

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, Amen.

In his sermon last Sunday, Pastor Punke declared that in giving his account of the crucifixion of our Lord, St. Matthew is acting very much like a reporter, that he doesn't tell us the *meaning* of the events, as does St. Paul. And our pastor is right. It is St. Paul who says *explicitly* that Jesus Christ, our Lord, was handed over on account of our trespasses and raised again for our justification (Romans 4:25). St. Paul tells us the significance of Jesus' death *in so many words*.

But tonight let me tease a little bit more out of St. Matthew's account of the death of our Lord and Savior, including the aftermath, as is appropriate for the evening of Good Friday, after the 3 o'clock hour of his death. Here is what Matthew tells us in chapter 27, beginning with verse 45:

AND FROM THE SIXTH HOUR, DARKNESS CAME OVER THE WHOLE LAND UNTIL THE NINTH HOUR. AND AROUND THE NINTH HOUR, JESUS SHOUTED OUT WITH A LOUD VOICE, SAYING: ELI, ELI, LAMA SABACHTHANI, THAT IS, MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAVE YOU FORSAKEN ME?

We must stop here. And for more than just for a moment. Here our Lord is quoting the first verse of Psalm 22, a psalm of David, uttered when that forerunner of our Lord was in distress. The prophet Isaiah makes plain what is happening here. He says regarding the sins of God's people in chapter 59, v. 52:

BUT YOUR INIQUITIES ARE THE THINGS MAKING A SEPARATION BETWEEN YOU AND YOUR GOD, AND YOUR SINS HIDE HIS FACE FROM YOU, PREVENTING HIM FROM HEARING.

To which his people reply (chapter 64:7): FOR YOU HAVE HIDDEN YOUR FACE FROM US, AND YOU HAVE CONSUMED US BY THE HAND OF OUR INIQUITIES

Listen to these words!!! This is what our Lord was undergoing on the cross: **Separation from God because of sin, with the Father hiding his face and consuming his Son because of iniquity, experiencing the full effects of sin.** But *not his* sin and iniquity was in play. It was our iniquity, our sin, our rebellion on that cross. In the words again of Isaiah, as he describes the Suffering Servant, who was *spat upon, humiliated, mocked, and killed*—that is to say, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, who was *spat upon, humiliated, mocked, and killed*—: THE LORD HAS LAID ON HIM THE INIQUITY OF US ALL (Is. 53: 6). *This* is the cup that Jesus dreaded in the Garden of Gethsemane, the cup that he sought to be taken from him (26:39)—the cup of God’s judgment upon sin. It is this cup that he drained to the very dregs. **Oh, the HORROR of that hour!**

But our Lord *shouted out*, St. Matthew says! The Greek of this text is clear. He shouted out, and he did so *with a loud voice*. Our Lord did *not shriek*. He did *not cry*. His voice was **strong**. And this fact directs our attention to the rest of Psalm 22, which our Lord surely also had in mind. In the succeeding verses, we hear praise of God’s salvation. Listen to verse 24: FOR HE HAS NOT DESPISED OR ABHORRED THE AFFLICTION OF THE AFFLICTED, AND HE HAS NOT HIDDEN HIS FACE FROM HIM, BUT HAS HEARD, WHEN HE CRIED TO HIM.

**Our Lord’s confidence propelled that shout!!**

Which leads us to a deeper understanding of verse 50 of our text in Matthew 27: AND JESUS AGAIN CALLING OUT WITH A LOUD VOICE—and then *what? Expired? NO! Breathed his last? NO!-----He*

*sent forth the Spirit!* That’s what the Greek says. In the words of the KJV: “he gave up the ghost”—but that is not, in some way or other, Jesus’ “ghost”—it’s the **Holy Ghost!**

This expression, “*sent forth the Spirit,*” is not any sort of usual way of talking about dying in Greek literature. It’s strikingly unusual. It involves sending forth something like a projectile of war. And what is sent forth is the Spirit—the Holy Spirit—the Holy Spirit that Jesus had received at his own baptism as he began his ministry on earth, which is now sent out.

And we see the results of all of this—of the shout, the death, and the sending forth of the Spirit—in the next three verses, 27: 51-53. AND BEHOLD, THE CURTAIN OF THE TEMPLE SPLIT FROM ABOVE TO BELOW, IN TWO, AND THE EARTH SHOOK AND THE ROCKS SPLIT, AND THE TOMBS OPENED, AND MANY BODIES OF THE SLEEPING SAINTS AROSE. AND UPON COMING OUT OF THE TOMBS AFTER HIS RESURRECTION THEY WENT INTO THE HOLY CITY AND APPEARED TO MANY.

Let me focus upon the resurrecting of the saints this evening. The bodies of the saints arose. Matthew’s account would tell us that here *is fulfilled* the vision of the prophet Ezekiel in chapter 37 of his prophetic book: the fulfilling of the vision of the valley of the dry bones—this was the OT lesson for the 5th Sunday in Lent: Verse 11-14a: THEN HE SAID TO ME, SON OF MAN, THESE BONES ARE THE WHOLE HOUSE OF ISRAEL: BEHOLD, THEY SAY, OUR BONES ARE DRIED UP, AND OUR HOPE IS LOST; WE ARE, INDEED, CUT OFF. THEREFORE PROPHECY AND SAY TO THEM, THUS SAYS THE LORD GOD: BEHOLD I WILL OPEN YOUR GRAVES AND RAISE YOU FROM YOUR GRAVES, O MY PEOPLE. AND I WILL BRING YOU INTO

THE LAND OF ISRAEL AND YOU SHALL KNOW THAT I AM THE LORD, WHEN I OPEN YOUR GRAVES AND RAISE YOU FROM YOUR GRAVES, O MY PEOPLE. AND I WILL PUT MY SPIRIT WITHIN YOU AND YOU SHALL LIVE.

These words were spoken in metaphor to the people in the Babylonian Exile, but they are fulfilled very literally at the death of our Lord, and at the release of the Holy Spirit. Now, here, already at the cross, the blessings of the final days—of the new creation—are brought into being and made visible for everyone to see! Thanks be to God!!

And this, brothers and sisters in Christ, is why today is “Good” Friday and not “awful Friday.”

Our Lord **forsaken by God** as he bore our sin upon the cross? YES!

Our Lord **confident** as he bore that sin *alone*, confident that he would be triumphant over divine judgment upon our sin? YES and Yes!

And our Lord already in his death **bringing forth into our world the new life of the end-time reign and rule of God**, with the resurrection of the dead bodies of the saints? YES! Yes! and YES!

Go forth, then, in peace, children of God!—confident in the salvation of our Lord, which  
Forgives us all our sins, and  
Gives us new, and eternal, life.

Happy Good Friday!

Amen!

Good Friday, 2020, Zion Lutheran Church, Fort Wayne, Indiana.