

Now is the Time for the Passion of the Lord!

The Sunday of the Passion (April 1, 2012)

Rev. Steven D. Spencer – Pastor of Messiah Lutheran Church

John 12:20-43

Be careful with what you ask for, you just might get it. The Greeks who came to Jerusalem had no idea, when they asked of the disciple Philip, "***Sir, we wish to see Jesus***" (v. 21b) what they were about to receive. They had come to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover, and they wanted to see the Christ of the Jews. Little did they realize that they would behold the Angel of Death passing over that Holy City! But it was not for their death that He had come, He came for the death of Jesus—He came for the life of the world.

What the Greeks would see would not be what they expected nor wished to see of Jesus. Here is this Jesus speaking to them in terms of being lifted up, of dying, and of rising. They may have thought it rather savage or barbarian, and it may have caused some consternation among them. For this Son of Man whom they came to see was speaking of His impending death, speaking in terms of the immediate future, but He also was speaking in terms of their eternity.

What an incredible length of time it must have seemed like to our Lord as He did for us what was necessary in His human nature. The Son of Man was soon to give His life as a ransom for many, for the salvation of mankind, for the life of the world. Here was the world before Him: Jews, Greeks, people from far and near, all there in Jerusalem for the feast. Little did the Greeks, or even the Lord's disciples, know that they would one day feast on His very body and blood, given and shed for them, poured out for many, for the forgiveness of sins and for the glorification of His Father in heaven, whose voice boomed from the heavens, "***I have both glorified My Name and will glorify it again***" (v. 27b). The glory of the Father would come at the expense of His only-begotten Son. The Son would glorify the Father with His own holy precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death. His death brings us life—eternal life to the fullest—for we have no life in and of ourselves, we are dead in our trespasses and sins. We are spiritually deaf, dumb and blind, literally dead, and enemies of God, for we are all conceived and born and living in sin.

We are in bondage to sin and cannot free ourselves, and for our sins the Lord was bound in chains and brought before the Sanhedrin, Pilate, and Herod, to be handed over and to be crucified. It is for us and for our salvation that the Lord would be crucified, dead, and buried, for we and our sins nailed Him to the cross, with assistance from the Roman soldiers of course, for, while we cry "Hosanna!" today with the crowds in Jerusalem, we will join with them in just a few days as they too turned on their King and cried out "Crucify Him!" And it is for us that the Father's voice boomed from heaven on Transfiguration, "***This is my beloved Son, listen to Him***" and for us that the Son cried out from the cross on Good Friday saying, "***Father, forgive them for they know not what they do!***"

Yes, we may call that dark Friday "good," for the time had come for Jesus, whose Name means "YHWH saves," to save sinful mankind, to lift up fallen man by His being lifted up on the cross, so that all who look to the Son of God will see the light that is Jesus Christ, the Light of the world, that light which no darkness can overcome. We may call the week Holy. Holy, for it is in this holiest of weeks the hour of the King had come. The Son, out of His obedience to His Father's will and out of His own great love for us, did not cry out, "Father, save Me from this hour," but He prayed, "***Not My will, but Thy will, be done***" (Luke 22:42), and He saved us at that hour, as St. Paul says to us, "***But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth His Son...to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons***" (Galatians 4:4-5). Again St. Paul says, "***For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. ...But God***

demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him" (Romans 5:6,8-9). For this reason our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ came to this hour, for Jesus has come and brings eternal benefits. It is our benefit that He bled and died to take away our sin. It is our benefit that He paid the price for our sins that we could not even begin to hope to pay.

It is for our benefit; even more so it has been the good pleasure of God our heavenly Father, who desires not the death of the sinner but the death of His saints, for blessed are the dead who die in the Lord. Blessed are you whose Old Adam has drowned and dies in the living waters of Holy Baptism. Blessed are you whom God has called His child and marked you with the sign of the Holy cross, the sign by which your sinful nature died with Christ, for you are baptized into His death but not just His death but also into His resurrection.

The Greeks had no idea they would see Jesus and the fullness of His love. They received more than they asked for, but this is the modus operandi of our Lord, for when we ask to see Him, He gives us to see Him for who He truly is: the God of love, His love is shown to us in His being lifted up on the cross to draw us to Himself, to win the total, complete, and perfect forgiveness of our sins, the same total, complete, and perfect forgiveness He gives us in Holy Baptism, Holy Absolution, Holy Scripture, and Holy Communion, and by the Holy Spirit we receive these gifts in faith which is also given to us by Him. Our Lord, who comes to us in Word and Sacraments, gives us the fullness of Who He is, for when we see Jesus, we see the whole lot of Him, for He does not deal with us or give His Means of Grace fractionally. He does not give us a percentage of Himself, but He gives us all of Himself, His Name, and with His Name all of His blessings and gifts. When you receive the Lord's Word preached, Holy Baptism, Holy Absolution or are given or the Lord's Supper you will receive the fullness of the forgiveness He won for you by Jesus being lifted up on the cross, giving you the very body He gave and the very blood He shed for you. Not in percentage, not in fractions but in fullness.

The hour has come for your heavenly Father to be glorified as you taste and see that the Lord is good and His mercy endures forever. Now is the hour that has come, **"For He says: 'In an acceptable time I have heard you, and in the day of salvation I have helped you.' Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation"** (2 Corinthians 6:2). **"Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world is cast out"** (v. 31). Now is the time to look unto Jesus, the Author and Perfecter of your faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and was once lifted on the glorious tree, and, as He has promised, has drawn us now to Himself.

This Thursday at Maundy Thursday Services He will draw us unto Himself at His Holy Table, for He has come down to us, He has come down to serve us. On Good Friday He will draw us through the Word to His Holy Cross to see the price paid in full for our salvation. And on Easter Sunday we will be drawn to see His empty tomb showing the world the joy of our salvation.

But for today it is the time to see Jesus, riding victoriously into Jerusalem on the colt a foal of a donkey listening to the shouts of the people. **"Blessed is He who comes in the Name of the Lord! ...Hosanna in the highest!"** (vss. 9-10).

Hosanna means, "Lord Save Us Now!" And He has, for in Jesus all your sins are forgiven in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, In Jesus name, amen and amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus,
AMEN!

We confess our Christian faith together with the words of the Apostles' Cree