

John 19.30
Good Friday
“It Is Finished: A Drama of the World in 5 Acts”
15 April 2022
St. John’s Evangelical Lutheran Church, Topeka, Kansas

+ Iesu Iuva +

“It is finished.” The last words to come from the mouth of the dying Jesus. “It is finished.” Not just a turning, a high or low point in the story, but its end. The drama of history, the drama of the fall, the drama of redemption not only comes to its climax here. It is finished. The sad, sin-filled, painful, sorrowful reality of the children of Adam is done.

“It is finished: A Drama of the World in 5 Acts”

Act One. God had called him Adam, because that meant “human being.” He was the first of them, the patriarch of the great family of humanity that was to be.

And then He pulled from Adam’s side one whom the man called Hawah, Eve, because that meant “Life.” She was to be the mother of them all.

And when the Lord God got done He pronounced that He had accomplished what He wanted:

creatures in His own image,

creatures brought to life and animated unlike any others, by His own breath,

creatures of their own kind held together by the bond of love, sharing one another’s essence.

“bone of my bone,” Adam called it, just as the Lord Himself was, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

The Lord God gazed on them, these icons of Himself, and pronounced them “very good.” Not just “good,” but “very good,” endowed with a goodness worth replicating; and He gave them the command: be fruitful and multiply.

Act Two. In the cool of the day, a conversation with a slick seducer, the spark of a delusion of grandeur—could it be that we can really be like God?—, the bite of a piece of forbidden fruit.

But nothing changed.

Or rather, nothing changed like it was supposed to. The knowledge of good and evil wasn’t supposed to like *this*.

And instead of ascending to the heights of divinity, they say to one another: “Shh! A sound. Hide! Hide yourself, over here behind this bush!”

They can hide their nakedness. But their shame? Not so much.

Somebody’s to blame for this mess.

But certainly not Adam. Just ask him; he’ll tell you: “It was the woman *You* gave me! Yeah, that’s the line. It’s *Your* fault, God. None of this would have happened without the woman *You* gave me!”

Act Three. From generation to generation, in one long, drawn-out death-march, the sons of Adam and the daughters of Eve have lived under the curse.

In one long, drawn-out cycle after another, from sin, from Adam's sin, and Eve's, comes death; and from death, sin takes its own nihilistic energy. An energy perpetuated in the misery of each successive generation.

The children of Eve the woman named Life pass on death to those to whom they give life.

Brother slays brother.

Whole societies call the other the enemy and systematically eradicate them.

Whole societies, legislators and judges, even our own, sign on the dotted line and legally orchestrate the clinical death of millions.

That's what the children of Adam do. They rape, steal, and murder. They cheat. They slink around behind the backs of their husbands, their wives. They cheat on taxes, they cheat their neighbors, they cheat in mere games. All to get ahead of the misery. And they stop at nothing. They turn friends into tools for advancement; they lie about themselves—always for the better—, and rumor the evil of others.

When they're not actually doing any of this, they're talking about it; and when they're not talking about it, they're driven to distraction from the depth of their being by a relentless, undying desire to do so.

And then to forget the misery of it all they familiarize themselves with the end of a needle, the bottom of a pill bottle, the inside of plastic baggy.

That's what the sons of Adam, the daughters of Eve, do.

But the shame! The shame won't go away! It wasn't supposed to be like this.

And faithful sons of Adam that they are, they shout, "Don't blame me. Don't let's not blame each other—that hits too close to home. What's Adam's line? Yeah, that's the line. It's God's fault."

Act Four. Like the most sinister plot imaginable, the criminals arraign the Just. The criminals put the Just on trial and make themselves prosecutor, judge and jury.

Because someone's going to pay for all of this. Good Friday A.D. 33.

- God had given the courtesy to our first parents of approaching them quietly and calmly in the cool of the day, when things are comfortable. Now the sons of Adam arraign God in Christ at the 6th hour, when the sun is at its highest and hottest, to show how their rage burns.
- God had allowed Adam and Eve to speak in their defense. Now God in Christ offers no defense, no rebuttal to the charge leveled by Adam's sons.
- God had approached our first parents with gentle questions, to determine the facts of the case. But now? Facts be damned—Jesus is subjected to accusation without evidence, driven malice, anchored in lies.
- Even in delivering the curse, God had shown His infinite grace and longsuffering by promising one who would be wounded in their place. But now the guilty substitute, Barabbas, is rejected for the Holy and the Innocent.
- Even in delivering the news of their fall, God had shown His infinite grace and longsuffering by not executing the terms of the infringement—in that day you will die—; and now Jesus is rushed off to His death on the same day.

But let's be clear about something. All this happens not because God approves of the charges. In His perfect justice, He rejects the premises, the evidence, the argument. So ludicrous is it all, in fact, that no judge on earth worth his salt could be part of this kangaroo court.

But as faulty and lame and trumped up as this whole miscarriage of justice is, the sons of Adam and the daughters of Eve have one point right. Somebody is at fault; and somebody must pay. Somebody must pay. For the slaughter in Ukraine, for the aborted baby, for abandoned wife, for the lonely life that ends in suicide, for the short-fused father, for the child who's turned out nothing but bad, for the many who died during the pandemic—alone, because of contagion— somebody must pay. And the sentence is enormous. It is death and hell. Somebody must pay.

But the sons of Adam and the daughters of Eve will not.

In fact, they cannot.

And so God Himself accepts charges He cannot condone. That's what grace and mercy are. The Just One, God Himself, in Christ subjects Himself to the injustice of the sons of Adam and the daughters of Eve in order to be both the Just and the Justifier of them all, in order to undo the curse step by step.

Act Five. To restore the life lost by the first Adam, the Son of God and Mary's Son comes as the Second Adam to give life to Adam and all His descendants by His death. "Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the One Who was to come.... For as by one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by one man's obedience the many will be made righteous." [Rom. 5.14,19]

To unravel Eve's deception by Satan, He allows Himself to be betrayed by Satan. "After Judas had taken the morsel, Satan entered him. Jesus said to him, 'What you are going to do, do quickly.'" [John 13.27]

That the Light of the world might enlighten all men, He is sought in the darkness by the light of lamps and torches. "So Judas, taking the cohort and henchmen from the high priests and Pharisees, came to the place with torches and lights and weaponry." [John 18.3]

To bring men to the eternal Garden, heaven, He is dragged from a garden. "So the band of soldiers and their captain and the officers of the Jews arrested Jesus and bound Him." [John 18.12]

To unbar the way to the heavenly garden for those whose way to the earthly garden was guarded by an angel, He stays angel legions from entering the fray on His behalf. "If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would have been fighting that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But My kingdom is not of this world." [John 18.36]

Crowned with thorns, He wears on His brow the curse of the ground. "And the soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on his head." [John 19.2]

To release them from the pain of daily survival, He endures the pain of whip and scourge. "Pilate took Jesus and flogged Him....And the soldiers came up to Him... and struck Him with their hands." [John 19.3]

To wipe the sweat from men's brow, He labors to carry the heavy load of His cross. "And He went out, bearing His own cross." [John 19.17]

To restore men to life, He goes to the death. "He went out...to the place of the Skull, which in Aramaic is Golgotha." [John 19.17]

By His accursed death on a tree, He makes a tree made to serve death the Tree of Eternal Life for those bereft of the earthly tree of life. "Cursed is everyone is hanged a tree." [Galatians 3.13]

To cover the shame of men's nakedness, He is stripped of all His clothing. "The soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took His garments and divided them into four parts, one part for each soldier." [John 19.23]

To check the curse of the pain in childbirth, He gives His grieving mother to the care of the disciple whom He loved, and the grieving disciple to the care of His mother and says, "Behold your son! Behold your mother!" [John 19.26]

To give the sweet, refreshing, living waters of paradise to those who had forfeited the clear rivers of Eden, to those who thirst after righteousness, He says, "I thirst," and accepts into His mouth the sour desiccation of old wine, of vinegar. [John 19.29-30]

To crush the head of Satan, He allows hands, feet, and side to be pierced. "The soldiers came and broke the legs of the first, and of the other who had been crucified with him. But when they came to Jesus and saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs. But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear." [John 19.32-34]

That by His wounds we may be healed [Isaiah 53.5] from His wounded side came forth "blood and water," the Blessed Sacraments of the Holy Christian Church.

To cleave the earth that holds the sons and daughters of Adam in death, He is placed in the grave. "Because of the day Jewish day of Preparation, since the tomb was close at hand, they laid Jesus there." [John 19.42]

And then it's all done. The drama comes to an end here. Because here, Jesus, the very Son of God, does in their flesh what the children of men will not, cannot do. He dies the death they deserve. He suffers every torment earned by them.

And when it's all done, He speaks words over what He has done, words that echo what His Father had said in the beginning. τετέλεσται. "It is finished." "It is complete. It is good. It is very good. Because I have redeemed my creatures from their sin, their death, and their hell. I have sprung the cursed from the curse. I have given life by My death."

O blessed sin that merited so great a Redeemer, so complete a redemption!

It is finished. Amen.

pax dei, etc.

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