

Pastor T.C. Arnold  
Good Friday  
John 18 and 19  
April 14<sup>th</sup>, 2017

Last weekend, Lutheran High School of Kansas City put on a production of the play called, “The Crucible.” If you are unfamiliar, it’s a modern spin on the Salem witch trials from back in the late 1600s. There is a lot of emotion in this play. Characters express great joy, deep sorrow, fierce anger, and everything in between. A character in the play named Giles Corey, a cantankerous old farmer who knew his way around the courtroom, had a wife named Martha who read books... and when she read, Giles couldn’t pray. He made the mistake of telling someone about this and, as a result unbeknownst to him, led people to believe his beloved Martha was a witch. She was placed on trial. Giles Corey, played by master thespian Benjamin Arnold (admittedly, I’m biased), would fight fiercely in court for her life... also bringing evidence against another man who accused a different farmer of being a witch so he could take his land. Giles Corey would not say where he got his evidence. He was afraid for the man’s life... he wanted to protect him. In the end they tried to torture Giles to get in order to tell them where he got his evidence. So they put large stones on his chest – yet he would stand on his word and on the honor of his family... He would say nothing. At the end of his life they asked him to divulge the name of the man so they could accuse him too – to which Giles only said two words... “More weight”. And he died.

Today is an emotional night. This is an emotional week. Today we take a journey, with our Savior Jesus. We walk with him along the dreaded way to a hill called Calvary. We will watch Him whipped. We will hear His sorrowful shouts. We will be with those crowds that were ripping Him apart with their words, with their spit, with their fists. We are there today watching our Savior carry his cross as the drag Simon of Cyrene from the crowd to carry it when He has no more strength to do so. And if there was any time for our Savior to give up... to tell Pilate what He wants to hear so that he could clear Him of this devastating end... to free him from the chains and spare Himself from the cross... Jesus remains silent... not a word does He say. He will not give a name. He will not spare Himself and let others die. Jesus says, “More weight! Put more whips and chains on me. Put that crown of thorns on me. Give me that purple robe and make fun of me. Hit me with that reed. Scourge me to within an inch of my life. More weight, more of your sins, more of your pain and agony. You put it on me. I will die with it. I will die for you!”

Today is an emotional night. Sorrow accompanies joy. Death occurs for the sake of life. Bittersweet is what we say. Bittersweet tears role down our face tonight. Why? Because we love our Savior. We love Him and yet we betray Him. He died because of our sins. He died because of you and me. He died because there was no way we would ever stand in His presence in the heavenly kingdom on our own merit. And Jesus wants you there... He wants you with Him in heaven. So He does for you...

We sang, “**Oh Dearest Jesus, What Law Hast thou Broken - That such sharp sentence should on Thee be spoken?**” We ask that question in song... and we know the reply. There is no law that Jesus broke... yet on that cross he took on the sins of every law breaker. And in an amazing and mysterious way, Jesus was the pure Lamb of God... sinless and yet at the same time completely sin-filled with your sins. He was the terrible law breaker – yet He never broke a law. This is our blessed Jesus. What love is that for you? What gift is that for you? Today our lovely Lord looks a mess with His own blood. Our insides are churning and stomachs turn inside out. We can’t take it anymore. The thought that we put Him there. The realization that because I sin

He dies. I want to die for my sins. Don't want kill the innocent man. I want to die for me. I deserve to die for me. But no, Jesus would not have it – from me, from you, or from anyone. He would do it. He has to. Only God can cleanes you and me from all unrighteousness. And He does! That's the joy in sorrow. That's the grace in the midst of tragedy. Thanks be to God. What an emotional night.

Yes, as we look at that cross of death tonight, we know what we did to put Jesus there. As we look at that cross of death tonight, there hangs our Savior... He does it with great agony. But, beloved in the Lord, He would do it no other way. So with our emotion of pain, regret, guilt, and sorrow, should also be the emotion of joy and happiness with all hope and anticipation of the new life Jesus gave to us that Friday we call "Good." So as we look at the cross, we will get emotional. All emotions wrapped up together.

And if this were the end of the story... if this is where we depart... in sadness... in darkness... then this would be a day of great morning and sorrow. But it's not. We know there is more. There is more and more to be given. There is more for us to see. That blood spilt from the Lamb of God on the altar shaped like a cross between two robbers is for you. It has a purpose. And though death and dying is our refrain this evening; that will change. It will change to white, to light, to life. It will change to... *"Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen."*

And yet, this resurrection is not what saved us. It's not what gives us life. No, that happened tonight. That happened when "more weight... the weight of our sins" were placed on Him. That happened on Good Friday... That happened with the word "Τετέλεσται..." in the Greek. "It is finished," in our own tongue. It is finished for you on the cross. It is finished and you are forgiven. It is finished. No longer would Jesus suffer on the cross. He would die for you. No longer would Jesus need to work to bring forgiveness to all who believe. It is finished! Thanks be to God!

This very emotional evening with tears and terrors will conclude in victory. Tonight we close the tomb all the while knowing... it is finished. It is done! The victory is complete. We live... and so will our Savior Jesus again. Amen.

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