It is at that moment that Jesus spiritual suffering has ended. He has paid the full ransom. And Jesus can declare God's name to the believing thief next to Him. **"Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise."**

For Jesus could only say this having been reassured by His Father that the New Covenant of His blood had been established. Jesus could only say that He Himself would be in paradise with the thief after His Father no longer forsook Him.

And then to proclaim this great news to the world before He died we hear these words recorded in John 19.

“John 19:30

So when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, “It is finished!” And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit.

This was His victor’s cry. He had accomplished His purpose of saving all mankind. His spirit left His body. And His lifeless body hung on the cross until His disciples took it down. To confirm that He was indeed dead, a soldier pierced His side with a spear. This was the reality. Jesus the Son of God died.

And then what happens after a person dies. Well, normally the body is prepared for burial. And a disciple named Joseph desired to honor His Lord. He was a member of the council but had not agreed to the councils plans to crucify Jesus. He went to Pilate and asked to bury the body so that it would not be left on the cross during the Sabbath.

And Joseph wrapped it in a linen cloth. From John 19:39-40 we read these words.

“John 19:39-40

39 And Nicodemus, who at first came to Jesus by night, also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds. Then they took the body of Jesus, and bound it in strips of linen with the spices, as the custom of the Jews is to bury.”

We remember Nicodemus from his visit to Jesus at night, wondering how a person could be born again. Jesus words created faith in Nicodemus, we see.

Nicodemus trusted in Jesus words that he heard in John 3.

“And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, 15 that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. 16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”

Jesus had to be lifted up and die. And there was Nicodemus preparing His body for burial with the sure hope of eternal life in his heart. Strips of linen, John testifies, were used. It wasn’t a 14ft. x3 ft. shroud of Turin, that’s enclosed in a clear argon filled case. That’s superstition. That’s venerating a piece of cloth. The true veneration was the selfless act of Joseph and Nicodemus to carry His body, prepare it and place it in a new tomb.

By Jesus’ death and burial indeed, He sanctifies all the graves of the believers. Jesus body itself didn’t see corruption for He had removed the curse of sin and placed death itself under His feet.

What other indication do we have that this is so?

So we hear from Matthew 27.

“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.

Jesus' death opened the graves and many of the saints who were sleeping came alive and were seen! Why because Jesus Himself could not stay dead. And this we celebrate even tonight. That Jesus' death, as real as it was, and it had to be real, is not the end of the story. The grave where Jesus was buried on Good Friday is empty on Easter morning. The new covenant of the Gospel of forgiveness was signed with His death and sealed with His resurrection!

What does this mean for you and me? What it meant for the saints who were sleeping and came back to life! For the death of a saint is precious in the Lord's eyes (Psalm 116:15). And if the body of a saint is but sleeping until it is awakened at Jesus second coming! For He has finished our salvation once and for all and graciously gives this gift to you and me through faith.

Today is a Good Friday. It is the best Friday. TGIGF - Thank God its Good Friday! For we thank Him for our victory over death.

“Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

5 For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection,”

Amen

“And this peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” Amen. (Philippians 4:7)