

# Good Friday

## "Lent 2018 – The Battles of Lent"

The Battle of the Cross

Text: Mark 15:33-39

Grace, mercy, and peace be yours in Jesus Christ, who on the cross was sacrificed in our place to save us from the eternal torment we most certainly deserved. Amen.

The text for this Good Friday evening is found recorded in the Gospel of Mark, the 15<sup>th</sup> Chapter, beginning with the 33<sup>rd</sup> verse:

**ESV Mark 15:33-39** *And when the sixth hour had come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour. <sup>34</sup> And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?" which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" <sup>35</sup> And some of the bystanders hearing it said, "Behold, he is calling Elijah." <sup>36</sup> And someone ran and filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on a reed and gave it to him to drink, saying, "Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to take him down." <sup>37</sup> And Jesus uttered a loud cry and breathed his last. <sup>38</sup> And the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. <sup>39</sup> And when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that in this way he breathed his last, he said, "Truly this man was the Son of God!"*

These are the verbally inspired words by which we will be filled and strengthened this evening. In reverent adoration and in humble supplication we pray, "**Sanctify us by your truth, O Lord. Your Word is truth!**" Amen.

In the name of Jesus Christ, our Passover Lamb, who on the cross was sacrificed for us, Dear Fellow Redeemed:

Once more this evening – as the culmination of our Lenten preparation and self-examination – we are returning to a most familiar place. Having previously stood at a distance and viewed the spectacle of Golgotha, this evening we journey right up to the foot of the cross, surveying the field where yet another battle was fought by our Savior as our substitute. The particular enemy that our Lord there defeated was yet another adversary over which we were utterly powerless – death itself.

There is obviously no event in the church year as solemn as that which we commemorate on this evening - Good Friday, the death of our Savior-God. Yet, through the centuries, Christians have struggled to view the cross

rightly, especially on this night. Having learned also the end of this story (the Lord's resurrection on Easter Sunday) it is difficult for shallow children like us to know just how our Lord would have us think and feel on this day. How shall you and I view this scene that opens before us in our mind's eye? How shall we view the suffering of our Lord, together with his death? In other words, should we in our hearts feel sorrow and terror or joy and relief?

God's Holy Word gives us guidance in this recurring question. In our text we read those tortured words of our Lord: "**Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?" which is translated, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"** From these words we learn at least three key truths. First, that the greatest suffering of our Lord was spiritual, rather than physical. Second, that the wrath and fury that was meted out by our God upon his own Son ought to remind us of the enormity of our own personal sins. And finally the stark, unavoidable truth that Jesus suffered on the cross utterly, completely alone.

First the true nature of Jesus' suffering. Many of our favorite Lenten hymns actually do us a disservice by focusing on the physical aspects of Jesus' suffering. The physical pain of the crucifixion was actually the least of Jesus' problems as he hung upon the tree. Note that the subject of his tormented cry was not the searing pain of the nails, the unquenchable thirst, or the brutally lacerated back. It was the horrifying abandonment by his Father. God the Father was laying upon Jesus the iniquity of us all. (Isaiah 53) When God made Him (Jesus), who knew no sin, to be sin for us, God the Father had to obey the call of justice and turn away from his own Son. He who had a perfect and holy love for his Son, abandoned that Son, regarding him as the sum total – the very embodiment – of all that is evil. This is the great agony that caused our Jesus to cry out from the cross, "**My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?"** Look thus upon the cross.

In the second place, to rightly understand Calvary we cannot ignore the words Jesus spoke to the women who mourned for him along the way: "**And there followed him a great multitude of the people and of women who were mourning and lamenting for him. <sup>28</sup> But turning to them Jesus said, 'Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children.'**" (Luke 23:28-31) Consider those final words again, and thereby gain insight into how you should view the events of Good Friday: "**For if they do these things when the wood is green, what will happen when it is dry?"** Jesus was the "**green wood.**" He had done nothing wrong – ever. His message was that if this is the fury that divine justice exacts upon the only man who is truly holy and sinless, what will be done to the sinner

(the **"dry wood"**)? What happens to the foul and evil sinner, when such torment is visited upon the beloved, holy Son? Look also thus upon the cross, for there Jesus averted that catastrophe for all who die in the Christian faith.

The events of Good Friday are to fill our hearts with absolute and utter terror at the punishment we rightly deserved because of our sins. We do ourselves a great disservice when we fail to set aside quiet, meditative time to acknowledge such truths. For every thorn that bore into the flesh of Jesus, my sin deserves far worse. For every nail that pierced his hands and feet, I deserve infinitely worse. The spiritual anguish that afflicted Jesus, this I have earned by my disobedience. The agony of Jesus should be recognized as but a sampling of the eternal torment my sins deserved. Look thus upon the cross.

As in all things Biblical, we are to look to the cross from the perspective of an *active participant*, rather than a *detached spectator*. What was done to Jesus was not done only by others. You and I were also there. Recognize then that you are the one who martyred Jesus. The nails are your evil deeds and the thorns of the crown are your wicked thoughts. Your perverse words are the Jews that called for his crucifixion, and your sins are the Roman soldiers who drove home the nails and later mocked the Son of God.

This too is how we should view this place that we visit this evening, this cross of Calvary, this ultimate battle between our Savior and death itself. The benefits of Christ's sacrifice depend first upon man coming to this true knowledge of himself. The suffering of our dear Lord had as its one and only object the rescue of sinners from the certainty of spiritual and eternal death. Every time man turns a blind eye or a deaf ear to the events of Good Friday, that great and terrible sacrifice is wasted. In every case where the individual sinner refuses the Holy Spirit's call to look upon the cross and mourn his sins, for that soul the payment of Jesus Christ goes for naught.

To further understand what was happening to Jesus there on the Calvary, as well as just exactly what prompted his anguished cry, we must first note the difference between the garden and the cross. In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus had a Father to whom he could turn for strength and comfort; he had a Source on whom he could rely, fully expecting to receive all that he would need if he was to survive the hours that lay ahead. Not so on the cross. There, Father had fully turned away from Son. During those dark hours that he hung on the cross, Jesus was made to be sin for us: **"For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."** (2 Corinthians 5:21) He

was made a curse *for us*: **"Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree')."** (Galatians 3:13) His Father having turned away from him, Jesus on the cross no longer enjoyed the same relationship he had in the Garden. Note well that Jesus did not cry out, *"My Father, My Father..."* but, **"My God, my God..."** The sins of the world had formed a wall of separation between Father and Son. Now the man Jesus sought his Father, but that Father was nowhere to be found. God makes no reply. He has turned away.

It is certainly difficult in the extreme for us to fully comprehend what it meant to Jesus to be abandoned by his Father. On the cross, Jesus was covered in the filth of all the world's accumulated perversion – evil of every imaginable sort. God the Father sees him in this state, and turns away in righteous judgment at the sin that Jesus now bears. Jesus calls out to him, but God the Father does not answer. This was that which Jesus dreaded in the Garden. This was that which caused him such anguish – the knowledge that this day, this hour, was coming.

Finally, we are to look upon the cross and recognize our own helplessness, our own inability to offer any aid or comfort, for there our Savior suffered utterly alone. Our sins put him there, he suffers therefore for us, but now we are to recognize that there he alone suffers and dies. We cannot help.

In fact the greatest perversion of Good Friday and the cross is the notion that we must, or even *can*, help in any way. We view this battle rightly when we recognize that Jesus alone fights, and that Jesus is absolutely alone. There a gift is being given, through suffering beyond our comprehension, and that gift cannot be earned, merited, or repaid.

All of this, dear Christians, is that which should strike our hearts when we look upon the cross on this day; when we look upon that place of death. And yet that is only supposed to serve as the *start* or *beginning* of our view. We dare never end there. As soon as the terror of our sins settles upon our hearts, as soon as we recognize that Jesus is there doing what only Jesus could do, then we are to no longer hear, **"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"** but, **"It is finished!"** and, **"Truly this Man was the Son of God!"** Then we are no longer to look with horror at the cross where hangs our Savior, we are to see the *empty* cross and the *empty* tomb. We are to look with understanding at the torn curtain in the temple, and to see it as God's declaration that death has been defeated, and that we have been granted access and reconciliation. Sin had separated us from our God, and that sin has now been removed.

All of these together (the **"It is finished!"**, the torn curtain, and the empty tomb) - all teach us that Jesus accomplished exactly what he set out to do. He has washed us clean, removing our sin and guilt forever. The Heavenly Father no longer looks at us with revulsion, for the filth of our sin is gone. We stand now in his sight as perfect and holy, covered with the dazzlingly white robe of Jesus' perfection. All of this Jesus accomplished on Good Friday – this extraordinary evening. The last battle has been fought, and won. Death has been defeated by death. Christ has died, and the result is that we have now been given eternal life.

This is precisely what makes Good Friday so special. In this one event are contained both the stark reality of the horror we should all feel on account of our sins, and the joyful relief that is ours in the certain knowledge that the torment we deserved was visited upon God's own Son in our place. Through his death, Christ has defeated death. With the hymn writer we confess:

*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.*

*Then, for all that wrought my pardon,  
For Thy sorrows deep and sore,  
For Thine anguish in the Garden,  
I will thank Thee evermore,  
Thank Thee for Thy groaning, sighing,  
For Thy bleeding and Thy dying,  
For that last triumphant cry,  
And shall praise Thee, Lord, on high. Amen.*



# **Good Friday Service**

**St Paul Lutheran Church  
Bismarck, ND**

# ST. PAUL EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

2510 E. Divide Ave.

Bismarck, ND 58501 (701) 223-4885 Cell: (701) 425-5483

[www.bismarcklutheran.org](http://www.bismarcklutheran.org)

Mark Johnson – President

Eileen McEnroe – Head Organist

Michael Roehl – Pastor

Tonight's Organist – Eileen McEnroe

**Good Friday Service – March 30, 2018**

**The Opening Hymn** #143- (Verses 1-7)

## Invocation

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

**Congregation:** *(Spoken) Amen.*

## Confession and Absolution

**P:** *On this most solemn occasion we acknowledge that it was also our sin that caused the death of our Lord, and we therefore confess our sins in the words of the 51<sup>st</sup> Psalm:*

**Psalm 51** *(Supplement page 28)*

**P:** *Jesus Christ, our Lord, paid the penalty for our sins upon Calvary's cross. Because of that sacrifice, I, according to His authority and by His command, announce to you that all of your sins are forgiven, in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

**All:** Hymn 779 (Stanzas 1 & 3) *(Brown Hymnal)*

Redeemed, restored, forgiven through Jesus precious blood,  
Heirs of His home in heaven oh, praise our pard'ning God!  
Praise Him in tuneful measure who gave His Son to die;  
Praise Him whose sev'n-fold treasures enrich and sanctify.

Dear Master, Yours the glory of each recovered soul.  
Ah, who can tell the story of love that made us whole?  
Not ours, not ours the merit; to You alone the praise!  
Give us a thankful spirit to serve You all our days.

## The Scripture Lessons

A compilation of the following passages:

Lamentations 1:12, Isaiah 53:3-6, Galatians 3:13, Romans 8:32, John 1:29, 2 Corinthians 5:21, Revelation 5:13

*Is it nothing to you, all you who pass by?*

*Behold and see if there is any sorrow like His sorrow.*

*He is despised and rejected by men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.*

*Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us.*

*Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed.*

*God did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all.*

*All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.*

*For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.*

*Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!*

*Blessing and honor and glory and power be to Him who sits on the throne, And to the Lamb, forever and ever!*

## 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 sitting 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 Words of Christ from the Cross

(Hymn 177, Verse 1)

1. Our blessed Savior seven times spoke  
When on the cross our sins He took  
And died lest man should perish.  
Let us His last and dying words  
In our remembrance cherish.

<sup>ESV</sup> **(Various readings from the Gospels)** Two others, who were criminals, were led away to be put to death with him.<sup>33</sup> And when they came to the place that is called The Skull, there they crucified him, and the criminals, one on his right and one on his left.<sup>34</sup> And Jesus said, "**Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.**" And they cast lots to divide his garments.  
¶ One of the criminals who were hanged railed at him, saying, "Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us!"<sup>40</sup> But the other rebuked him, saying, "Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation?"<sup>41</sup> And we indeed justly, for we are receiving the due reward of our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong."<sup>42</sup> And he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom."<sup>43</sup> And he said to him, "**Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise.**"

¶ but standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene.<sup>26</sup> When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, "**Woman, behold, your son!**"<sup>27</sup> Then he said to the disciple, "**Behold, your mother!**" And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home. ¶ Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour.<sup>46</sup> And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "**Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?**" that is, "**My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?**"

¶ After this, Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said (to fulfill the Scripture), "**I thirst.**"<sup>29</sup> A jar full of sour wine stood there, so they put a sponge full of the sour wine on a hyssop branch and held it to his mouth.

¶ When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, "**It is finished,**" and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

¶ It was now about the sixth hour, and there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour,<sup>45</sup> while the sun's light failed. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two.<sup>46</sup> Then Jesus, calling out with a loud voice, said, "**Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!**" And having said this he breathed his last.

(Hymn 177, Verse 9)

9. Whoe'er, by sense of sin opprest,  
Upon these words his thoughts will rest,  
He Joy and hope obtaineth  
And, through God's love and boundless grace  
A peaceful conscience gaineth.

## **The Sermon – "The Battle of the Cross"**

Text: **Mark 15:33-39** *And when the sixth hour had come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour.* <sup>34</sup> *And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?" which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"* <sup>35</sup> *And some of the bystanders hearing it said, "Behold, he is calling Elijah."* <sup>36</sup> *And someone ran and filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on a reed and gave it to him to drink, saying, "Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to take him down."* <sup>37</sup> *And Jesus uttered a loud cry and breathed his last.* <sup>38</sup> *And the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom.* <sup>39</sup> *And when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that in this way he breathed his last, he said, "Truly this man was the Son of God!"*

**The Post Sermon Hymn – 172 (Stanzas 1-2, 4, 9-10)**

"Oh Sacred Head Now Wounded"

**The Prayer of the Day, followed by 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 – (Sung by the Church Choir)**

"Lord Jesus Christ, My Life, My Light"

**Silent Prayer**

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As is our Good Friday custom, the congregation will be ushered from the sanctuary in silence following the closing hymn. Those in attendance are asked to leave the church quietly thereafter. We observe this custom in solemn commemoration of the death of our Lord, and yet we do so not as those who mourn without hope. We commemorate this solemn event as those who recognize that the debt for our sins was paid in full by our Lord Jesus on this night. There is a time to mourn and a time to rejoice. So also we solemnly observe the death of our Savior this evening (a time to mourn) but in full expectation that our Lord will turn our mourning into the joy of the empty tomb on Easter morning. All are therefore invited to gather here again on Easter morning for that greatest of all Christian holidays.