

April 2nd 2021

Text: Matthew 27:45-50

Lenten Theme: Were You There?

Good Friday/Midweek Lenten VII

0541

Theme: Were You There...At Jesus' Death.

May God's mercy and grace in Christ Jesus ever give you enduring hope and comfort forevermore. Amen. Dear friends in Christ: On Thursday night, the night in which Christ was betrayed, He had stated about Himself the He would go as it was written of Him. Psalm twenty two, our Old Testament lesson, is one of those places where His going to the death of the cross is written. As we saw it is a very stark description of Jesus' crucifixion and death, describing as if David had been present and witnessed himself this world changing event. Let us turn in our Bibles to the book of 1 Peter, chapter 1, and read verses 18-20: **read passages here.** Peter states clearly that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was foreordained to shed His blood on the cross to purchase our redemption. Truly when Adam and Eve received the promise of a Messiah to rescue them from sin and death, this had already been determined in the counsel of the Triune God. In Revelation we are told that He was slain from the foundation of the world. It is interesting then, especially in light of this past Sunday's sermon that David, Peter, Adam and Eve, and us were all witnesses to the work of Christ in going to the cross, for this was determined not at some point in time, but in eternity, thus encompassing all of time. Thus everyone, by faith, which is what grasps reconciliation with God, and heaven being defined as dwelling with God, witnesses this event. This we have already seen, and this is one of the major points of this series of sermons. Jesus' work was not a temporal work, only benefitting man while on earth, but an eternal work carried out in time.

This is the very thing we have discovered throughout this series of sermons, which are titled: Were you there? In each and every case throughout the first six we found that we were at each respective event, for our sin was there. Our sin being there shows to us that Jesus was partaking not in some short term, temporal work, but a work of eternal, lasting reconciliation. This point cannot be overstated. Nor can we ever say that we have heard too much about our sin, for its ugliness, pervasiveness, and consequences have been on full display for us, and it brings us to realize the enormity of our sin, but also the enormity of what Christ did in our behalf. This we saw as well the first six sermons in this series, that besides our sins being there, Jesus too was there atoning for them all. This past Sunday, Palm Sunday, a new aspect was introduced to this series, that of viewing these events by the eye of faith, for we indeed saw the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem by faith, for the same confession of faith that we make each and every week, yea each and every day, was made by those people who were bodily present. In addition we saw that Jesus entered into Jerusalem as King, albeit in humility. Nevertheless, He came as a King, one of His three offices, a King one seen by faith in Him. These aspects will continue through tonight and on this coming Sunday. Tonight we come to a day, which strangely enough is named Good Friday, and we again ask the question we have asked seven times before: were you there at Jesus' death? We

will find this evening much of what we have found before, but in addition we will see the eternal aspect of it, and an explanation of how it could be that Jesus performed such a great and mighty work in our stead. Let us then answer the question before according to our text for this evening which is found in the twenty seventh chapter of the Gospel according to Matthew beginning at verse forty five.

“Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour. And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Some of them that stood there, when they heard that, said, This man calleth for Elias. And straightway one of them ran, and took a sponge, and filled it with vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave him to drink. The rest said, Let be, let us see whether Elias will come to save him. Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost.”

Let us pray, O most holy and gracious Lord Jesus, we come before Thee in wonder and humility as we consider Thine innocent suffering and death in our behalf. When we see the eternal weight of sin poured out upon Thee in both eternal and temporal death, we cannot but confess unto Thee our unworthiness for so great a work. Yet we sing forth Thy praises and give thanks unto Thee forevermore for condescending to lowly man, and as a Man didst mediate between us and the Father, and for offering Thyself as a sacrifice for all our sins. Remind us of Thy great love toward us, and keep us from casting away from ourselves Thy gracious work through sin and shame. Send unto us Thy Spirit in great measure, that we not forget all Thy benefits, but ever and always have our hearts and minds there fixed, so that we may rejoice and be glad all our days. Grant that all who are gathered here on this Good Friday, remember in joy the shedding of Thy blood for the remission of all our sins, and give us all a strong faith in Thee, that we may be, as Thou hast promised, co-heirs with Thee of all things. Finally we pray that Thou wouldst remember us when Thou comest into Thy kingdom, and do Thou, by Thy grace, say unto us those blessed words: “today shalt thou be with me in paradise. Grant all these things, O Lord and Savior, for Thine own sake. Amen.

Guided by God’s Spirit, let us answer the question: were you there...at Jesus’ death, saying first that:

Yes, our sin was there. we read verses forty five through fifty of our text: ***“Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour. And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Some of them that stood there, when they heard that, said, This man calleth for Elias. And straightway one of them ran, and took a sponge, and filled it with vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave him to drink. The rest said, Let be, let us see whether Elias will come to save him. Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost.”*** In opening our service today we sang: “Many hands were raised to wound Him, none would interpose to save; but the deepest stroke that pierced Him was the stroke that Justice gave.” (TLH

153:2b) Of all the wounds which Christ endured the worst was the smiting of Christ in eternal damnation. It is true that Jesus endured much in His body, He was scourged, men struck Him, put a crown of thorns on Him, He was shamed ridiculed and mocked, had nails driven through His hands and feet, but none compared to the moment when He cried out: **“My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?”** In this moment we witness a mystery, something which cannot be understood by the human mind, but something told to us anyway, God the Father turning His back on the God the Son because of the great sin which rested upon His shoulders. Not His own sin, mind you, but our sin. You see in order to even have cursory understanding of this moment, one must go back to the beginning, yes to the garden of Eden. When God gave His Law to Adam and Eve, He declared to them the punishment due if they disobeyed. Let us turn to the book of Genesis, chapter 2, and read verse 17: **read passage here.** This Law, which was comprehended in obedience to God, declared that one sin, one misstep would bring with it death. Now truly death of the body passed upon mankind in that moment, but so too did eternal death. The definition of eternal death is separation from God for eternity. This then was the consequence: eternal death, or hell, damnation. This punishment and consequence did not change. God declared, by His Law, that this was the consequence, and God’s justice determines that this punishment must be carried out. Now alongside that determination, as we saw earlier, God determined that the Savior would be sent to save mankind. Now, this Gospel message did not overthrow the Law, but rather the Gospel is the fulfillment of that Law, both as to its demands, and its justice. Blood was demanded, there was no way around it. Thus, the Son of God, the anointed Savior, was sent as true Man and true God to do that very thing. What we see in our text is the carrying out of justice. Thus, we see that in the carrying out of justice was our sin found, and so our presence there at the cross witnessing His death, in fact, putting Him to death in the soul and body. Being divine, He was able to pay for eternity for each person while hanging on the tree. Yet, we need not worry about the timeframe so much as what He did in that moment. He served our sentence, the sentence passed upon all men because of sin. Dear Christians, that was ours to pay, for we have sinned. All the agony, the longing toward God when we are without Him, and torture of being rejected by God almighty were ours to endure if not for this moment before us. We must answer that we were there, for our sins were being punished in Him.

Let us turn in Bibles to the book of Ephesians, chapter 2, and we read verses 12-16: **read passages here.** Whether Jew or Gentile, whether male or female, of whatever race Jesus Christ paid the price due for our sins in this place. He reconciled us with the Father, for once He had appeased the wrath of God by His own damnation, peace was made between God and man. This is the very reason why it is called Good Friday, not because we are happy that Jesus was slain, but that He was slain for me and thereby gives me peace with God. It is truly incredible. May God continue to renew in us the knowledge of this great sacrifice in our behalf. Thus do we answer the question: were you there...at Jesus’ death? Saying that yes, our sin was there:

But, our High Priest was there. We read verses forty five through fifty of our text: *“Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour. And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Some of them that stood there, when they heard that, said, This man calleth for Elias. And straightway one of them ran, and took a sponge, and filled it with vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave him to drink. The rest said, Let be, let us see whether Elias will come to save him. Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost.”* Having seen clearly the Kingly office of Christ this past Sunday, we now view Him in His office as High Priest. In the Old testament the high priest was to act as a mediator between God and men. Thus, the High Priest would undergo a series of acts to sanctify himself, after which he would take the sacrifices at the hand of the people, take them into the holy place and there offer it for their sins. The Old Testament office of the high priest was to stand until the Savior came who would actually perform all those things that were foreshadowed by the Old Testament sacrifices. What we witness in our text is Jesus actually performing that very act of the High Priest. The sins of the world were laid on Him, and as the High Priest entered into the Holy Place, and offered Himself upon the altar of the cross to make payment for sin. Let us turn to the book of Hebrews, chapter 9, and we read verses 11-15:**read passages here.** Thus we see here the culmination of all those things we have looked at for the past seven weeks, Jesus making atonement for sin. And the only way that Jesus could thus be the High Priest and stand between God and man as a true High Priest, was to be the God-Man. Only He can act as mediator, only He can stand between us and God making intercession for us.

Now we must also look at the temporal death of Christ, that is, the death of His body. It was a true death, not a soul sleep as some imagine and have taught; it was not Him going into a coma as others have conjectured, but Jesus actually and truly died. His soul passed from His body, as is indicated by Jesus saying in other Gospel accounts: *“Into Thy hands I commend my spirit.”* Jesus’ body would be lain in a grave shortly after our text, but His soul went immediately into heaven. Now one may ask why was it necessary for Jesus to die in the body if He paid for sin by suffering damnation? Well so it is that Christ paid for our sin in eternal death and overcame temporal death by His own death. He sanctifies the Christian grave, so that the Christian death is no longer death at all, but a sleep.

Recently we have all heard on the news the term: “No justice, no peace.” Well this term would be used properly in regard to what we here speak of. If there was no justice served against Jesus Christ on the cross as we here witness, then there would be no peace for us, because we would have justice served against us. But Jesus did endure the justice of God, and so we have peace with God. May we ever remember our High Priest and the sacrifice He made in our behalf, that we may ever have peace, hope, joy and comfort. Indeed our sin was there at Jesus’ death, but our High Priest was also there making reconciliation and redemption for you, dear Christian, and for me. May this be our focus on this Good Friday. Amen.

