

## INI

John 19,30b

Good Friday — 3 April 2015

**Greeting:** To those who are called, sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ; mercy, peace, and love be multiplied unto you. Amen.

We hear a portion of the Holy Gospel according to Saint John, which was read earlier:

And He [Jesus] bowed His head and gave up His spirit.

**So far the reading. Let us pray:** Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of our hearts, be acceptable in Thy sight, O LORD, our Strength and our Redeemer. Amen.

**Introduction:** For most of us, death will come when it comes. We do not summon it, but it summons us. If one looks at it like that, then the picture of the Grim Reaper is not too far off the mark; after all, he is coming to collect sin's wage, which of course, it nothing less than death.

There are those, however, who think that they are the ones who can summon death. They are the death with dignity crowd, for example, those who advocate for doctor assisted suicide. They are the Jack Kevorkians of this world, who go around peddling a drug cocktail that will push their clients into the hereafter – and it is no surprise that his nickname was “Doctor Death.” But they do not so much summon death on their terms, but unwittingly on his terms, and he is still there to collect sin's wage.

But there is One in history Who did not meet death on death's terms.

Even though this One willingly embraced death, He did so on His terms and not on death's terms.

He was willing to step into the darkness of the grave, but was fully aware that the darkness could not overcome Him.

Even though death would embrace this One, death did not realize that this One would break death's deadly embrace.

The One of Whom I am speaking is our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. This brings me to my sermon theme for today, "**Jesus' Death – A Death Like No Other.**" I'll develop this theme in three parts:

- 1) His Death Was Real And Voluntary**
- 2) His Death Is The Death Of Death Itself;** and,
- 3) His Death Means Life For Us**

**1) His Death Was Real And Voluntary.** By three o'clock in the afternoon on that Holy Friday – for in English the "Good" in "Good Friday" was an old idiom for "Holy" – Jesus gave up His spirit. In other words, He died.

In John's Gospel, John notes that Jesus "bowed His head and gave up His spirit." Luke makes explicit what is implicit in John's account. In Luke, the evangelist records Jesus' words, "Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit" (Luke 23,46). And earlier in John's Gospel, John records Jesus' words when He spoke about Himself as the Good Shepherd. Jesus says:

For this reason the Father knows Me and I know the Father and I lay down My life for the sheep ... For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it up again. No one has taken it away from me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up

again. (John 10,15+16-18).

What is common to these three accounts? Jesus dies with Scripture even as He dies according to Scripture.

With Jesus' own Words, He is the One Who summons death – even though to all outward appearances it is death who is summoning Jesus. He enters death of His own free will, just as earlier in the passion He let Himself be bound as a prisoner. As Church fathers put it, Death did not come to Jesus, but Jesus came to death.

That Jesus “bowed His head and gave up His spirit,” emphasizes Jesus' willingness to die, and His consciousness of dying.

Thus, we also see that Jesus died only after he had accomplished all things. He says, “It is finished!” immediately before embracing death. All that the Father sent to Son to accomplish has been accomplished. But as we'll see in a moment, it even means more than that.

But when Jesus “bowed His head and gave up His spirit,” it means that He really died. It is not only that the Son of God died, but more to the point, it is that God the Son died.

When we put it like that, it is almost incomprehensible, almost impossible. We really cannot grasp it and then look for rationalizations that some how will soften the enormity of the statement – God died on Good Friday.

Islam teaches that a look-a-like died on the Cross in Jesus' place. In a word, non-Scriptural nonsense. Five decades ago there was a book called *The Passover Plot* – it held that Jesus purposely planned His crucifixion and on the Cross took a strong narcotic in order to make it only seem as if he had died. That scenario, however, is more the product

of a vivid imagination than a historical reconstruction. About the same time *The Passover Plot* appeared, the death of God theology was all the rage – today no one can even remember who advocated such stuff much less what it was about.

But Jesus truly died. God the son truly died. And he died when he had finished His atoning sacrifice. And in finishing that sacrifice, we see that

**2) His Death Is The Death Of Death Itself.** Jesus did not die for Himself. Rather, Jesus embraced death because it is the payment for our sin.

Through the prophet Ezekiel, God tells us what the penalty for sin is. God says:

The soul who sins shall die. (Ezekiel 18,4)

Lest people think that somehow God in the Old Testament is different from God in the New Testament, Paul tells us:

For the wages of sin is death. (Romans 8,23)

There is no getting around it – sin pays the same wage to all – young or old, rich or poor, healthy or sick, or any other category we might think of.

But when Jesus said, “It is finished,” He tells us that by His dying on the Cross He once and for all time paid the wage demanded by sin. In Greek, “It is finished” is one word, and that word was the word that store keepers wrote at the bottom of an invoice when it was paid – it mean, “Paid In Full.” Jesus paid our debt to sin in full.

On the Cross, Jesus took on Himself the penalty for our sins. As

Peter tells us:

and He Himself [that is Jesus] bore our sins in His body on the Cross, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you are healed. (1 Peter 2,24)

As the sinless Son of God, God the Son died for us, we who are like sheep who love to wander. But in dying for us, Jesus broke the power of sin's payout, that is, death.

For Paul that's one of the points of Baptism. To the Romans, Paul writes,

Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? <sup>4</sup> Therefore we have been buried with Him through Baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. (Romans 6,3-4)

We'll speak of this a bit more in the third point, but it anticipates that while we may experience a temporal death, neither we nor any other believer will experience the second death, that is eternal death. And as he writes to the Romans, Paul tells us why that is as well:

knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him. <sup>10</sup> For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. (Romans 8,9-10)

Why doesn't death have any more power over Jesus? Because in His dying and rising again, Jesus is the death of death – because Jesus went through death to life and continues to live, death no longer has any power over Him.

And thus,

**3) His Death Means Life For Us.** Even before Jesus was born, Zachariah, John the Baptist's father, described both God's promise and the hope it would give for all mankind. Zachariah said,

Because of the tender mercy of our God,  
With which the Sunrise from on high will visit us,  
<sup>79</sup> To shine upon those who sit in darkness and the shadow of  
death, (Luke 1,78-79)

The "Sunrise from on high" is a reference to Jesus, Who will visit those who "who sit in darkness and the shadow of death."

In His dying a real death, God the Son went through the Valley of the Shadow of Death. Jesus, as our Good Shepherd, went through that Valley ahead of us, so that with confidence we can pray with David,

Yea, though I walk through the Valley of the Shadow of Death,  
I will fear no evil;  
For You are with me;  
Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me. (Psalm 23,4)

Death is nothing to joke about, but because Jesus willingly died for us and became the death of death itself, He has placed death in a different perspective for all who trust that Jesus died and rose for them, thereby winning for them the forgiveness of sins.

Even though the grave looks like an endless abyss of darkness, it is something different for those in Christ. It is as Paul says:

But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written,

“Death is swallowed up in victory.

<sup>55</sup> O Death, where is your victory?

O Death, where is your sting?”

<sup>56</sup> The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the Law; <sup>57</sup> but thanks be to God, Who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Corinthians 15,54-57)

Death’s sting has been taken away. In the New Testament, the word “sting” is not used very much and it is directly related to the word, “pierce,” for to sting is to pierce. On this Holy Friday, we look to John who looked on this scene and writes,

And again another Scripture says, “They shall look on Him Whom they pierced.” (John 19,37)

Christ was pierced for us. Indeed, it was more than nails that pierced Him – it was our sins. But because Jesus was pierced for us, He takes the final piercing of death away from us.

We shall all die. Each Christian must suffer the consequence of Adam’s sin. But thanks be to God, on account of Christ no Christian will die “in” his sins (1 Corinthians 15,17; cf John 8,24). Each Christian dies absolved. Since the Christian is reckoned as sinless for the sake of the sinless lamb of God Who takes away the sin of the world, death cannot hold him

**Conclusion:** On this Good Friday, this Holy Friday, we stand in awe of our Savior.

God made Jesus Who knew no sin to become sin on our behalf ...  
(2 Corinthians 5,21)

Because he became sin for us, He paid the price that sin demands. Sin could not demand the price from Jesus, but He paid it for us by dying

on our behalf. God the Son really died and willingly embraced death.

But because Jesus embraced death and it could not embrace Him, Jesus broke the power of both sin and death, and thus His death means life for each one of us.

Even though we will one day die on account of Adam's sin, we will not die "in" our sins. Thus, Jesus has called us to newness of life now, and in the hour of our death we may confidently pray as He did, "Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit/" amen.

Now, the peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Amen.

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**SDG**