

I.N.I.

WE CALL THIS FRIDAY GOOD

Homily for Good Friday, Year C, March 25, 2016
St. Paul's Lutheran Church, 57th & Broadway, Sacramento, CA

Isaiah 53:3-6 3He was despised and rejected by others;
a man of suffering and acquainted with infirmity;
and as one from whom others hide their faces
he was despised, and we held him of no account.

4
Surely he has borne our infirmities
and carried our diseases;
yet we accounted him stricken,
struck down by God, and afflicted.

5
But he was wounded for our transgressions,
crushed for our iniquities;
upon him was the punishment that made us whole,
and by his bruises we are healed.

6
All we like sheep have gone astray;
we have all turned to our own way,
and the Lord has laid on him
the iniquity of us all.

Grace to you and peace from God, our Father, and the Lord, Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for our sins to deliver us from this present evil age according to the will of our God and Father, to Whom be the glory now and forever. Amen. (Gal. 1:3-5)

We call this Friday "Good."

Scholars guess that the name was "God's Friday" before it was changed, but isn't that odd when on this day we say good-bye to God's glory, his only Son?

Yet, stay a while with this day--let your hearts dwell on what is unspeakably **bad** about this day we call "**good**."

Because, when we come together year after year on this day, we strengthen our understanding of what is **good** about this day.

And we here express our profound devotion, love and thanks to our holy God.

First, The Dreadful Necessity for This Day

The Prophet Isaiah Tells the Story of His Generation and Ours.

v. 3. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have all turned to our own way,....

The prophet must have been a country boy--he uses the example of sheep.

He had seen flocks of sheep being shepherded, and he noticed that they were "follow-the-leader" animals--which ever way the leader went, they followed.

So if the leader went astray, all the sheep did too.

And isn't that how **we** go astray, following other sinners like the sheep we are?

But it's worse than that--"we have all turned to our own way."

Our temptation to sin comes not only from the world--other sheep--but also from within--from our own sinful flesh.

Thus it is our fault that Christ had to suffer for our sins, because we followed the path of our ancestors--our first ancestors, Adam & Eve, and all their offspring.

Not only Isaiah's generation, but our own as well, must come to the realization that **we** are responsible for the death & burial of God's Only Son.

Thus the dreadful necessity for this day we call "good."

Over the centuries a list of Seven Deadly Sins was developed by theologians-- would we, on this day we call "good", see ourselves here?

1. **Pride** is excessive belief in one's own abilities; it interferes with our recognition of the grace of God and leads us to think we can do enough good works to earn God's favor. Pride is also known as Vanity.
2. **Envy** is the desire for others' traits, status, abilities, or situation.
3. **Gluttony** is an out-of-control desire to eat & drink more than one needs.
4. **Lust** is excessive craving for sexual pleasures beginning with the lust of the eye and leading to sex outside of marriage.
5. **Anger** is found in the one who spurns love and opts instead for Fury and Wrath.
6. **Greed** is the desire for material wealth or gain, ignoring the realm of the spiritual. It is also called Avarice or Covetousness.
7. **Sloth** is the lazy avoidance of physical or spiritual work.

Who of us can say that we are not guilty of all seven deadly sins?

What makes them deadly, i.e., "leading to death," is their chronic nature--they are character flaws embedded by much use--we don't really **want** to repent of them!

Take just one of the seven deadliest--**sloth**; I once had lunch at Valparaiso U. in Indiana with Fr. Alexander Schmemmann, Dean of the faculty of St. Vladimir's Orthodox Seminary in Crestwood, NY--he came there w/ my friend Fr. Rados, priest of the Syrian Orthodox Church in Terre Haute, who was there, at my invitation, to a Lutheran Liturgical Conference. Fr. Schmemmann wrote concerning **sloth**:

It is that strange laziness and passivity of our entire being which always pushes us 'down' rather than 'up'--which constantly convinces us that no change is possible. ... The result of sloth is faint-heartedness. It is the state of despondency which all spiritual Fathers considered the greatest danger for the soul. Despondency is the impossibility for [one] to see anything good or positive; it is the reduction of everything to negativism and pessimism. It is truly a demonic power!

....Alexander Schmemmann, *Great Lent* (St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2003), 34-35.

Quoted in FORUM LETTER--March 2016

What he describes is only one of the works of Satan, the tempter.

And now Martin Luther's evil trinity of tempters is complete: 1) the world (other sheep), 2) our own sinful flesh, and 3) the devil.

Since all of these have led us into sin, we fall under St. Paul's diagnosis: "The wages of sin is death." (Rm. 6)

Since we all have a 100% chance of death, we surely know **the dreadful necessity for this Day We Call Good.**

However, we also know **The Blessed Outcome of This Good Day Who Is the Suffering Servant in Isaiah?**

Bible Scholars find many references to Is. 53 in the N.T.

C.H.Dodd says that it is quoted or directly alluded to in 25 different places.

All point to Jesus of Nazareth as the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy.

Our Lord himself identified with the Suffering Servant when he said to his

disciples in Mt. 20, **"28 ... the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."** (ESV)

Listen to Martin Luther's comment on this passage,"

There is no greater bondage or form of service than that the Son of God should be the servant and should bear the sin of every [one], however poor and wretched or despised. What an amazing thing it would be [today] if some great king's son should go into a beggar's hut to nurse him in his illness, wash off his filth and do all the things which otherwise the beggar would have to do. All the world would gape with open mouths, noses, ears, and eyes, and could never think and talk enough about it.

Our news media today would see to that!

Luther is correct, of course, but he asks,

"...behold, what does it mean? The Son of God becomes my servant and humbles Himself so much that He carries even my afflictions and my sin; yea, the whole world's sin and death He takes upon Himself, saying to me:

You are no longer a sinner, but I--I Myself--step into your place. You have not sinned; I have. The whole world lies in sin, but you are not in sin, but I am. All your sin shall be upon Me, and not on you.

What a wonder!

With our sin upon him he went willingly to the cross, and there, because of his wounds, **the great exchange** took place, what Luther called "**der fröhliche Wechsel**". **the happy exchange:** our sin became his--his sacrifice became ours.

Isaiah prophesied: **4 Surely he has borne our infirmities and carried our diseases; 5 ... But he was wounded for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the punishment that made us whole, and by his bruises we are healed.**

Last word--**The Outcome of this Good Day Will Be Blessed** for us only if we believe its message. Lutherans believe we are saved from eternal death purely by grace when we trust this Suffering Servant.

Dr. Fred Niedner, on the faculty at Valparaiso University, reviewed a book titled **The Gift of Grace** -- (now, think human organ transplants) -- and he wrote: **"For one thing, the whole notion of salvation by grace through faith behaves like a piece of alien tissue transplanted into our hearts and minds. Our immune systems attacks it continually. (We don't want to believe--it sounds too easy--we want to save ourselves.) Only through daily doses of anti-immune-system medications, otherwise known as preaching, the sacraments, and repentance, can we [most certainly believe] ..." that salvation is by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. --FORUM LETTER--March 2016**

So stay a while with **this Day we call Good**--do not hurry past the message of the cross--let your hearts dwell on the unspeakable cost of our salvation.

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

S.D.g.

The Rev. Dr. Donald Schedler, Snowline Hospice Chaplain, Ret.
[1355 spoken words] Georgia 10; Am. Typewriter 11; Arial 10