

## **Pre-service - Hymn 651**

1. Be still, my soul: The Lord is on thy side;  
With patience bear thy cross of grief or pain.  
Leave to thy God to order and provide;  
In ev'ry change he faithful will remain.  
Be still, my soul: Thy best, thy heav'nly Friend  
Thru thorny ways leads to a joyful end.

2. Be still, my soul: Thy God doth undertake  
To guide the future as he has the past.  
Thy hope, thy confidence let nothing shake;  
All now mysterious shall be bright at last.  
Be still, my soul: The waves and winds still know  
His voice who ruled them while he dwelt below.

4. Be still, my soul: The hour is hast'ning on  
When we shall be forever with the Lord,  
When disappointment, grief, and fear are gone,  
Sorrow forgot, love's purest joys restored.  
Be still, my soul: When change and tears are past,  
All safe and blessed we shall meet at last.

## **Hymn 143 (Stanzas 1-5)**

1. O dearest Jesus, what law hast Thou broken  
That such sharp sentence should on Thee be  
spoken?  
Of what great crime hast Thou to make confession,  
What dark transgression?

2. They crown Thy head with thorns, they smite,  
they scourge Thee;  
With cruel mockings to the cross they urge Thee;  
They give Thee gall to drink, they still decry Thee;  
They crucify Thee.

3. Whence come these sorrows, whence this mortal  
anguish?  
It is my sins for which Thou, Lord, must languish;  
Yea, all the wrath, the woe, Thou dost inherit,  
This I do merit.

4. What punishment so strange is suffered yonder!  
The Shepherd dies for sheep that loved to wander;  
The Master pays the debt His servants owe Him,  
Who would not know Him.

5 The sinless Son of God must die in sadness;  
The sinful child of man may live in gladness;  
Man forfeited his life and is acquitted;  
God is committed.

## **Hymn 347 (Stanzas 14)**

1. Jesus, priceless treasure,  
Fount of purest pleasure,  
Truest friend to me.  
Ah, how long in anguish  
Shall my spirit languish,  
Yearning, Lord, for Thee?  
Thou art mine, O Lamb divine!  
I will suffer naught to hide Thee,  
Naught I ask beside Thee.

2. In Thine arms I rest me;  
Foes who would molest me  
Cannot reach me here.  
Though the earth be shaking,  
Every heart be quaking,  
Jesus calms my fear.  
Lightnings flash and thunders crash;  
Yet, though sin and hell assail me,  
Jesus will not fail me.

3. Satan, I defy thee;  
Death, I now decry thee;  
Fear, I bid thee cease.  
World, thou shalt not harm me  
Nor thy threats alarm me  
While I sing of peace.  
God's great power guards every hour;  
Earth and all its depths adore Him,  
Silent bow before Him.

4. Hence, all earthly treasure!  
Jesus is my Pleasure,  
Jesus is my choice.  
Hence, all empty glory  
Naught to my thy story  
Told with tempting voice.  
Pain or loss, or shame or cross,  
Shall not from my Savior move me  
Since He deigns to love me.

### **Hymn 175**

1. When I survey the wondrous cross  
on which the Prince of glory died,  
my richest gain I count but loss,  
and pour contempt on all my pride.

2. Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast  
save in the death of Christ, my God!  
All the vain things that charm me most,  
I sacrifice them through his blood.

3. See, from his head, his hands, his feet,  
sorrow and love flow mingled down.  
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,  
or thorns compose so rich a crown?

4. Were the whole realm of nature mine,  
that were a present far too small.  
Love so amazing, so divine,  
demands my soul, my life, my all.

### **Hymn 179**

On my heart imprint Your image,  
Blessed Jesus, King of grace,  
That life's riches, cares, and pleasures  
Never may Your work erase;  
Let the clear inscription be:  
Jesus, crucified for me,  
Is my Life, my hope's foundation,  
And my glory and salvation!

# Good Friday 2020

## "What's Done Is Done"

*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. Amen. (TLH 151)*

We bring our Lenten meditations to a close this evening with a study of death - the death of our Savior. Our study will be ordered under the theme: "*What's Done Is Done.*" The texts that will form the basis for our meditation this evening are found in the Gospels of Matthew and John, and in Paul's Letter to the Romans:

**ESV Matthew 27:3-5** *Then when Judas, his betrayer, saw that Jesus was condemned, he changed his mind and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and the elders, <sup>4</sup> saying, "I have sinned by betraying innocent blood." They said, "What is that to us? See to it yourself." <sup>5</sup> And throwing down the pieces of silver into the temple, he departed, and he went and hanged himself.*

**ESV John 19:21-22** *So the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate, "Do not write, 'The King of the Jews,' but rather, 'This man said, I am King of the Jews.'" <sup>22</sup> Pilate answered, "What I have written I have written."*

**ESV Matthew 26:73-75** *After a little while the bystanders came up and said to Peter, "Certainly you too are one of them, for your accent betrays you." <sup>74</sup> Then he began to invoke a curse on himself and to swear, "I do not know the man." And immediately the rooster crowed. <sup>75</sup> And Peter remembered the saying of Jesus, "Before the rooster crows, you will deny me three times." And he went out and wept bitterly.*

**NKJ John 19:28, 30** *After this, Jesus, knowing that all was now accomplished... said, "It is finished," and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.*

**ESV Romans 5:18-19** *Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. <sup>19</sup> For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous.*

These are the verbally inspired words of our God. Humbly asking our God to bless our Good Friday study of His Word, so we pray, "***Sanctify us by your truth, O Lord. Your word is truth.***" Amen.

Fellow Christians, I suspect many of you would agree that Good Friday represents arguably the most difficult of all Christian observances. "Difficult" in the sense that no other Christian celebration offers the same mixture of sorrow and joy; of pain and comfort; of horror and happiness – and all in connection with the death of our holy, innocent Lord Jesus. It can all be very confusing – which is not exactly what we are looking for in a church service or religious observance.

Perhaps the most difficult or confusing aspect of Good Friday and the death of our Savior is understanding just what emotions God deems appropriate for his children on this most solemn occasion. The dilemma is caused in part by the fact that though we know that our Lord died on this day, yet we also know that he did not remain in the grave, having been raised by the Father on the third day. Our emotions are further confused by the fact that heaven's door was opened for us by our Lord's innocent death on this night, which makes this morbid scene a true victory celebration for sinful and desperate mankind. It explains how and why on Maundy Thursday we can sing the words we do and mean every of them:

*The death of Jesus Christ, our Lord, we celebrate with one accord;  
It is our comfort in distress, our heart's sweet joy and happiness. (TLH 163 s.1)*

Yet the questions remain: What would our God have us do? Do we rejoice, or do we mourn? Are we to feel sorrow or joy? Thanksgiving or shame? Or are we supposed to experience all of these emotions in the course of our commemoration of Good Friday?

It is probably wise to acknowledge from the start that we do not commemorate this day only or even mostly because our Savior suffered the *physical pain* of the cross, substantial and terrible though that was. That's our natural inclination, isn't it? We find it easiest to focus on those things that we can quantify and understand, the painful things that were done to Jesus' body – the whip, the crown of thorns, the nails, and the cross. These we can grasp, as we then imagine those things being done to our own bodies. The goal seems to be to thereby experience a certain measure of thankfulness and relief that we now do not have to suffer such things. The day then gets boiled down to *"I can't imagine how that must have hurt! Thank you Jesus that I don't have to be whipped, or to have nails pounded through MY hands and feet! Thank you for being crucified so I don't have to."*

To rightly commemorate the most important elements of Good Friday, remember a rather simple rule of thumb: *Thank Jesus not so much for doing what we could have done for ourselves (though obviously unpleasant in the extreme) but for doing what we could not do. Give thanks to our Savior-God on this day for doing what no one else could ever have done.* The fact is what we see on Good Friday is the culmination, the grand finale, of the epic struggle between Good and Evil, between Jesus and Satan. We see Jesus, in other words, accomplishing for us that which we never could.

A quick review of the various human beings that played a role in the events of Good Friday demonstrates the point, for there we see nothing but failure. This evening we examine three of those failures under the theme: *What's Done Is Done*. The first three highlighted in our texts for this evening include Judas, Pilate, and Peter. While they all have failure in common, we focus this evening on their subsequent actions, for they serve as examples of the three options available to us when we today fail.

And we will fail. We *do* fail. Miserably and repeatedly.

We begin with Judas. We will likely never fully comprehend the motives behind Judas' actions. What he did was clearly wrong, but the fact that Judas was surprised and remorseful when the Jews later condemned Jesus to death is telling. Regardless of why he did what he did, Judas reacted by demonstrating man's typical first reaction to his own sin, his own personal failure: he tried to undo, or make up for, the damage he had done. In other words, he didn't accept the simple truth that what's done is done. He desperately wanted to believe that he could make it up to God, and to thereby undo the terrible sins he had committed.

We hear this "make up for it" silliness often and in a variety of forms in our day-to-day lives, which means that it is only natural that desperate human beings would try to do the same in their interaction with their God. An athlete, for example, makes a costly mistake and the first thing out of the commentator's mouth if that player later makes a good play is that he "made up for" the prior mistake. I always question whether or not that is actually true in something like athletics, but there is absolutely no doubt that it doesn't apply when it comes to sin.

Sin isn't something we can correct or "make up for." It's not like at a county fair where we are "winners" if we keep trying to knock down the bottles or throw a ring over a peg until we finally get it right. Sin is like detonating a bomb. Once done, it cannot be undone. Giving back what you stole doesn't make up for, doesn't cancel out, the original theft. There was nothing, for example, that Adam and Eve could have said or done to regain the perfection of Eden after they had sinned. Judas chose to try, and he was just honest enough to admit to himself that he could in no way make up for or undo the terrible sin that he had committed.

Judas therefore represents man's first option when confronted with the reality of sin: try your best to make up for it.

Pontius Pilate represents the second option. There was absolutely no doubt in Pilate's mind that Jesus was innocent, and yet every single one of his subsequent actions represented a futile attempt to offer a substitute for that one right thing – which clearly would have been to declare Jesus innocent of all charges and to release him. He tried brutally whipping an innocent man to placate the bloodlust of Jesus' accusers. He tried passing him off to Herod as someone else's problem. He tried to release him as the guilty man pardoned annually at the Passover. He even tried literally washing his hands of the whole miscarriage of justice over which he himself was presiding. In the end he opted for the absolute worst possible course of action: he condemned to death the innocent Son of God.

In fact the only place where Pilate actually showed any sort of resolve was in connection with the sign that he ordered to be placed over Jesus' head on the cross. We heard about this in our text from John 19. Here Pilate opted for the "what's done is done." Understand the rank hypocrisy and utter foolishness he thereby demonstrated. Pilate knew that that sign was, by his own order, to be affixed above the head not only of an innocent man but of a *living* man. There was still time therefore for Pilate to reverse himself. Yet he made his "bold stand" not on correcting his terrible sin (which he still had the power to do) but on the inconsequential wording of that inconsequential sign.

This represents the second option available to mankind when confronted with sin: first, to act as though sin is both inevitable and unavoidable, and then to somehow justify that sin by arbitrarily making a "bold stand" in an area of our own manufacture. That's not unlike a thief or an adulterer imagining that something frivolous like giving up meat during Lent will make up for his sin, or somehow undo what he has done.

The third option, when confronted with our sin, was demonstrated by Peter. Despite being warned specifically in advance, Peter failed miserably by denying his Lord. His reaction, once he realized what he had done, was telling: **"He went out and wept bitterly."** When confronted by his sin, Peter wept bitterly because he knew not only that there was absolutely nothing that he could do to undo his sin, there was also nothing that he could do to make up for what he had done. He knew that nothing "good" that he had done in the past, or could do in the future, could ever cancel out what he had just done to his Lord. He was consumed by the awful realization that what he had done was indeed irrevocably done.

This is the proper Christian reaction to sin and failure – the recognition and acceptance of our sin and of the utter impossibility of ever making it right with God.

All of which would leave us in a most desperate and hopeless state if not for our final two readings this evening. The first is Jesus' own declaration of *"what's done is done"* – expressed by him with three words that form the greatest sentence ever spoken: **"It is finished."** Man could do absolutely nothing to make up for or cancel sin, but God could. God did. That's what happened there on Calvary. Jesus there absorbed the punishment for every single sin. The result is that there, along with Peter, our tears of frustration and hopelessness are dried, our desperation and despair are answered, our impossible sin-problem is solved – removed forever. **"It is finished"** didn't just mean that Jesus' work was finished; it meant – it *means* – that no part of God's salvation plan for mankind is left undone. Nothing need be or can be added – certainly not from failed sinners. There Jesus paid what we never could.

The best news of all? What's done there is *done*. God the Father has accepted Jesus' perfect life and innocent death as greater than the sum total of all of mankind's sin. Nothing in all of creation can change what God there irrevocably declared. Our sin has been removed. Our debt has been paid in full.

This is the message of our final reading, the irrevocable, declared-by-God-himself verdict that man's sin-debt has indeed been paid in full: **"Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. <sup>19</sup> For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous."**

You and I will likely continue to struggle to rightly celebrate this day, this event. While we mourn the depravity of our sin and the resulting death of our Savior, we also are well aware that Jesus wasn't conquered by death. Through his death he *conquered* sin and death as our Substitute. So it is that we conclude our Good Friday commemoration not in despair, but eagerly awaiting the celebration of the empty tomb on Easter morning.

God grant us the grace to observe this great event in perfect harmony with his will, as we ask him to fill our hearts with the joy and comfort that our Savior won for us. Amen.