

Lent 2018 – The Battles of Lent

"The Battle of the Streets of Jerusalem"

Text: Luke 23:26-31

Christ – the Life of all the living; Christ – the Death of death, our foe,
Who, Thyself to me once giving to the darkest depths of woe,
Through Thy sufferings, death, and merit I eternal life inherit;
Thousand, thousand thanks shall be, Dearest Jesus, unto Thee. (TLH 151)

May you continue to appreciate the life you have been given, through the death of your Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

The text for this evening is found recorded in the Gospel of Luke, the 23rd Chapter, beginning with the 26st verse:

Luke 23:26-31 And as they led him away, they seized one Simon of Cyrene, who was coming in from the country, and laid on him the cross, to carry it behind Jesus. ²⁷ And there followed him a great multitude of the people and of women who were mourning and lamenting for him. ²⁸ But turning to them Jesus said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. ²⁹ For behold, the days are coming when they will say, 'Blessed are the barren and the wombs that never bore and the breasts that never nursed!' ³⁰ Then they will begin to say to the mountains, 'Fall on us,' and to the hills, 'Cover us.' ³¹ For if they do these things when the wood is green, what will happen when it is dry?"

These is God's Word – the verbally inspired words by which we will be filled and strengthened this evening. We seek to prepare our hearts for the study of God's holy Words with this simple prayer, **"Sanctify us by your truth, O Lord. Your Word is truth!"** Amen.

Dear Fellow Recipients of the gift of life:

This evening – as part of our Lenten preparation and self-examination – we return to yet another familiar scene of our Lord's Passion, and again we seek to recognize that place as the battle site that it was. Once again we are also reminded that the goal is not to create a false view or idea, but to recognize the reality that actual spiritual battles truly took place at these sites. This evening we visit the streets of Jerusalem – the route along which Jesus was led to his execution – and we recognize it as the site of our Savior's battle against sorrow.

Actions have consequences. No one here would dispute that fact *in the abstract*, but we all tend to have a bit more trouble with reality. Everyone here, for example, is well aware that if you drive in excess of the posted speed limit, you are liable to get a ticket. Everyone here knows and accepts that, yet when that abstract understanding becomes a reality – when we actually *do* break the speed limit and actually do have to pay a fine and pay more for insurance – many tend to complain bitterly and feel perfectly justified in grumbling about how unfair it all is.

I saw much the same thing when I visited a death-row inmate in Florida. Though he had robbed, assaulted, and then murdered a woman in cold blood when she returned home after grocery shopping, he complained bitterly that the State of Florida was carrying out the prescribed consequences for his actions.

In case anyone here is feeling indignant, condescending and maybe even disgusted about someone objecting to suffering the known consequences for their actions, maybe we need to make this a bit more personal. In one of the declarations that we occasionally use to confess our sins, we admit that because of our sins *"we deserve only hard times on earth, and eternal punishment in hell."* I have no doubt that each of us agrees with what we there confess, but the reality is that, again, our agreement is only true in the abstract. In other words, we agree that we deserve hard times on earth because of our sin, but then we tend to be both surprised and indignant when those hard times actually materialize. We deserve hard times on earth, but we also imagine that we should get to determine the form and severity of those hard times. Even if, for example, I waste a great deal of the money that my God provides, I shouldn't have to suffer with financial difficulties. Though I am often a poor parent, I shouldn't have to deal with strained relationships with my children. Though I am thoughtless or abusive to my spouse, I shouldn't have to suffer through marital discord.

More to the point this evening, though our Savior warned that because we broke God's perfect creation with our sin we should expect suffering in this life, we are still somehow indignant when something like sorrow fills our world. Part of the problem is that we, even unconsciously, see the outside façade of the lives of others – lives that appear so problem-free – and we compare "deservedness." *"How can the life of someone who is obviously Godless, whose life is filled with so much obvious and unrepentant sin, selfishness, and materialism, be so good, and mine be so filled with problems, frustrations, and sorrow?"* The first answer, of course, is that there really is no such thing as a problem-free life. Appearances are deceiving. Jesus commented on how beautifully

whitewashed tombs are still filled with dead men's bones. The second answer is that God alone knows what we need. God alone knows what is truly best for us. Life itself teaches us that financial troubles teach us to rely on God's providence, weakness teaches us to recognize and rely on God's strength, and frustration, fatigue, and disappointment teach us not to get too preoccupied with this earthly existence.

I'm sure you've all experienced this for yourselves – the positive results when our Heavenly Father gives us what we need, rather than what we want – or *think* we need. We are typically not drawn closer to our God by the times of ease and plenty, but by the difficult and painful. Through the consequences of sin, God reminds us of the seriousness of sin, together with the eternal consequences if we allow ourselves to be once again enslaved by sin.

Look again at the last verse of our text for this evening. There Jesus said, **"For if they do these things when the wood is green, what will happen when it is dry?"** On the surface, Jesus is pointing out the fact that since such bad things were happening to one who had no sin, who was innocent in every way, those who are guilty are foolish to expect anything less.

That much is clear, but it is a mistake to imagine that we have always fully grasped the depth and wisdom of what Jesus said, when we may only have lightly scratched the surface. Our Lord always invites us to dig ever deeper into his Word. To do so this evening requires a bit of background.

Jesus was obviously not the only person to be condemned in the Roman Governor's court. Countless others preceded and followed after. Unlike today, sentences were often carried out immediately. The condemned could be led directly from Pilate's court to the site of their execution – which we today know as Golgotha or Calvary. The route that connected those two places was always the same, and that route was known to the Jews as "the Way of Sorrow." Citizens of Jerusalem would typically line that "Way of Sorrow" and, depending on the circumstances, either jeer or weep for the condemned and they passed by. Jewish propriety dictated that even the most hated, despised criminal should nonetheless have someone to mourn his imminent death, so they would hire professional mourners to follow after the condemned as they walked along "the Way of Sorrow." It was undoubtedly this group of professional mourners that Jesus addressed in our text when he said, **"Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children."** These were also therefore among those for whom Jesus himself wept,

recognizing their unbelief. ***And when he drew near and saw the city, he wept over it,*** ⁴² ***saying, "Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes."*** ⁴³ ***For the days will come upon you, when your enemies will set up a barricade around you and surround you and hem you in on every side*** ⁴⁴ ***and tear you down to the ground, you and your children within you. And they will not leave one stone upon another in you, because you did not know the time of your visitation."*** (Luke 19:41-44) Again in Matthew 23 he voiced the cause of his sorrow: ***"See, your house is left to you desolate."***

Jesus knew, though the Godless did not, that his prophecy that ***"your house is left to you desolate"*** would be fulfilled both in time and in eternity. He knew that in 37 years the legions of Rome would descend on Jerusalem and that its fall would be as horrible as it was absolute. Unspeakable barbarity would reign in Jerusalem during that siege, and once the City fell, its destruction would be absolute. You recall the conversation Jesus had with his disciples, recorded in Mark 13:1-2: ***And as he came out of the temple, one of his disciples said to him, "Look, Teacher, what wonderful stones and what wonderful buildings!"*** ² ***And Jesus said to him, "Do you see these great buildings? There will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down."*** Rome fulfilled that prophecy in 70AD. Still to this day, the only surviving remnant of the City that Jesus saw is a small section of foundation later excavated that is today known as the West or Wailing Wall. How foolish then for the Godless to weep for Jesus. It was Jesus who wept for them.

But the worst never happens in this life. All human beings experience sorrow at the death of a loved one, but Christians do not weep as do the Godless. The Godless tend to regard death as the tragic end of virtually everything that is good, for all that they know and hold dear is what can be gained in this life. Christians mourn the temporary separation, but they also celebrate death as the beginning of all the eternal good that our God has planned for his children. Jesus would obviously then never speak the words of our text to *Christian* women. Having himself existed in the perfect joy of heaven, he would know better than anyone else how senseless it would be to express sorrow or pity for anyone about to enter the perfect rest of a faithful death, followed in a timeless moment by the inexpressible joy of the Resurrection and life eternal in heaven. Such words would be reserved only for the Godless, for whom death is truly lamentable in every conceivable way. Not only does death

represent the end of all that they desired; it is for them the entrance into unspeakable and eternal torment. Therefore, to paraphrase Jesus' words: *"Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, for I am soon going to be forever with my Father in heaven. Weep for yourselves and for your children, for, because of your unbelief, you are not."*

This is the battle that Jesus fought on the streets of Jerusalem, along that "Way of Sorrow." This was the battle against sorrow itself. The sorrow of the Godless was and is misplaced. Their sorrow is restricted to the things of this world when those things are denied or lost to them. The professional mourners wept for what the condemned were about to lose in this life. On the Way of Sorrow Jesus revealed to us the nature or character of true sorrow. How senseless then to weep for Jesus – since he was about to be returned to the perfection and glory of heaven. And that same heaven can be ours. It can be the personal possession of every man, woman, and child in existence today – and every day until earth's end. Jesus knew that true and lasting sorrow could only reign for mankind if he accepted the Godless concept of sorrow (that life on earth is all) and if he refused to walk that "Way of Sorrow," ending at the cross.

He did walk that long road. He did walk resolutely to Golgotha, and there he opened heaven's door by paying the sum total of man's sin debt. In so doing he defeated, destroyed, man's idea of sorrow, replacing it with the confident expectation that ***"the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us."*** (Romans 8:18)

Was Jesus' life on earth filled with sorrow? Certainly, and if his was, we can know that our lives will also be. Yet our lives can never be filled with the hopeless sorrow of those who do not recognize their Savior. Because of what Jesus did, you and I will never know such sorrow. Amen.

Weekly Hymn and Sermon Schedule

February 14

Hymns: 140 (1-4)
367, 263

Lenten Theme:
"The Battles of Lent"

*"The Battle of the
Upper Room"*

Text: John 13:1-17

February 21

Hymns: 388 (1-3, 6)
143 (1-5), 261

Lenten Theme:
"The Battles of Lent"

*"The Battle of
Gethsemane"*

Text: Mark 14:32-42

February 28

Hymns: 358, 171 (1-5)
260 (1, 4 & 6)

Lenten Theme:
"The Battles of Lent"

*"The Battle of the
High Priest's
Palace"*

Text: Mark 14:53-64

March 7

Hymns: 652, 371 (1-6)
258 (1, 3-5)

Lenten Theme:

"The Battles of Lent"

*"The Battle of
Pilate's Court"*

Text: Mark 15:1-15

March 14

Hymns: 360, 155
463 (1-2, 8)

Lenten Theme:

"The Battles of Lent"

*"The Battle of the
Streets of
Jerusalem"*

Text: Luke 23:26-31

March 21

Hymns: 153, 176
448 (1-2, 5)

Lenten Theme:

"The Battles of Lent"

*"The Battle of
Golgotha"*

Text: Mark 15:22-32



St Paul Lutheran Church

Lent 2018

"The Battles of Lent"

- The Upper Room
- Gethsemane
- The High Priest's Palace
- Pilate's Court
- The Streets of Jerusalem
- Golgotha

-Please return this bulletin to the Entry Table for use next week-

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Mid-Week Lenten Services - 2018

The Opening Hymn (As noted on the back page and on the Hymn Board)

Invocation

Pastor: *In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.*

All: (Spoken) *Amen.*

Confession and Absolution (TLH 323)

Pastor: *Acknowledging that we stand in the presence of our Holy God we humble ourselves, and in true repentance, we confess our sins:*

All:

1. With broken heart and contrite sigh, a trembling sinner, Lord, I cry.
Thy pardoning grace is rich and free - O God, be merciful to me.
2. I smite upon my troubled breast, with deep and conscious guilt oppressed;
Christ and His cross my only plea – O God, be merciful to me.
3. Nor alms nor deeds that I have done can for a single sin atone.
To Calvary alone I flee – O God, be merciful to me.

Pastor: *Jesus Christ himself has been punished for your sins. God the Father has placed upon Jesus the iniquity of us all. According to His authority, and by His command, I announce to you the divine decree of our God that all of your sins are forgiven, in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

All: And when, redeemed from sin and hell, with all the ransomed throng I dwell,
My blissful song shall ever be: God has been merciful to me.

The Reading of the Passion History

The Apostolic Creed

I believe in God the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth.

And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord,
Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried.

He descended into hell.

The third day He rose again from the dead.

He ascended into heaven

and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty.

From there He will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy Christian Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.

The Pre Sermon Hymn (As noted on the back page and on the Hymn Board)

The Sermon – *The theme for our devotions this Lenten Season is*

"The Battles of Lent"

(Please turn to the back page for this evening's service details)

The Response – (Sung to the melody of Hymn 237)

1. *A mighty Fortress is our God, a trusty Shield and Weapon;
He helps us free from every need that hath us now o'ertaken.
The evil Foe means deadly woe;
Great guile and might his arms in fight;
On Earth is not his equal.*
2. *With might of ours can naught be done, soon were our loss effected;
But for us fights the Valiant One, Whom God Himself elected.
This Lord of Hosts is Jesus Christ;
Our Savior-King, our Mighty God.
He holds the field forever.*

The Prayer of the Day

The Lord's Prayer

The Benediction

P: *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
And the love of God the Father,
And the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.*

C: *Amen, Amen, Amen.* (Sung by all)

The Closing Hymn (As noted on the back page and on the Hymn Board)

Silent Prayer

Announcements

[All are invited to remain for fellowship and light refreshments.]