

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

If there's ever any doubt that God doesn't take sin seriously, look at Good Friday and you see he most definitely does. Sin is serious, deadly serious. You are severely mistaken when you forget there is a cost to be paid when it comes to sin. On Good Friday you see not only the cost, death, but the one who pays it, Jesus, and what he pays it with, his own holy precious blood and his innocent suffering and death.

You know, though, it's not surprising that we forget this cost or put it in the back of our minds as an afterthought. The world sees debt as something theoretical or just a made-up concept. It doesn't help matters when we live in a day and age where credit cards and online transactions are the way business is done. Even with something like currency, paper money, there's an element which is lost as it only points to something which backs up what is written on the paper.

Maybe this is where growing up on a farm has some advantage in this sense, or at least it used to illustrate this point. When you wanted a steak, chicken, or bacon what had to happen? An animal had to die for its meat to be on your plate and you consume it. It paid the price so that you could have food, and that's ok, God gives us meat to eat now, and we have dominion over the animals.

Or think about when a disaster hits, and you must try to rebuild your homes and property. For a while there was a shortage of lumber or supplies. Even though you wanted these things to rebuild if it wasn't there it couldn't be done. The debt you bore or are still bearing is the need for these goods and yes, the price it cost for these as they need to be available and need to be paid for things can get moving or completed. Everything has a cost, it's not always monetary but there's something.

The reality of our sin is that it must be answered for and cannot go unnoticed. If it did, God would be a liar who says one thing and then the next minute acts in a different way. If sin weren't a big deal and demand the punishment and condemnation of God, the Lord would simply say "eh, who I am to judge?" But that's not who he is or what he does. Being holy, righteous, true, and just there is no place for sin in his presence or his kingdom. God does judge and his judgments are true and righteous.

Even in the church we want to push the notion of debt aside. When we have Easter without Good Friday, we miss the point. It's like the theological equivalent of wanting to get free stuff but no one picks up the tab. It's also why an empty cross doesn't save anyone there needs to be someone on it, it's either you or him. Someone must pay and pay with his blood and life. It's what many complain about my generation that wants everyone given to us and never stops to ask? "Who's going to pay for all of this?" Sin must be answered, it can't go unnoticed. God knows someone must pay.

To take sin seriously in our own lives is know the cost it is due and to know God's judgment against it. It's to be stripped bare and exposed for the sin which is ours from the time of our conception and what he has done or not done in all things. It's to stare God in the face and see his wrath against it and rightly know the terror that we should have for transgressing his holy law. The fear of God is an important part of this and acknowledging who we are before him. This is

deadly serious. You should fear God when you see all that's before you on Good Friday. Darkness, death, sin, and crucifixion all proclaim to you that this is what your sin deserves and the price it cost. Fear God and repent.

Yet to behold this day is to see the day of redemption. To “redeem” means to buy back. To have a Redeemer is to have one who pays a price for you and you have the benefits of the cost he pays. On Good Friday you see this and have this as you look to the future through the lens of the crucifixion. On Good Friday you see Easter all the more joyously because when you know the cost you appreciate the payment. When you have great debt, the day your debt is paid off is a day of freedom and you announce it to everyone. You've been given a new life that is free to live. And you treat people differently too, You do not hold sin against someone. One of the words for forgiveness in the New Testament is a word for setting loose or freeing. You take that burden of holding something against or over someone when you forgive them because you know that Christ takes that burden and payment upon himself and has paid the cost that it is rightly due. In this way, sin is never excused or brushed aside, it is simply place upon another to pay the punishment and cost. And what is the cost? Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins the Bible says on more than one occasion and the punishment that is due sin is death.

So, what of Jesus? Why him? “Pilate said to them, ‘Take him yourselves and crucify him, for I find no guilt in him.’” What a true statement. There's no guilt in Jesus because he is God in the flesh. He and only he, then, can be the sacrificial Lamb without spot or blemish for he is God. And he alone can suffer and die for he is fully man. The Person of Christ is your Redeemer who takes upon himself. “Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.”

Today is Good Friday and it's the day payment is made, and God's justice is carried out. What does God say and do? What makes this day so “good?” What is the image before your eyes today as you hear these words? What is the confidence to go from this place knowing what is due and if it has been paid? “When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, ‘It is finished,’ and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.”

Behold Jesus crucified and see there is most certainly a price for sin and a just punishment for it. See that God is no liar and holds sin accountable as his wrath burns hot and all consuming. This is all very real and it's before you tonight. That's what you see as you ponder the Passion of your Lord. Your sin put Jesus on the cross. Yet he goes like a sheep led to the slaughter. He goes willingly because he knows the cost, oh does he ever. He knows the cost and what you owe God, but he goes to the cross for your sake. The Father offered up his only Son as a substitute for you for “in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them.”

Caiaphas was right, it was “expedient that one man should die for the people.” The Lord knew this, and he did it and did it willingly. You look back now on this day and seeing all the evil that was done to the sinless Son of God and how the guiltless one is rendered guilty you call it all for

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what it is and what you have, it's good. After each day of creation God in Genesis God would look at his creation and saw that it was good. Today, Good Friday is finished, your sin and the sin of the whole world is paid in full by the one who knew no sin. The evil of men is used for good, and victory is won through what seems to be defeat. Death is around you and God died on the cross. But death is defeated by the death of Jesus. Today is Friday and it is finished. It is Good, very good. In Romans, God proclaims, "God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." In 1 John, God says, "In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins."

Dear people of God, baptized into Christ you have this given out to you for your good. So, listen, dear saints of your Lord's passion. Lament your sin but rejoice in the one who has taken your iniquities upon himself. Rejoice dear daughter of Zion. This week began as you saw your King humble and riding on a donkey. Now your King hangs dead extended upon the cross. You ponder, listen, and gaze upon God dead in your place. But in the silence, you hear the cry of redemption and victory. You leave as free people who are debt free. The transaction is complete. The day of rest is approaching, and a fresh tomb closes on the one who has no place in it. He has destroyed death by his death and goes to preach to those in prison that he has done it, it is finished. You bow your heads in humility as the Lord bowed his in death and you raise your heads washed in baptismal waters knowing what is to come on the third day and the last day. When Jesus pays the price, tombs his and yours don't stay occupied for long.

Sing of this victory your Lord paid not with gold and silver but by his holy precious blood and his innocent suffering and death making you his own. All of those who mocked him will have their mouths stopped and God will have the final word. For those who rejected them it will be a day of shame but for you this is a day which preaches to you the great good of what you heard today. The Lord died at the hands of men who meant it for evil, but God meant it for good. That's what the Lord does because nothing would stop him from redeeming you in Christ. Listening to this all, behold your crucified Lord stricken, smitten, and afflicted and sing your tongue of this glorious battle and victory you have in the death of Christ for you. Behold him and even as you hear of him laid into to the tomb you see all that has been done is good. And, you know something, don't you? There's more "good" on the horizon as the sun sets this day. Sunday is coming and it's going to be a good day.

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