**Midweek Lenten Theme: Blood of the New Testament.**

**February 14th 2024 Ash Wednesday/Midweek Lenten I**

**Text: Luke 22:39-46** 0703

**Theme: Blood of the New Testament: Shed by Sweating.**

May the shed blood of Christ ever be to you a covering for your sins, and that which washes you clean, justifying you unto life everlasting. Amen. Dear contrite Christians: We come today upon the season of Lent, Ash Wednesday marking the beginning of the somber season. We come here in remembrance of the death of the Son of God, Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. We remember His death in which He shed His blood, which shedding of His blood was payment for the sins of the whole world. Yet not only the sins of the world, but the sins of you and me. All those things which we might shrug off on a daily basis are the very things that caused that shedding of blood. And lest we think that the blood spilled is of no real consequence, which our flesh dares to think and even say, we will see during these midweek services, just what exactly the shedding of His blood means. It means two things primarily: first, it shows to us the seriousness of the crimes we have committed; secondly, it shows to us the grace which our Triune God showed unto us by the sending of Christ to shed that blood which grants unto us the remission of sin and life everlasting. Considering what things we are accused of, this love demonstrates to us the astounding nature of this love, that despite our sin, despite our defiance of the almighty God through sin, He still saved us.

He further demonstrates this love to us, by the real giving of His body and blood for us to receive often. This is done in His institution of the Lord’s Supper wherein He gives us to eat of His body and to drink of His blood. When instituting the sacrament the night He was betrayed and the night before He was put to death at the hands of the Romans, as He sat with His disciples in the upper room, made this declaration: *“This is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.” (Matt. 26:28)* When we approach this altar to receive the Lord’s Supper we are approaching to receive the grace of God in Christ, by receiving, with our mouths, His blood shed for the remission of sins. Do we then approach as if it is nothing? Do we approach with other things on our mind? Honestly, for myself, this happens all too often, and I believe for everyone. Yet, that is the very point of the series of sermons we have before us this Lenten season. It is to remind us of what exactly we are doing and exactly what we are receiving in the blood of the New Testament. And let us be reminded that Jesus Himself told us to do this very thing, that is, to receive His Supper often in remembrance of Him and His death. What better time to do this than at this most holy season of Lent, which is set aside, and marked as the time to do that very thing. This series is also to demonstrate to us the unbreakable link between the Old and New Testaments, for there are many in our world making claims that men were saved in a different way that they are today, that the eras of the Old Testament and New Testament were different eras, one ruled by the Law the other by the Gospel. But as we will see nothing could be further from the truth, for the blood of the New Testament, that of Christ crucified for the sins of the world, is for all people of all time. During our series we will focus on the many different sheddings of Christ blood during His passion. Tonight we will look at the shedding of His blood by sweating. We will do so according to our text for this evening which is found in the twenty second chapter of the Gospel according to Luke beginning at verse thirty nine.

**Quote text here.**

Let us pray, O most glorious Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, we come before Thee today with no excuses for our shameful deeds, with nothing to offer unto Thee. We plead guilty of all sins which are charged against us, and we can do nothing else but confess each one unto Thee. Yet, we implore Thee O most merciful Savior, to plead for us before Thy Father in heaven as Thou hast promised to us in the shedding of Thy most precious blood. Grant that we never take Thy blood for granted, nor that we do despite unto Thy grace by our sins, but ever hold fast to the hope of eternal life through faith in Thee. Help us to approach Thy table with due respect, honor, and gratitude, receiving there forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation. Grant us grace today to be truly contrite over our sin, and to sincerely believe in Thee, and to become children of Thy Father in heaven and Thy brothers and sisters, heirs of eternal life. Lord, we ask that Thou wouldst return quickly and rescue us from the body of this death, and to deliver us to Thy dwelling-place and our true home in heaven. Grant these things for Thine own name’s sake. Amen.

Guided then by the Spirit of God let us ;learn of the blood of the New Testament shed by sweating, seeing first that Christ was:

1. **Praying earnestly under wrath.** We read verses thirty nine through forty four of our text: **Read verses here.** We find our Savior, in our text, in the Garden of Gethsemane, as He had resorted to this place very often. Here He would commune with His Father in prayer and receive strength in His mission upon earth. Here we find Him again, only on this occasion, it was mere hours before He would be crucified for the sins of the world. There are many who have expressed the idea that the sufferings of Christ began the moment the nails pierced His hands and His feet, or when He was scourged by the soldiers of Pilate, but truly they began earlier, and here we see the first evidence of the agony that He was in, not necessarily agony of body, though that too can be seen, but agony of His soul, the weight of the world’s sins upon Him, and the beginning 0of drinking the cup of wrath which His Father had given Him to drink. We here are given a picture of the seriousness of our sin. It is not some insignificant thing that can be brushed off as easily as removing debris from the shoulder, but its consequence is death itself, the shedding of blood of the guilty. Yet many would here say, Christ is not guilty, why must He suffer? And that is the point is it not? That the innocent Savior took on the guilt on of man. Oh the depth and riches of the grace of Christ! Oh that men would ponder and comprehend the scene that lays bare before us! Oh that we would weigh its teachings, that we would here see the enormity of our guilt!

Christ prays earnestly that the cup of wrath would pass away from Him, not so that He might thereby condemn man, but that it be accomplished another way. Yet,, as prayer is, He says the will of the Father be done. And it is the Father’s will that Jesus Christ, Jesus of Nazareth, the eternal Son of God, shed His own blood in payment for the sins of the world, for you and for me. This idea is not new, and was depicted throughout the Old Testament in the shedding of blood of millions upon millions of animals, the sum of which is to show us the seriousness of sin, and to show us the greatness of the sacrifice we begin here to witness in the person of our Savior. Having the weight of our sin upon Himself, and enduring already the wrath of His Father from heaven, Jesus actually begins to sweat blood. Now we must not venture here into some philosophical discussion of the medical reason for this event, as many have done making claims that Jesus was undergoing some sort of blood disease that caused this, rather it is for us to see the suffering, the intense suffering here endured which was due to our sin. Let us hear of this from the Old Testament: *“For thus saith the Lord God of Israel unto me; take the wine cup of this fury at my hand, and cause all the nations, to whom I send thee, to drink it.” (Jer. 25:15)* The prophet Jeremiah makes a solemn declaration, by the Word of the Lord, that all nations are to drink from this cup of wrath, the same cup which Jesus is beginning to drink in the Garden of Gethsemane. We can again see this from the Old Testament: *“Thus saith thy Lord the Lord, and thy God that pleadeth the cause of his people, behold, I have taken out of thine hand the cup of trembling, even the dregs of the cup of my fury; thou shalt no more drink it again.” (Is. 51:22)* Why is it that we no longer must drink it? Because the Lord Jesus Christ hath taken the cup of wrath and has drank it down to dregs and beyond to pay the guilt of my sin and your sin. Why was Jesus here bleeding through His pores? Our sin and the weight of the guilt of our sin upon Him, and the wrath of the Father over sin. It is that simple. Already was the payment for sin beginning to pour forth from Him; already was suffering for MY sin. O Lord forgive me! O Lord pardon me!

Here then we see that blood of the New Testeament being shed by sweating praying fervently under wrath:

1. **Being in agony.** We read verses thirty nine through forty six of our text: **read verses here.** Do we comprehend? Do we thoroughly understand the truth, the import, the overwhelming magnitude of the moment before us, presented here in our text? Or are we as apathetic as ever? Do we come here tonight wishing we need not be here? Are we to pass over this Ash Wednesday without a second thought? The answers to these questions, dear friends, cannot be as they ever have been. We cannot allow another day to pass in our apathy. I do not disclude myself from these comments and questions, for I too am sinful and apathetic. I am the chief of sinners. To close our service this evening we will sing: “Go to dark Gethsemane, ye that feel the tempter’s pow’r; your Redeemers conflict see, watch with Him one bitter hour; turn not from His griefs away, learn of Jesus Christ to pray.” (TLH #159:1) It is the natural reaction of our flesh to view the events of dark Gethsemane and to turn away, to pretend it is no bog deal, that there is nothing extraordinary to see here. Yet what we have here discussed is just the tip of the iceberg, so to speak. I do not possess the vocabulary to properly present what is here seen, and perhaps no human language does. The agony was in His eternal soul, in His divine essence, the weight of sin and death. A weight which each of us knows all too well, and yet all too often pretend does not exist. The blood of the New Testament! Let those words linger in your ears. Let them sink in and ponder what they mean. It is the New Testament, the true blood shed for the remission of sins, and in light of the fact that it was our blood that deserved to be shed, and not just for a short time at our earthly death’s but eternally, and further that we are to shed this blood eternally without the comfort and care of God who we will forever be without, and any soul that does not upon hearing these things, break down and dissolve into utter contrition, shame, and solemn mourning over their sin is a soul that is hard beyond compare.

Let us, dear Christians, not be like those that draw back to perdition, but those that believe to the saving of the soul. Let us look and stare and gaze in wonder into the Garden of Gethsemane, there seeing the Creator and almighty God upon His knees in agony, sweating and shedding His precious and priceless blood for you and for me, and in so viewing, let us too fall on our knees and confess our shame and our guilt, and pour forth in our thanksgiving in eternal gratitude for what we here see! May the Lord grant that we receive all these things this day, throughout the Lenten Season, and our whole lives through. *“For the Lord shall comfort Zion: He will comfort all her waste places; and He will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord; joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving, and the voice of melody.” (Is 51:3)* Amen.