

Pastor Kenneth Mars

Grace Lutheran Church – Pine Bluffs, WY

Good Friday (members of St. John's Kimball, Zion Grover, Immanuel Burns also present)<sup>1</sup>

March 25, 2016

Text: Isaiah 52:13–53:12 & John 19:30

Grace be to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

The idea that the crucified Jesus is God's Lamb who takes away the sins of the world is a most shocking and repulsive. That Jewish Man crucified between two criminals had been tortured beyond belief in the hours leading up to this display of state-sponsored execution. Jesus was a bloody mess of suffering and anguish. Isaiah prophesied about the hideousness of it all. Some 700 years before Good Friday, Isaiah said the Lamb of God, the suffering Servant of the Lord, would be "despised and rejected" (53:3) and "his appearance was so marred, beyond human semblance, and his form beyond that of the children of mankind (52:14). The Lamb of God was a disfigured, marred sacrifice. It just didn't seem right.

The OT required that all sacrificial lambs be perfect, without defect. And yet, here He is, the Lamb of God disfigured beyond recognition. Psalm 22 declares that the suffering Messiah was "a worm and not a man, scorned by mankind and despised by the people" (vs. 6). Just so we don't miss the point, Isaiah even writes this about the Messiah, "He had no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him... as one from whom men hide their faces" (53:2, 3). We must never sanitize Christ's crucifixion; we must never domesticate it. For the crucifixion of Good Friday is nothing other than the Lamb of God giving Himself unto death and judgment for the salvation of the universe. That was a messy business, to be sure.

And yet Holy Scripture points us exclusively to this brutalized Savior. Any other Jesus – that is, a Jesus who wasn't crucified for the sins of the world – is a false Savior, a false God. The only God we can know is the God revealed in and through Jesus. "No one comes to the Father except Me" said Jesus (John 14:6). And the Holy Spirit is sent by the Father in Jesus' precious name (John 14:26). We must come to terms with the fact, the Jesus crucified on a Roman cross upon Golgotha's hill is the God with whom we must deal.

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<sup>1</sup> Adapted from the sermon Series "The Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world" prepared by Rev. Brent Kuhlman, 2014.

And how must we deal with this Jesus? We must hear His preaching, heed His peculiar message which can only be heard from Him. For He chooses that we should know Him in the preaching of the cross and the joyful proclamation of His resurrection from the dead on the third day. Jesus chooses that we should know Him in the faithful administration of His sacraments. Saving faith comes by hearing the message of Gospel preaching and receiving the saving word of justification hidden in the lowly means of water, bread, wine, and words.

On this Good Friday, there is one Gospel sermon that Jesus preaches which we must hear! It may be the shortest sermon ever preached, much shorter than what I've already proclaimed. From the pulpit of His cross, Jesus preaches, "It is finished!" (John 19:30). Nothing could be better, or more powerful. "It is finished!"

Jesus finished what He came to do:

- “to bear our griefs and carry our sorrows” (Is. 53:4),
- “to be pierced for our transgressions” (Is. 53:5),
- “to be crushed for our iniquities” (Is. 53:5, 10),
- to have “laid on him the iniquity of us all” (Is. 53:6),
- “to be numbered with transgressors” (Is. 53:12),
- “to bear the sins of many” (Is. 53:12),
- “to make intercession for the transgressors” (Is. 53:12), and
- “make many to be righteous” by bearing “their iniquities (Is. 53:11).

All of that, and so much more, is finished. Sin, the biggest thing that has gone wrong with you and this entire universe, has been atoned for. Jesus took all of it unto Himself and destroyed it in His death and resurrection. Because of what Jesus finished, we can boldly say that we have died to sin and now live to God in righteousness. For by the wounds of Jesus we have been healed (I Peter 2:24). That's why the apostle Paul asks his taunting question, "Death, where is your sting?" The sting of death is sin and it's gone; it's finished. Thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ (I Cor. 15:54–57). That's why Satan can no longer accuse you. He's finished; his accusing voice is silenced in the preaching of Jesus. For you, as God's holy people, overcome him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of your testimony (Rev. 12:10–11). When your sins afflict you or if death taunts you, all you need do is say "It is finished!" Jesus' preaching is now your preaching.

Now that all things are finished for our salvation, we can hold fast to our confession of faith (Heb. 4:14). We can "with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that

we may receive mercy and grace to help in time of need..." (Heb. 4:16). At the invitation of Jesus, we receive His gifts unto eternal life. Baptismal waters cover our sins, past, present, future, and rescue us from death and devil and give eternal salvation to all believers. Consecrated bread and wine gives us the body and blood of Jesus that nourishes us with forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation. Holy Absolution whereby we hear the very voice of the Savior, the Lord Jesus, who declares that we are forgiven before God in heaven. All of this and so much more in that short, powerful, and glorious sermon preached by that Man whom the world held in derision when He was bleeding and dying out of love for them.

"It is finished!" That's no ordinary sermon. And that's one most extraordinary preacher. It's Jesus, God's beloved Son, our Savior. The Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world now lives and reigns to all eternity. From the Father's right hand He guards and protects you and everything which He accomplished on Good Friday and Easter. Glory be to Jesus, God's marred yet perfect Lamb, who finished all things for the honor and salvation of His beloved people.

✠ In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. ✠ Amen.

Now the peace of God which surpasses all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus unto life everlasting. Amen.