

Good Friday Service – April 6, 2012 – Pastor R. R. Krueger – Matthew 27:27-31

*Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the common hall, and gathered unto him the whole band of soldiers. And they stripped Him, and put on Him a scarlet robe. And when they had planted a crown of thorns, they put it on His head, and a reed in His right hand: and they bowed the knee before Him, and mocked Him, saying, 'Hail, King of the Jews!' And they spat on Him and took the reed, and smote Him on the head. And after they had mocked Him, they took the robe off from Him, and put His own (robe) on Him, and led Him away to crucify Him.*

If I were to ask you to give me a one sentence summary of the 1<sup>st</sup> chapter of Genesis, I'm sure that you would say something like: "God created the whole world in 6 days." And you'd be right! And I'm certain that you would remember that at the end of every one of those 6 days, God looked at what He had created and crowned that day's work with His statement: "*And it was good!*"

And if I were to ask you to give me a one sentence summary of the 2<sup>nd</sup> chapter of Genesis, I'm sure that you'd say something like: "God created Adam and Eve." And you'd be right! And with the creation of Adam and Eve, God placed the crowning end to His work of creation: man and woman, humankind, the crown of God's Creation!

Now, if I were to ask you to give me a one sentence summary of the 3<sup>rd</sup> chapter of Genesis, you might tell me that that was the chapter when man, Adam and Eve, fell into sin and passed sin onto all of their children, including you and me. You'd be partially, only partially, correct. You would have missed, however, the crown of all crowns – God's forgiveness for Adam's and Eve's sin and subsequently, the crown of God's forgiveness for the sins of their children, including you and me. That is precisely why the Psalmist could shout that crowning IF in this night's Psalm, Psalm 130. "*IF...IF Thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with Thee.*" That crowning IF assured the Psalmist of the same thing that Adam and Eve were assured of and of which all of their children, including you and me, are assured of. God has divine forgetfulness.

You see, it is also in the 3<sup>rd</sup> chapter of Genesis that God gave to Adam and Eve and to all of their children, including you and me, the double promised prophesy of this day, Good Friday. Remember the double promised prophesy of Good Friday? Right there in the 15<sup>th</sup> verse of that third chapter: (Thus saith the Lord to Satan) "*And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her Seed; It shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise His heel.*" Isn't that exactly what we saw happening out there on Calvary earlier this Day? Satan having his head crushed; the death blow to the head of the hellish serpent but, in the process, Christ being struck in the heel; hurtful but hardly fatal! Remember what's coming this Sunday!

But wait a minute, Pastor, you said that there was a double promised prophesy of Good Friday in this 3<sup>rd</sup> chapter. Where is the second one? Right here in verses 7 and 21: "*And the eyes of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons.*" And then after God gave them that first of that double promised prophesy of Good Friday, He gave them, and us, this second promised prophesy of Good Friday... "*Unto Adam also and to his wife did the Lord God make coats of skins, and clothed them.*" Adam and Eve, and their children too, including you and me, choose something as temporary and really

useless as fig leaves and God replaces it with something better, more durable and more useful, coats of skins. Yes, that is the second of the double promised prophecies of Good Friday. And we see the first one being fulfilled out there on the crest of Calvary and this second one in that common hall of Pilate's with his ghoulish soldiers as they changed His robe for the robes of mockery and then took off their robe of mockery and placed His robe back on Him.

Think with me now on this "Thus saith the Lord..."

On the Changing of the Robes:

- I. He took our robe in order to earn divine forgetfulness for us.
- II. He gives His robe, assuring us of divine forgetfulness.

The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews reminds us that Christ took on our robe when he says *"Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage."*

Yes, we know and confess that as a result of His conception in the womb of the Virgin Mary and His subsequent birth, He took on human flesh, our robe, if you will. But we see that even more pointedly and graphically by the mocking actions of those soldiers as they put on Him their robe of mockery. Probably the most humiliation that our Christ bore were those 6 hours on the Cross; second to that was the blasphemous betrayal by Judas; and third had to be the mockery of those soldiers. Consider...stripped in front of that whole band of soldiers. Consider...that scarlet robe and, I will imagine, that it was anything but clean and in good repair. Consider...that cruel and painful crown of thorns. Consider...that mocking reed in His right hand. Consider...their mockery of kneeling before Him. Consider...spitting on Him. Consider...smashing that reed over His head. Consider...consider...consider their mockery!!!

Then, consider the robes of mockery that are still being thrown over His shoulders in this, the 21<sup>st</sup> century. We think those soldiers were mockingly cruel when they pretended loyalty to Him saying, *"Hail, King of the Jews."* But what about the mocking loyalty of Him today that claims to be a Good Teacher and a Fine Moralist but shuns proclaiming Him to be personal Lord and Savior. Or the mockery of fellow human beings bullying and spitefully teasing each other on school playgrounds and in the halls of high schools and yet marching off to Sunday School with their parents.

The blessed Apostle Paul had stern and warning words both to those soldiers of Pilate in their mockeries of Christ and to any mockeries on Him in this 21<sup>st</sup> century. He says: *"Be not deceived: God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."* And our Lord Himself spoke firmly to any and to all who try to straddle the fence of discipleship; His words to the Church in Laodicea still apply to tepid and, therefore, mocking, discipleship: *"I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot. I would that thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of my mouth."*

But them putting that scarlet robe on Him and Him accepting their mockery of so dressing Him is not the conclusion of our text, is it? For our text concluded: *"And after they had mocked Him, they took the robe off of Him, and put His own (robe) on Him and led Him away to crucify Him."*

And, to put it very simply, you do know why He was crucified, don't you! So that He could place His robe upon us...His robe of righteousness by which He earned for us that divine forgetfulness and forgiveness.

Oh yes, I know and am convinced that St. John was describing me as part of that great multitude that will be clothed with white robes and I rejoice to know that you have the same knowledge and conviction about yourself. Because He took on my robe of sin, He will robe me in heaven with the white robe of His righteousness and forgiveness – you, too! But not just then. Also, now and here on Good Friday, April 6, 2012. For does not Holy Scripture reassure us *“for as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.”* Put on Christ and, by blessed Baptism, have had Christ put on us His robe of His righteousness and forgiveness.

Let me tell you about Ed and Edna Klinzig. They were an 80 year old couple in the parish I was privileged to serve in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania before you called me to come serve here. I got a panicky telephone call from Ed late one morning. He told me that Edna had fallen down the basement stairs going to do some laundry and he couldn't get her up or aroused. I told him to cover her with a blanket and I would be right there. Before leaving, I called the ambulance and told them to meet us there.

I rode with her in the ambulance to the hospital. The doctor said she had a badly broken hip and several serious bruises and they would take her into surgery to repair the hip. We prayed together and I left. Later that afternoon I returned to the hospital and saw that she had come through the surgery. After awhile she asked if I would return that evening.

When I came back that evening, she was alert and she had one request. She said: “Pastor, will you sing with me?” “Sure” I told her, “but what hymn shall we sing?” Her answer was immediate and definite: “‘Jesus, Thy Blood and Righteousness’, but” she said, “may we sing it in German?” So we did and so Edna and I began: “Christi Blut und Gerechtigkeit.”

“Jesus, Thy blood and righteousness my beauty are, my glorious dress; midst flaming worlds, in these arrayed, with joy shall I lift up my head.”

So went that German duet in a rather quiet hospital room.

But when we got to the second verse, I was singing a German solo. Edna was already singing that second verse in her Christ-given white robe. And that second verse begins: “Bold shall I stand in that great day, for who aught to my charge shall lay?”

On the changing of robes! Ours on Him; His on us! Join me and stand with me as we sing those two verses...now and in anticipation! Amen.