

Sermon – April 3, 2014 - Good Friday Morning

Our Lord Did This for You!

Psalm 22



Our text for this Good Friday meditation is Psalm 22, which we already heard a few minutes ago.

Throughout Lent, during our midweek services, we have meditated on and prayed the seven Penitential Psalms. On this Good Friday, we consider what is referred to as the Passion Psalm, Psalm 22. While all the Penitential Psalms describe primarily the sufferings and deliverance of David or some other king, or psalm writer, Psalm 22 gives a graphic prophecy of the suffering and triumph of the Messiah himself, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

What a terrible and sad day it is when God dies! But what a blessed and holy day it is when God dies for us, his death for our life. I pray that you would behold this death and trust it for it is the source of true life, for you. For without the life that Jesus gives through his death, we can live physically, biologically, but not spiritually, not eternally with God. Without Jesus Christ we are dead while living, dead in trespasses and sin.

So I pray that as we consider what happened to Jesus on Good Friday, as prophesied in this psalm, we also consider what it means for each of us.

If Jesus' death does not yet, at this moment, mean new life for you, then I pray that the Holy Spirit gives you the wonderful gift of new life today, in the next few moments, through the proclamation of Jesus Christ crucified. If your flesh has already died with Jesus and his death has worked new life in you, then I pray that this new life may be renewed and strengthened again this day.

From Psalm 22, we see a graphic description of Jesus' suffering and death with very vivid details written by David over one thousand years prior to that first Good Friday. While the situation described in this psalm might have been David's suffering while he was persecuted, Psalm 22 foreshadows, and more, what Jesus who was also David's Lord, would experience. It is more than a foreshadow, it is actually a direct prophecy. Here the Holy Spirit directs David to describe the facts, through what he was probably feeling himself, of the extent of Christ' suffering and death. So, on this Good Friday, we can't help but stand in awe of God's omniscient and omnipotent prophecy and fulfillment.

Psalm 22 begins with what would be the fourth of Jesus' words from the cross: "Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?" "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" These are the words of the sacrificial Lamb from earth toward heaven. They are words that imply trust and dependence instead of despair, because while forsaken by God the Father, the Crucified One still calls out to God as "My God," not once, but twice. This is a mystery that only eternity can penetrate: God is forsaken by God. The forsakenness of Jesus, the Christ, is unique because he places himself under the judgment of God as he bears the sins of all people for all time. He cannot be spared from experiencing God's full wrath against sinful humanity. He must face it completely as if he himself

were guilty. He who is completely innocent and holy came to take our place and to represent us before God as the Second Adam who was forced to experience the agonies and terrors of hell in order to free us from sin and death and hell. And out of the infinite depth of this experience of God's wrath, with all earnestness Jesus cries his complaint: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

Jesus is forsaken by God the Father. He is also scorned like a worm by those who are persecuting him. In their mockery, Jesus' enemies draw the conclusion that God does not want to rescue him. The cruelty of Jesus' enemies is graphically portrayed by comparing them to vicious animals: bulls, lions, and dogs. When they beat him, they were like bulls trampling a person underfoot. When they tore his flesh, they were like lions tearing their prey. When he was on the cross, they surrounded him like a pack of wild dogs. The crucifixion is graphically described in that they have pierced his hands and his feet.

Then, you see that at the foot of the cross are the Roman soldiers who carry out the sentence. According to Roman custom, the garments of the victims were a part of the soldiers' booty. Even before our Jesus' death, they are already dividing the spoils. Jesus' robe is without a seam, so they "divide [his] garments among them and for [his] clothing they cast lots."

Now, did Jesus know all these things were to happen to him? Yes he did. He also knew the mocking of his tormentors and yet He was obedient. But he also knew the Love of the Father, from his incarnation, the Father declared his love for his only-begotten Son. Angels announced his future glory to Mary and Joseph even before he was born. At his nativity, angels announced the peace he would bring. The Father personally declared his pleasure at Jesus' Baptism and transfiguration. In the same way, Jesus had shown his love and obedience to the Father throughout his life. And he would not renounce the love of his Father now. In Psalm 22, our suffering and dying Lord proclaims God's holiness and his trust that the Father will work deliverance through the terror he is undergoing now, even in and through his terrible agony.

But there is more, in the psalm we see that Jesus poured out like water. He is dried up like the piece of a broken pot. "I can count all my bones" he said, then lastly, another cry was heard: "I thirst."

In Psalm 22, our suffering Lord tells us why he had to go through all he had to go through. The Father let the Son die for the sins of his people so he could restore them and grant eternal blessings.

And eternal blessings we do have. Easter is coming! The Father did not abandon his Son to the grave, but he was raised to life and glory. And now our crucified Lord calls us brothers. Through faith in Jesus Christ as our Savior, we are truly God's children who share in his suffering and death, in his flesh and blood. Through Jesus Christ, we have deliverance from sin, death, and the devil. He is now our High Priest, who is able to help us in any suffering or tribulation that we face, here today, any place and at any age, young and Old. He is the Savior of all people, both poor and rich, and all who turn to him in faith will receive the blessings of his kingdom. All who trust in him will be fed at the banquet of eternal life.

Psalm 22 ends with the Hebrew word 'asah, "He has done it." It can also be translated "It is done" or "It is . . . finished"—and you know where else we hear that today. This last word of the psalm expresses the very words you'll also hear from the

lips of our crucified Savior. "It is finished." This is the completion for which all of creation had been waiting since the fall of mankind into sin.

How then shall we view what was prophesied in Psalm 22, today in 2015?

What should this mean for you and me on this Good Friday almost two thousand years later? Well, above all, by the working of the Holy Spirit, Christ's death on the cross should mean repentance and faith for us. In the first place, there is no better location for us sinners to come to true repentance than at the foot of the cross of Calvary. For it is here we see human sinfulness in its highest degree, or rather, in its greatest depth, and it is here that we see the most dreadful consequences of sin.

If we really want to see the depths of human depravity, we must go to Golgotha. For who is it that hangs here between heaven and earth, between two criminals, with flesh torn to shreds and blood spattering his body and dripping to the ground, with hands and feet pierced through? Who is he that here is slowly being tortured to death? He is not a criminal, for even one of the crucified criminals says, "This man has done nothing wrong." However, he is more than just an innocent man. He is the Son of the Most High God, the Lord of glory, the Word made flesh, by whom all things were created. This is the One whom people took, hung on a cross, suspended between earth and heaven, and slowly, tortured him to death. That was without question the most hideous, shameful, wicked, and cursed deed that has ever been conceived in human hearts and carried out by human hands. Here we see what the human heart and mind are capable of conceiving, thinking, planning, doing. Here we see human sinfulness in its greatest depth. And even though you and I were not there personally, our sin played a part in that. Shouldn't we be appalled that we are human beings and that we belong to a species, the human race, that has made itself guilty of such a crime against God? We did that! Shouldn't we hang our heads in shame?

Yet at Calvary, we not only see sin in its highest degree and greatest depth, but we also see its most dreadful consequences. For what Christ has here suffered, he endured not for his sins, but willingly for ours. What we see Christ Jesus suffering is what we should have suffered eternally on account of our sin. The pains that he suffered, we should have suffered. Because of our sin, we deserved eternal rejection by God—eternal rejection in hell. On Golgotha, God has written the Law before our eyes in bold, bloody letters: "The wages of sin is death!" That kind of death!

Finally, on the cross we also see sin as an unbearable burden that we never would have been able to carry. If God could have saved mankind any other way, wouldn't he have done so? What an insult against God sin must be, since God would not be reconciled unless his own Son died as a sacrifice in our place so that we might live. Thus, the death of the Son of God on the cross for our sins calls us to true repentance, that is, to true sorrow, despair, and remorse over our sin.

Yet, the new life in Christ does not consist only in terror and despair over our sin, but also and above all, it calls us to a firm faith in God's grace and steadfast love. And here, at the cross of Calvary, we find the greatest demonstration of God's willingness to forgiveness and save us poor, miserable sinners. Here we see the height and depth, width and breadth of God's love for us: for God gave his own Son unto death so that we could have pardon and peace.

As we come before the cross of Christ, terrified over our sins, Jesus cries out, "Father, forgive them," and "It is finished." Be comforted; your sins are forgiven you!

Don't ask, "What more shall I do?" There is nothing for you to add. Christ Jesus has already done everything; you should only believe in him. If you feel your sins are many and great, then look up and see your Savior who has endured the most and greatest afflictions and suffering for your forgiveness. On the cross, the words stand clearly before all sinners: Repent, for you shall die! But just as clearly shine the words for terrified hearts: Believe and you shall live!

Today, Good Friday, our salvation and reconciliation was finished, completed, accomplished on the cross of Calvary by our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Now, by the power of the Holy Spirit, we are called to repent of our sins and believe that Christ Jesus has paid the ultimate price for us. Therein we have forgiveness and life. That God prepared this from the foundation of the world, that he used King David to prophesy and proclaim this in such graphic detail more than one thousand years before it happened, that Jesus accomplished each detail completely and fully so that he might taste death for everyone—that is a remarkable demonstration of God's faithfulness and steadfast love. Thereby, Jesus has made us his brothers and sisters, children of God, and heirs of eternal life. Dear Christian friends, on this Good Friday, be comforted, even in your sorrow over sin, for our Lord did this for you . . . Today!

Amen!