

Rev. Seth D. Bode † Sermon 420, 04-02-2021 † Good Friday

“Credo, Domine; adjuva incredulitatem meam,” Mark 9:24.

“Domine, volumus Jesum videre,” John 12:21.

LUKE 23:46

Jesus cried out with a loud voice, “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!”

[Psalm 31:5] *When he had said this, he breathed his last.*



A picture of Jesus Christ on the cross – whose hands would you let this fall into? Would you be okay with someone looking at the image of Jesus on the cross? Facebook denied a fellow WELS pastor’s advertisement, because of the picture of Jesus on the cross. What does that tell you? Do you know what that tells you?

Social media is not comfortable with that image. People are not comfortable with the image of Christ on the cross. Why is that? I don’t feel comfortable when I look at Him. I don’t like how His neck is tilted or how His wounds are etched into His body. It’s a nasty death. I don’t like grotesque, painful things.

But you can picture Him tonight, can’t you? The Lord was not beheaded, like a Roman citizen would be, quick and easy. He was stretched over the cross on His back. His hands and feet were spiked to the wood, He was raised on end, driving every nerve and muscle into tension, producing the most amount of pain possible. The least movement increased the throbbing hurt. The exposed wounds became inflamed and gangrenous, the thirst became bitter and burning, the night’s sleeplessness piled up, and the undue attention grew into shame—all in a death meant for the worst of the worst. (But we haven’t even gotten to the worst part yet.) You are here to think about that, aren’t you, because you and I need to think about that. What do we do about death?

What can we do about death? Is there an afterlife? Will I fall into the wrong hands? Is there a solution to my squirming feelings when I view a nasty death?

The ironic thing about these feelings people have when they see Jesus on the cross is ... Jesus on the cross actually takes care of the punishment of death. THIS IS what God did about death. This is what God did so that you and I can, like Jesus, commend our spirits ...

Into the Hands of the Father

However innocent Jesus was, everyone and everything was stacked against Him. His own disciple betrayed Him after repeated warnings; another denied Him with cursing and swearing; and the rest ran off. Enemies became friends on the basis of being His enemies—as Herod and Pilate condemned Jesus, at that point they started a friendship. No one defended Jesus, save the criminal on the cross. No helping hands could be found.

In a prayer recorded in Acts 4, the apostles say, “*Indeed Herod and Pontius Pilate met together with the Gentiles and the people of Israel in this city to conspire against your holy Servant Jesus, whom you anointed*” (v. 27). When hanging on the cross, Jesus was offered vinegar mixed with gall, as well as the most bitter blasphemies, mockeries, and taunts. Thanks for the helping hands.

Not only were there men against Him. There is One to whom the righteous can look when unjustly condemned. The righteous can appeal to . . . **God**, knowing that if all men are against them, God is for them and will not condemn them.

But not Jesus.

Hear Him in the dark with infinite anguish, “*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me*” (Matt. 27:46). God forsook Him. God was against Him. God’s own hand pressed down on Him. On the same day earthly judges sentenced Jesus to death, God the Father also sat in judgment over Him and pronounced Him guilty of death. Surely the wrath and curse of God rested on His soul, a torture greater than anything inflicted on Him humanly. The human executioners did what the Father’s “*power and will decided beforehand should happen*” (Acts 4:28).

Isaiah said about this torment, “*It was the LORD’s will to crush him and to allow him to suffer*” (53:10). God, who is “*able to destroy both body and soul in hell*” (Matt. 10:28), set on Jesus all the powers of darkness. He who was innocence itself—“*God made Him to be sin for us*” (2 Cor. 5:21). Jesus treaded the winepress alone, and “*out of the nations no one was with Him,*” but His clothes were stained with the blood that should be theirs (Isa. 63:3). Jesus Christ did not only walk among sinners, He was not only surrounded by sins, but sin was so really upon Him that it brought Him death. John was right, “*Behold! The Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world*” (1:29).

If we could properly consider this, our hearts would burst, that God's Son, Creator of all things, should let out a cry of death. (That is all Mark records at this point, by the way—a "loud cry.") This is far and beyond all sense and understanding. We cannot get to the bottom of it our life long. When our sins are made plain and the conscience is touched, then we find out all that Christ suffered here. Then everything that Christ suffered is to be referred to our souls, and the more we exalt the passion, the more clearly do we see our own condemnation.

But what was the "*loud cry*"? Isn't it mysterious then when we hear Jesus (literally) "*cry out with a loud cry*," that He intends to "*commit*" His "*spirit*" into the Father's hands? He had just questioned the One who rejected Him and forsook Him. Now He literally entrusts Himself to the care and protection of the very One who rejected Him and forsook Him. Finally He breathes "*His last*" (i.e., "*expires*"), and it's over. How is this possible? How is Jesus at one moment at odds with His Father, then at another moment at peace with His Father?

The answer is very simply that God was, is, and always will be pleased with Christ's righteousness. In such a brief period of time, the everlasting guilt of all sinners is gone. So quickly? So brief? Yes, Jesus is an equivalent atonement for the everlasting guilt of all sinners. The One who suffered is an everlasting person. He is the eternal God. Your sin, committed in a moment, brings everlasting guilt, because it is committed against God, an everlasting Person. So you cringe at an image of the crucified Lord. Yet the suffering of Christ, although it lasted just a moment, is of everlasting value, because Jesus Christ is an everlasting person. His hands span not only the length of the wooden beam, but the measure of the whole world's sin.

Sinners sinned against the everlasting God and deserved everlasting punishment; so the everlasting God takes the everlasting guilt of sinners and punishes it in His own everlasting Son, who is Himself the everlasting God. And so sinners are freed from everlasting punishment, and they will stand before God in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness.

The veil of the temple was torn, and the whole law was torn and terrified with it. The darkness, on which no one was allowed to look, became light. While the veil remained, the gospel was hidden and not openly preached; but now, with the death of Christ, all that was of the old Adam and the law is dead and done away.

Now you no longer see an angry judge, but the fiery, fatherly love of God. He has given His Son for you.

Christians! Do not look on the transaction on Mt. Calvary like the ignorant and unbelieving, who see nothing more than a saint put to death without mercy. If we see nothing more than “poor Jesus,” then we have not yet entered the kingdom of God. If we see nothing but a good man, a sad story, or a grotesque image, we have missed what our hands have done! The meaning would be lost on us.

By our sins, we have taken the spirit of this Jesus into our very own hands.

We must drop our anchor of hope at the cross, remembering that a divine judgment was held there. There our sins were judged. There everlasting punishment was inflicted and endured. There everlasting righteousness was restored for us.

*“God made Him who had no sin to be sin **for us**” (2 Cor. 5:21).*

*“Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the Law, being made a curse **for us**” (Gal. 3:12).*

So the prayer of Psalm 31:5 belonged to Jesus. He earned it.

But it can be our prayer, as well. By faith in Jesus Christ, *“Into your hands I commend my spirit,”* may be our words, because they were the words of Jesus Christ first. These words have long been a favorite prayer of believers. They were the words of King David under persecution. They were the words of Stephen in death. And they are the words of any sinner who is found in Jesus Christ, whose sins are found in His wounds, and whose feet stand on the Father’s promises.

By His outstretched hands, Jesus has won this prayer for us and for our use.

Because your sins are pounded into the Son’s hands on the cross, your spirit may be found resting in the Father’s hands; in Jesus’ name, Amen.

Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him, so that you may overflow with hope, through the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.