

Sermon Notes for 3/25/16 (Good Friday)

Preached at Jehovah Lutheran – St. Paul, MN

Text: John 19:17-30

Theme: THE SOURCE OF ETERNAL SALVATION, OUR MESSIAH

Hymn: LSB 123 (Ah, Holy Jesus)

The Point: In His suffering and dying, Jesus has accomplished everything needed for our salvation so that we can live free from fear of death and the penalty of sin.

Introduction: “*Tetelestai*,” shouts Jesus from His perch on Calvary’s hill. That word from the cross (*tetelestai*), “It is finished” indicates that His earthly task is complete. He has done all that was needed. All that remains is for the Father to put His stamp of approval on that work of suffering and dying, which happens as Jesus is raised from death on Easter. But just what is it that is finished at the cross on Good Friday? We find a number of things being finished.

First of all, Jesus has now faithfully fulfilled all the will and law of God. When we talk of Jesus’ saving work, we often think of the Passion of Jesus, and rightly so, for in those final days and hours of His earthly journey Jesus suffered without limit. But His suffering went far beyond that. His saving work involved every moment of His earthly life. He also endured all the devil’s temptations and trials without once feeling sorry for Himself, without once retreating into some excuses for doing Satan’s bidding, without once stepping foot outside the bounds of the will of the Father. “I have come, not to do my own will,” Jesus said, “but to do the will of Him who sent me.” And this He did, fully and completely, down to the last crossed “t” and dotted “i”.

Jesus’ words from the Sermon on the Mount reflect this clearly: “For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not one letter, not one stroke of a letter, will pass from the law until all is accomplished.” He accomplished it all – from the time of the first shedding of His blood at His circumcision, through obedience to frail and sinful parents, through learning from the often-mistaken rabbis and priests, through serving hateful and rebellious sinners of all stripes, through taking to Himself the pains and wounds and stripes of all who should suffer hell – Jesus did it!

Many times it would have seemed easier, from a human vantage point, to take a step in the devil’s direction – to turn the stones into bread, to bow down and get the crown apart from the cross, to give up on those thick-headed disciples. But Jesus soldiered on, following the marching orders that had been set out in Holy Scripture for the Suffering Servant Messiah. He spoke everything that God wanted Him to say, regardless of who might have been targeted. He attacked the self-centered religious bigots, the proud but spiritually vacant political leaders, the people who bore power and did not hesitate to use it to maintain their positions rather than to serve their constituents. Jesus refused the easy way, taking instead always the high and honorable way of service to which He had been appointed.

But there is more. Jesus has also assumed to Himself the full weight and burden of the sin of the world. I have no clue HOW this could ever take place, but we are told that it was necessary that a totally innocent victim should stand under the Judge’s condemnation so that the guilty could become innocent. This is the “great exchange” of which Paul spoke in Second Corinthians, “God made him who had no sin to be sin for us so that in him we might become the righteousness of

God.” Notice that Paul does not say that God made Jesus to be sinful; rather, He made Him to BE SIN. In other words, there has never been a guiltier, more death-deserving, , unrighteous and hate-mongering opponent of God than Jesus was seen to be as He hung at Calvary. His own words speak to this: “My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?” Being forsaken by God is the just and fair wages that our sin has earned.

And this our Savior Jesus has suffered all that our sins deserved. Desertion by the Father – that is the equivalent of hell, which consists of eternal separation from God. The hell that I have deserved, God’s own Son willingly accepted as His own. The pains and agony that I have earned end up being put onto the shoulders of the one perfectly innocent Lamb. Punishment for all the guilt that lay upon His shoulders, punishment which included the mockery, the humiliation, the torture, the crown of thorns, the beating, the nailing, the crucifixion. All of this Jesus underwent because our sin (yours and mine) had piled up that sort of debt. And He bled freely, because without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness. Finally He died, because the wages of sin is nothing less than death, the separation of body and spirit, but also death in the sense of separation from God, the source of life.

And that brings us to the final accomplishment of our Lord and Savior. Jesus dies the death which God’s will had required of the guilty, so that the guilty might be set free. He underwent death, which you and I (and every other person) have rightly deserved. He was the only person who has ever lived totally consistent with the requirements of God’s Law. Because He was willing to die without deserving to die, He was able to undo the power of death over us.

As C.S. Lewis describes it, He “worked death backward.” In Lewis’ powerful work *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, Aslan (the lion and champion of the story) is put to death on account of the treachery of one of the human children who get into Narnia. It was an exchange that the White Witch was glad to receive, figuring that by slaying Aslan she would be able to be queen of Narnia forever. But on the third day after he had been killed, Aslan comes to life again.

One of the first things he does is to invade the witch’s castle, where she has dozens and hundreds of statues, which were actually animals and other creatures that she has, by her magic power, turned into stone. When Aslan breathes on them, they come to life again. What a powerful picture of the work of the Holy Spirit, who breathes on us with the power of the Word so that death is worked backward, and we come to life, living in Jesus our Lord. He takes out our stony hearts and gives us a heart of flesh. He empowers us to live when it seemed that death was our last and only outcome.

Conclusion: In His suffering and dying, Jesus has accomplished everything needed for our salvation so that we can live free from fear of death and the penalty of sin. Nothing can be added to His work. Nothing need be added to His work. His “It is finished” marks the completion of the work of salvation which God had laid out already beginning in the Garden of Eden with the fall of Adam and Eve. In Jesus’ suffering and dying, the deadly serpent had bitten deeply into His heel. But that heel (along with the rest of Christ’s body) sprang into action on Easter morning and crushed the serpent’s head, once and for all. The rest of history will be the story of how that Gospel message has made its way around the world into nation after nation, people group after people group, heart after heart, until the banquet table in eternity is completely full. Thank God

that you also have your place reserved, your payment finalized, your debt paid, and your life restored through the One who said, "It is finished!" AMEN!