

November 21, 2010
 The Last Sunday of the Church Year
 St Peter Lutheran Church
 Bowie, TX
 Larry Knobloch, Pastor
 Luke 23:27-43

J.J.- Jesu Juva—Help me, Jesus

Luke 23:27-43 (ESV)

²⁷ And there followed him a great multitude of the people and of women who were mourning and lamenting for him. ²⁸ But turning to them Jesus said, “**Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children.**” ²⁹ For behold, the days are coming when they will say, ‘**Blessed are the barren and the wombs that never bore and the breasts that never nursed!**’ ³⁰ Then they will begin to say to the mountains, ‘Fall on us,’ and to the hills, ‘Cover us.’ ³¹ For if they do these things when the wood is green, what will happen when it is dry?” ³² Two others, who were criminals, were led away to be put to death with him. ³³ And when they came to the place that is called The Skull, there they crucified him, and the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. ³⁴ And Jesus said, “**Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.**” And they cast lots to divide his garments. ³⁵ And the people stood by, watching, but the rulers scoffed at him, saying, “He saved others; let him save himself, if he is the Christ of God, his Chosen One!” ³⁶ The soldiers also mocked him, coming up and offering him sour wine ³⁷ and saying, “If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!” ³⁸ There was also an inscription over him, “This is the King of the Jews.” ³⁹ One of the criminals who were hanged railed at him, saying, “Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us!” ⁴⁰ But the other rebuked him, saying, “Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation?” ⁴¹ And we indeed justly, for we are receiving the due reward of our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong.” ⁴² And he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.” ⁴³ And he said to him, “**Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise.**”

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¹ *The Holy Bible : English Standard Version.* Wheaton : Standard Bible Society, 2001

Grace, mercy and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

On this Last Sunday of the church year, we are greeted with a rich Gospel reading that is so full of information and promise for us...but it is a promise that was fulfilled in the suffering, death and resurrection of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

We love to talk about the resurrection at Easter; we spend time talking about His death on Good Friday, but somehow we leave out the suffering part. Why? Well, we understand suffering. We don't know about death and resurrection yet. Death will come...it's part of being a sinner. And more importantly, resurrection will follow death (yea!) because God promises it through faith in Christ Jesus.

But suffering...oh my, we understand that. Physical suffering from a cut or bruise. Ouch, but that goes away. A burn last longer; depending on the degree of burn, the spot burned can be sensitive for days. Physical therapy? That is a pain that gets worse before it gets better and can go on for weeks. We understand these types of pain and suffering; but what of mental pain or mental suffering?

Those of us who do not suffer from clinical depression have a hard time trying to figure out what that is like but I'm talking about the mental suffering that maybe we can understand a little bit. Wondering and worrying about a note that is due...and you don't know where the payment is coming from. Worrying about your name or reputation if that note can't be met, what are people going to say. Or if you lose a job...whether it is your fault or not; what's going to be said.

And that brings us to the worry behind that which is known as a rumor. People love to talk about other people; whether it is true or not.

And as much as we want to just let it roll off of our backs, that's really hard to do; which can cause suffering, depression and just plain not caring anymore. Rumors are horrible things; no matter where they start. Usually the person that they are about can't do anything to stop them, even if they are untrue. The rumor seems to take on a life of its own to where even friends of the victim start to repeat it. The only way to stop them is for the hearer to not repeat it. Check out the 8th commandment sometime and see what the Bible says about bearing false witness. It's forbidden. Bearing false witness doesn't just mean making it up, but carrying it forward too.

If you did not see it, you have no reason to repeat it. Furthermore, we are called not only to stop repeating it, but to defend our neighbor and to put the best construction on everything. How many of us follow through on that?

This leads us to our Gospel for this morning. What do you think about what people were saying about Jesus? I'll bet they were shouting some horrid things. "Crucify Him!" "Let His blood be upon us and our children" Not the mention the hitting, spitting and requesting a criminal be released instead of Him.

I 'magine there was a lot of talk going on about the crowd that Jesus ran with. Matthew, that tax collector and those smelly, uneducated fishermen.

Jesus was carrying all of this with Him as He approached Golgotha, carrying His own cross; but His load was already heavy as He began taking on the burden of the sins of the world; yours and mine included. As He was under this great burden of Your sin, do you think that maybe He was tempted to give up? After all, the carrying of the sin was suffering enough; now I have to deal with everything that people are saying about me. The Gospel this morning list just a few..*the rulers scoffed at him, saying,*

“He saved others; let him save himself, if he is the Christ of God, his Chosen One!”

³⁶ *The soldiers also mocked him, coming up and offering him sour wine ³⁷ and saying, “If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!”... One of the criminals who were hanged railed at him, saying, “Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us!”*

How many more were said under the breath to each other, carrying false rumors farther?

Jesus knew the truth. He is the Son of God. He is the Savior. He was carrying their sins! And they are lying to suit their selves; they are making themselves feel important by carrying a tale. “well you know that Jesus guy, the one who calls Himself the Messiah (snicker) well He hangs with tax collectors, He came up with wine at the wedding (snicker) probably from His private stash. I figure He is getting what He deserves.” But little did the scoffers know what one lowly criminal knew that was hanging on the other side of Jesus. That Jesus was getting not what He deserved...but what mankind deserved.

The malefactor or thief, had heard Jesus absolving the world as He was crucified, *“Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.”* As the soliders callously gambled for Jesus’ clothes, the Holy Spirit began to work on the criminal’s heart as he was brought to faith. And though that simple faith wrought by the Savior’s own words, the criminal spoke up, defending his Savior. saying: *“Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? ⁴¹ And we indeed justly, for we are receiving the due reward of our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong.”*

And then this new Christian made his first confession of faith as he said, *“Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.”* What powerful words...and these words stopped the mocking and possibly stopped the other rumors floating around.

Even today, lies cannot stand up to the truth.

When you hear someone being slandered, as Christians we are called to speak the truth. In Christian love, we defend our neighbors...in Christian love, we defend our Savior, just as the criminal did in our Text. Think about the power of gossip.

Look in all of the Gospels see how lies, gossip and slander began no to long after Jesus' earthly ministry started. By the time of Holy Week; those lies had risen to a fever pitch to where almost everyone was calling for blood. Jesus had to die to pay for your sins, but think about it...without gossip, slander and lies; could the religious leaders have gotten Jesus to the cross?

Have you heard gossip and slander coming from your mouth? You have the power to stop it. Have you heard untrue or unproven things spoken by your friends? Defend your neighbor or at the least, refuse to re-tell it, or better yet, don't listen.

And the next time you find yourself ready to tell or hear another story about your neighbor; the next time you feel yourself falling into that or any other sin, remember the words of Jesus as He was first nailed to the cross; *"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."* Jesus made plans for your forgiveness.

Repent and allow the Holy Spirit to work in your heard and make your confession of faith in your Savior, because Jesus is already in His kingdom and He has remembered you; that's why He sent His Holy Spirit unto you. And just as the reformed malefactor received those beautiful words of absolution...so to have you.

As you approach the altar this morning to receive the true body and blood of Jesus Christ, given and shed for the forgiveness of sins, approach with a clear conscience, because you are forgiven. In the name of the Father , and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

And the Peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Amen.

S.D.G.—Soli Deo Gloria