

"Who Was to Blame?"

Good Friday 2022

Texts: Matthew 27:46 and 2 Corinthians 5:21

*Ye who think of sin but lightly Nor suppose the evil great
Here may view its nature rightly, Here its guilt may estimate.
Mark the Sacrifice appointed, See who bears the awful load;
'Tis the WORD, the LORD'S ANOINTED, Son of Man and Son of God.
(TLH 153)*

May God the Holy Spirit enable you to recognize your role in this solemn event – the crucifixion of our Lord – not as an idle spectator, but as an active, guilty participant. Amen.

Dear Fellow Christians:

Look carefully, not *at* the crowd but *into* the crowd. It is, of course, immense – the largest possible gathering of human beings. Everyone is there. Literally. Everyone. But don't just see the crowd; see faces. Individual faces. Look carefully. Move from face to face. You'll know when you finally actually see what you are supposed to see. There. Just there – your face. You were there, weren't you? You were part it, part of the crowd that crucified its Lord, its Savior. Nor were you just a spectator, let alone a passive or secret ally of the One who there was nailed to the cross as one of society's very worst criminals. You don't get to pretend that you were better than the crowd, that you alone would have stood with Jesus. You were not only there in the crowd, you also called for his crucifixion. You screamed for his bloody death. Your personal sins did that. Yours. Not just the sins of "the world," but your sins. You. In fact it's not until you see your face in that angry, hostile crowd that you can begin to appreciate just what was done for *you* on Calvary, your role is Jesus' death.

Jesus didn't just die for "others." In fact sometimes it isn't even all that helpful to think on this night in terms of "all." "All" is too easily transformed into "none" if it is never made individually personal. Understand the role you played in this evening, *this* event. Your sin killed the Son of God. He died not only *for* you, but *because* of you.

Our theme for our special Lenten mediations this year has been "*It's Not God's Fault.*" This evening we examine just who was to blame for Jesus' terrible death.

The texts that will guide our Good Friday mediation this evening are found in the Gospel of Matthew and Paul's Second Letter to the Corinthians:

^{ESV}(**Matthew 27:46**) *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?"*

^{ESV}(**2 Corinthians 5:21**) *For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*

This is God's Word. Hold these words in reverence and learn from them - recognizing the Author, for it is written, "**Blessed are those who hear God's words and treasure them.**" So also we pray, "**Sanctify us by your truth, O Lord. Your word is truth.**" Amen.

Bill was sent to the airport to pick up his company's CEO, Thomas Armstrong, who was flying in for a first-ever visit to that branch. Surprisingly, he realized that he didn't know what the man looked like, but he had an idea in his mind of just what the head of the entire multi-national corporation would look like and was certain he would know him when he saw him. And, just in case, he also carried a sign with the man's name on it. As the crowds walked by, a rather diminutive, unimposing man in a rumpled suit and disheveled hair walked up to him and announced, "*I'm Mr. Armstrong.*" Bill took one look at the man and dismissed him, rather rudely. The man was persistent. "*My name is Thomas Armstrong. I'm your boss. I'm the man you were sent to pick up.*" "*Sure you are,*" replied Bill, as he rudely brushed the man aside and continued to scan the crowd.

Bill no longer works for the company. In fact his job was undoubtedly doomed the moment he formulated in his mind a preconceived notion of what his boss would look like, rather than ask someone who knew, and then allowed that homemade idea to dictate his actions.

In the great, epic struggle between Jesus and the forces of evil, in one sense Jesus didn't have a chance. In the other, his enemies didn't have a chance.

First Jesus. Did you ever stop to contemplate or analyze the base or root cause for the Jews' rejection of Jesus? According to their own words, they rejected and condemned Jesus to death because he was guilty of blasphemy for claiming to be the Son of God. Stop for a moment and think about just how ridiculous that accusation really was. Their reason for condemning Jesus absolutely guaranteed that they would reject, condemn, and then execute God's Promise Messiah – no matter when he appeared and no matter who he was. How so?

The Promised Messiah was not *capable* of blasphemy, since he himself *was God*, and by definition God cannot commit blasphemy, which is claiming glory that belongs only to God. Charging everyone who claimed to be the Messiah with blasphemy *guaranteed* that the Jews *would* one day kill their Messiah – who *of course* would rightly reveal to them that he was the Son of God and (in *their* minds at least) thereby make himself guilty. In other words, they took the most basic attribute that they should have expected in the Messiah and condemned Jesus simply because he claimed to possess that very attribute. It made no sense – but then unbelief almost never does.

If the Jewish rulers were going to condemn Jesus for speaking the truth, Jesus' only "hope" in connection with the scribes and Pharisees was to lie to them about who and what he was, or to pretend to be someone or something that he was not. This, obviously, Jesus could and would never do. In that sense, Jesus didn't have a chance – not as far as the Jews who rejected him were concerned. The preconceived idea of just what the Promised Messiah would be like doomed them to the rejection of that Savior.

But then we look at Good Friday from the opposite perspective and it becomes immediately apparent that Jesus' enemies – Satan in particular – were those who really had no chance. If their quest was to prevent the Son of God from carrying out the work his Father sent him to accomplish, they would certainly fail.

We know, of course, that Satan's goal was to destroy the only chance that mankind had to be saved by destroying Jesus. His only hope was to tempt Jesus to sin – for even Satan knew that a *sinless* offering or sacrifice was demanded as the payment for mankind's transgressions.

Knowing what he did, have you ever asked yourself why Satan manipulated or incited mankind into killing Jesus? The devil undoubtedly knew that if a *sinless* Jesus was put to death he would thereby fulfill his mission and open the doors of heaven for all believe in him. Why then put him to death, when by doing so they would seal their own doom?

First of all, understand that their own personal doom was already sealed. Causing Jesus to fail would have done nothing to help the certain plight of the devil and his minions. They were cast out of heaven and reserved for the fires of hell whether Jesus failed or not. In fact this gives us a bit of insight into the true nature of the devil. Here we are given an unobstructed view of pure evil as it really exists. Knowing that they were already

condemned to hell, the sole purpose of the devil and his angels is to destroy that which God loves. Their one and only goal is to cause others to join them in everlasting agony. No upside for them, only downside for others. Such evil is difficult for us to fully grasp, but it tells us what we are up against. It informs us just what we face day by day until our Lord calls us home.

Yet, again, why put Jesus to death when their only hope was to tempt him into sin? The answer is probably that the fallen angels are evil, not insane. Albert Einstein defined insanity as doing exactly the same thing over and over again with the expectation of a different result. They weren't insane. They had tried to get Jesus to sin for 33 years, in all manner of different ways, and they had a 100% failure rate. They apparently decided therefore that after 33 years of failure, they would try something different. They decided to incite their allies, the Jewish leaders, to kill Jesus. Their plan evidently was to roll the dice in one last great effort to accomplish what had always been their goal. Perhaps when faced with abandonment, isolation, and death – the ultimate test – Jesus would finally break.

They didn't have a chance. Jesus, our Champion, remained absolutely faithful and sinless to the bitter end. That end was announced by Jesus himself on this night: ***"It is finished!"*** The result is that the forces of evil not only lost everything, you and I won – everything.

Yet our texts for this evening provide a most startling contrast to our Lenten theme this year (*"It's Not God's Fault."*) It was without question my fault that Jesus suffered as he did, and was crucified as he was. My fault, no one else's. But God in his infinite love and mercy chose to save us by making it all *his Son's fault*. He *"laid on his Son the iniquity of us all."* Have you ever wondered why Jesus asked the question that he did from the cross: ***"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"*** Certainly he was still true God as he hung on the cross. Did he not know the answer? Jesus was also true man, and as true man certain things were kept from him (like the day and hour of the Last Day.) In the end we cannot say for certain why Jesus asked the question (what exactly he was thinking) but what we *can* know for certain is what we are thereby taught. First and foremost, we learn that Jesus *was in fact* abandoned by his Father as he hung on the cross. True God was abandoned by True God. What mortal is capable of understanding such truth? We are also taught something else. Since Jesus didn't answer the question, he thereby left it to us to answer. How do you answer your Savior's question this evening, as you commemorate his death?

Why did your Father forsake you, Jesus? Because of what I have done, because of my sin. You are suffering what I deserved. I also acknowledge that separation from God will undoubtedly be the worst aspect of hell, a misery we cannot now fully comprehend. But you could. You did. You were forsaken so that I would never have to know that terror for all eternity.

While absolutely true, that's really only the first part of the complete answer. The other part of the answer to Jesus' question is revealed to us in our second text: ***For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*** God the Father abandoned his beloved Son because he had made him guilty of the sum total of mankind's sin. He had no sin of his own, but God the Father there made him guilty of all. To put it another way, God made it his Son's fault. All of it. Every single sin. That's also the only way the second part of our text could be true: ***"...so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."*** We could not be righteous in God's sight if we still had sin. Any sin. Even one. Jesus had to become guilty of, and pay the ultimate penalty for, every single sin. God the Father did that by making it all his Son's fault. He made his Son the One who bore the blame.

Look again – carefully – into the crowd. See yourself. You caused that profound injustice. Not the sins of others. Your sins caused Jesus' suffering and abandonment, yours the blame Jesus was made to bear.

Look there, *and believe*, because *then* what your Substitute *accomplished* there on the cross is also yours. Then and only then the payment for *the world's* sins becomes the payment for *your* sins – through faith alone. Then it is that the death of Jesus Christ does not just bring *the world* life, it brings *you* life. Only then do you have a share also in his resurrection on Easter morning, and finally on the Last Day. It's only in recognizing your guilt that you can then be comforted with God's declaration of your innocence. You did what you did, which is exactly why Jesus Christ did what he did. Recognize that you caused his death, but that you also now share in his life. Amen.

The Pre-Sermon Hymn – 172 (*Stanzas 1, 4, 8, & 10*)

“Oh Sacred Head Now Wounded”

The Sermon

^{ESV} **(Matthew 27:46)** *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?”*

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“Who Was to Blame?”

The Post Sermon Hymn – 144

“Jesus, Grant that Balm and Healing”

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 – 175

“When I Survey the Wondrous Cross”

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.



Good Friday Service

St Paul Lutheran Church
Bismarck, ND

ST. PAUL EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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Mick Johnson – President Angela Pfennig – Organist
Michael Roehl – Pastor

Good Friday Service – April 15, 2022

The Opening Hymn -#142- (Stanzas 1-3)

Invocation

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

Congregation: *(Spoken) Amen.*

Scripture Readings and Confession

P: *On this most solemn occasion we commemorate the death that brought us life.*

Zechariah 12:10

1) Jesus, I will ponder now on Thy holy Passion;
With Thy Spirit me endow for such meditation.
Grant that I in love and faith may the image cherish
Of Thy suffering, pain, and death, that I may not perish. [TLH Hymn 140]

Matthew 27:27-31

2) Make me see Thy great distress, anguish, and affliction,
Bonds and stripes and wretchedness and Thy crucifixion;
Make me see how scourge and rod, spear and nails, did wound Thee,
How for man Thou died'st, O God, who with thorns had crowned Thee.

Isaiah 53:3-6

3) Yet, O Lord, not thus alone make me see Thy Passion,
But its cause to me make known and its termination.
Ah! I also and my sin wrought Thy deep affliction;
This indeed the cause hath been of Thy crucifixion.

Colossians 3:1-6

4) Grant that I Thy Passion view with repentant grieving
Nor Thee crucify anew by unholy living.
How could I refuse to shun every sinful pleasure
Since for me God's only Son suffered without measure?

Romans 8:31-34

5) If my sins give me alarm and my conscience grieve me,
Let Thy cross my fear disarm, peace of conscience give me.
Grant that I may trust in Thee and Thy holy Passion.
If His Son so loveth me, God must have compassion.

Mark 8:34-38

6) Grant that I may willingly Bear with Thee my crosses,
Learning humbleness of Thee, Peace mid pain and losses.
May I give Thee love for love! Hear me, O my Savior,
That I may in heaven above Sing Thy praise forever.

Absolution

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 151 (Stanzas 1 & 2)

Christ, the Life of all the living, Christ, the Death of death, our foe,
Who, Thyself for 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.

Thou, ah! Thou, hast taken on Thee bonds and stripes, a cruel rod;
Pain and scorn were heaped upon Thee, O Thou sinless Son of God!
Thus didst Thou my soul deliver from the bonds of sin forever.
Thousand, thousand thanks shall be, Dearest Jesus, unto Thee.

The Passion History Reading

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.