

Sermon April 13, 2017 – Maundy Thursday

His Blood Makes the Foulest Clean

Psalm 51:13-15

Then I will teach transgressors your ways,
and sinners will return to you.

¹⁴ Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God,
O God of my salvation,
and my tongue will sing aloud of your righteousness.

¹⁵ O Lord, open my lips,
and my mouth will declare your praise.



Dear Friends in Christ,

Should you ever find yourself under arrest, remember, “you have the right to remain silent.” That’s what you are told and better keep that way. And, if your attorney was present, he likely would tell you to exercise that right, and be silent. Not doing so, a guilty person when opening his or her mouth, can incriminate himself more than what the present situation merits.

For the guilty of sin our best defense is silence, for we are guilty before Almighty God.

For when we reflect upon the Law, for when we allow the Law speak to us, and if we are honest with ourselves, the guilt of our sin becomes quite evident.

That’s what God’s Law does, as the Apostle Paul saw, the Law of God has this effect. St. Paul spoke of this in Romans 3:19, when he wrote: “Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God.” Forget denying it; forget excuses; forget blaming another. Attempting to defend yourself against the charges of your sins, will only add to your crimes.

In the Old Testament we hear of King David, and he was one who had no reason to say anything. He was guilty, guilty of adultery with another man’s wife, which was deserving of capital punishment in itself, and more, of murder as well, because he had her husband murdered. Even though he (David) covered his guilt before others, he remained guilty of murder before God Almighty.

Deep down, David knew he was guilty. Remember that in Psalm 32 he spoke of how “his bones were wasting away.” He felt God’s “heavy hand” upon him, - “crushing his bones.” “His strength was dried up as by the heat of summer.” He couldn’t stand living with himself, - maybe not even looking at his own reflection.

Nathan confronted David. David could not deny what he had done. His heart was heavy. An Adulterer deserved death. A murderer deserved death. That meant that David deserved death. It was undeniable. What could he say?

He could say a prayer! And he did. He prayed the words of our text: "Deliver me from blood guiltiness, O God, O God of my salvation...." You see, David knew he had blood on his hands. Like Lady Macbeth, he could not wash out the dam spot. Some of you may recall from studying Shakespeare, that Lady Macbeth, - after participating in a murder, - would sleep walk in a crazed state, - rubbing her hands in a washing motion, and saying: "Out damn spot!" She doubted whether her own murdering hands would ever be clean. She claimed that she could even smell the blood on them.

Lady Macbeth was fictional. King David was real, is historical, who prayed to God, who asked God to deliver him, after all David did trust God's Word and his promise of forgiveness. He asked God to deliver him from his "blood guiltiness"

And God did. Through the prophet Nathan, God declared his forgiveness, he said: "The LORD also has put away your sin; you shall not die." (2 Sam. 12:13). But can God forgive the sins of a murderer? Could David's hands ever be clean again?

Absolutely! God spoke and his word made him clean. Through his Word, God actually sanctifies you. He makes you holy. He cleanses and purifies you from all your sin through his divine Word preached and proclaimed by the preacher; Nathan was the preacher.

The same way we do today, we do receive the forgiveness of sins, because of Jesus Christ. He came to this world to do this very thing, - in fact establishing a new covenant in His blood. Jesus has a lot to say about this in today's Gospel lesson. He said it as He sat around with His 12 disciples, celebrating the Passover.

Today, He cleanses and purifies you from all your sin through his divine Word preached and proclaimed by the preacher; there He declares you forgiven of your sins, when you hear "I forgive you," you are hearing Christ's words. Hearing God's word is important; after all it is his Commandment, as the Third commandment tells us: "Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy."

The living voice of Christ is heard in the divine word of forgiveness. Consequently, you are to make use of God's Word and exercise yourself in it, appreciating his gift of forgiveness, just as David did.

They are his divine words of promise attached to and permeating the Passover meal's bread and wine. "Take," Jesus says of the bread, "this is my body." With regard to the cup of wine, Jesus flat out guarantees: "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many" (Mk 14:22, 24).

They were reclining at the table and eating. As they were eating, Jesus "...took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to them, and said, "Take; this is my body." And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, and they all drank of it. And he said to them, "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many." He had given them Holy Communion, - His Body and Blood, given and shed for the forgiveness of sins, - telling them to do this often.

As we will be remembering tomorrow – Good Friday – Jesus shed His holy and innocent blood for the sins of the world. We know that His blood is holy and innocent, because, as we will be remembering on Sunday, - Jesus rose again. Only as One who is innocent could that have happened!

Friends, as the Lord could answer David's prayer – to deliver him from "bloodguiltiness," – the Lord can deliver us from our own. We may not be actual

murders or adulterers, - but still we are guilty. In His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus taught "...everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment..." (Mat. 5:22), equating this anger to "murder." He also taught, "...everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart" (Mat. 5:28). This reality can only shut our own mouths, - silencing us.

Yet, when we confess our sins, and trust in Jesus innocent shed blood for us, - we are delivered. We are free. His blood cleanses us from all unrighteousness.

Friends, as you come forward for the Lord's Supper, be assured that this forgiveness is for you too. That's why Jesus instituted this Supper on this Night – that we might have that blessed assurance of sins forgiven. We are able to see, touch, smell, and taste it!

And then, we can open our mouths – not just to eat and drink, - but to proclaim! Back in our text, that's what David said he would do. After he prayed: "Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, O God of my salvation..." he then added: "...and my tongue will sing aloud of your righteousness." He would praise His Lord and God – with hearts, tongue, and voice.

It's the natural response of one who has received forgiveness of sins by the blood of the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ. In the Psalm, David had prayed: "O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise." He promised, "Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will return to you." One cannot help but respond in "instructive praise," - glorifying the Lord, that's the third commandment in action.

I think of the many whom Jesus healed, - and how He would tell them to tell no one what He had done. Yet, they couldn't help themselves. They'd soon return home telling everyone about Jesus, - and singing His praises.

Friends, our mouths too are open to sing God's praise. Tonight, after hearing His Word of Grace and receiving Holy Communion, praise the Lord. Tell everyone what He has done!

"Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, O God of my salvation, and my tongue will sing aloud of your righteousness. O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise."

Amen.