

Pastor T.C. Arnold  
5<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Lent (Passion Sunday)  
Hebrews 9:14  
March 25<sup>th</sup>, 2012

History has shown much injustice against humanity. We know of the horrible crimes committed by Hitler and his regime against the Jews – but he also carried out slayings on those who were supposed to be with him. On the night of June 30<sup>th</sup>, 1934, Hitler's trusted S.S. were sent out to eliminate from the Nazi party certain persons who were considered dangerous to it. Without trial or opportunity of defense these members of Hitler's own cause were ruthlessly killed – somewhere around 150 of them. It was known as "The Night of the Long Knives" or "Hitler's Blood Purge."

Of course Hitler was not the only one. Stalin in the much-publicized "treason trials," saw members of the Communist Party turn on themselves and accuse each other of grave disloyalties. Many were executed. The Communists referred to this process as liquidation – not of inventory (like we hear that word used today) but of people.

You perhaps have heard of Joseph Kony by now. You have heard of the "injustice" he has placed on the people, especially the children, of Uganda – abducting them and forcing them to become soldiers in his personal army. He is yet another example of someone who would hesitate at nothing to do even the worst thing to get what he wants – or that would further his cause.

The Nazis, the Communists, and tyrant leaders contend that it is continuously necessary to purge the party of undesirable elements. Any "right thinking" person would abhor such a thing. We want nothing to do with a philosophy or a government that is guilty of such flagrant transgressions.

We realize that in Christianity there is a place for a blood purge; and it is a very prominent place. But its purpose and form are at the opposite end of the pole from what we just mentioned. What it is and how it works is our subject for this morning. We are bold to call it ***Christ's blood purge.***

You observed at the beginning of the Service this morning that the pastor remains outside of the altar area, that is, below the chancel steps while the Confession of sins is spoken and the Absolution pronounced. After this, during the speaking of the Introit, the pastor goes up to the altar – it's time to enter. In this way the church symbolically portrays the truth that no one can enter into the presence of God and have communion with Him unless their sins have been forgiven. There must first be a cleansing before approaching the holy. The church cannot live without repeated "purgings." The church exists to bring us into fellowship with God, and always it is our sins that stand in the way. Our sins must be got out of the way, since there is nothing so important as our right relationship with God. No matter how painful the purging may be, it must be done, for our hope of heaven depends on it.

And look at how this is done for us, "...*He entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of His own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption.*" Jesus was both High Priest and Victim. He was carrying out the sacrifice in the temple and He was the sacrifice in the temple. In other words, the temple, where this would take place, was a hill called Calvary. This place would act as the place for the holy sacrifice given once for all. Jesus was in charge of carrying out the blood purge to purify the human race, and He was the one who took that purging upon Himself when He died on the tree.

Today, we talk about blood. This day is traditionally called Passion Sunday by the ancient church. Today a clearly defined period of Lent begins. Our eyes go directly to the cross, and now, not the empty cross, the cross with Jesus nailed to it. We see His blood pouring out for

us. We recognize by way of the law revealed in His Word that we are the ones who placed Him there. But even though our sins are the reason He died, He shows us how very much He loves us by spilling that holy, cleansing blood on the cross of Calvary for us.

Back in the Old Testament the High Priest would enter the Holy of Holies once a year on the Day of Atonement. He would take the blood of the sacrifice into the most holy place and sprinkle it on the holy furnishings in and around the temple. All in all there were more than 50 applications of blood on the Ark of the Covenant, altars, basin, floor, lamp-stand and other places. It was holy sacrificial blood for holy places.

Of course, today we have no sacrifices on the Day of Atonement because our Day of Atonement, the “once for all” sacrifice came on Good Friday. And while that sacrifice only needed to happen once (and that is all we need) we constantly live in the “blood purge” of Jesus in His forgiveness of sins. We come before our Lord knowing who we are – and we admit who we are. We are poor miserable sinners. Yes, that is what we are today. Own up to it.

Yes, you are here and your friends and neighbors are probably the lazy ones. But have we been lazy? Yes, you are a confessor of the Savior and remain a blessed Christian kept safe in the Lord’s Holy and saving hand – thanks be to God! Yet you are prone to participate in the same sins as unbelievers, the same temptations, the same struggles... even the same heartaches and heartbreaks... the same depression and the same sufferings. We don’t mind doing the same sins as unbelievers, but funny how we as Christians think that the consequences should be different. We are, after all, Christians. God should keep us from unhappiness.

It doesn’t work that way. The consequences of sin are not prejudice. They do not discriminate. Therefore, each day we come before a Lord who is the blood purging sacrifice of all our sins – the sins of yesterday and the sins of today. On this day as the cross comes more and more into focus and we notice, as we get closer, there is an undeserving sacrifice hanging on it, we begin to see the blood that shows an undying love. Yes, it was a love that died, but wouldn’t stay dead. It was a blood poured out for you as the greatest sacrifice, the one time for all sacrifice, to cover a multitude of sins—your sins. Thanks be to God!

In Christ, you know where you stand before God – forgiven. So, beloved in the Lord, stand before Christ. The intensity begins with Passion Sunday. Stand before God in His House next week when we wave palm branches with our children and sing Hosannas. Stand before God in His House on Maundy Thursday, at His table, on Good Friday, at His cross, (and Holy Saturday at the Vigil) and at His empty tomb on Easter Sunday. But then, don’t let that be it. Bring those sins of yours to the cross each week in the Lord’s constant “blood purging” in Confession and Absolution. Bring that friend of yours, who is struggling, who is suffering, to see the Suffering Jesus, who did it all for you and for them.

This Palm Sunday, Holy Week and Easter, who will you bring? Can you think to bring someone – a friend or someone you love? With Hitler and Stalin and those like them, there was a “purging out” of the bad blood – those not good for the cause. For us Christ accomplishes this blood purge – so instead – let us “bring in” the guilty, the burned, the heavy laden and we can show them rest and life found in a bloody tree at that temple called Calvary. That “once for all” is for all. Thanks be to God. Amen

The peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.