

2015\_04\_03 Good Friday  
Ascension Lutheran Church, Batavia IL  
Pastor David Pfeiffer

## **He Did This For You!**

Psalm 22:1-21

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Grace to you and peace in Him who was humbled to the point of death for you, the name which God has exalted above every name – in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, dear fellow sinners, dear fellow saints,

Its one of those situations where you can't help but look. You drive by slowly. Red lights flashing. You know you should pay attention to the road ahead and the slowly moving traffic and the rescue vehicles and the police directing traffic – but you can't seem to help yourself. Its one of those situations where you want to cover your eyes, but you can't help but take a peak; there is something mystery of it all, that intrigues us. As long as it does not involve us, we don't mind pausing to take a look, and then we move on with our lives.

But with what eyes will we look upon this scene? With what attitude will we ponder it? Will we slow down enough to take in the full story, to understand what has happened? So Jeremiah writes, "Is it nothing to you, all you who pass by? Behold and see If there is any sorrow like my sorrow, Which has been brought on me, Which the Lord has inflicted In the day of His fierce anger." (Lamentations 1:12). And the hymn poet reiterates:

*Do we pass that cross unheeding,  
Breathing no repentant vow,  
Though we see Thee wounded, bleeding,  
See Thy thorn-encircled brow?      (TLH 145:2)*

So tonight, we slow down, we stop, in fact; we kneel before the cross to gaze upon this scene. And we discover that it does indeed involve us; we see that it involves us and someone we know quite well. As we see the depth of evil, the agony that is portrayed in this scene, in this hellish event, involving us and Jesus – it is quite unsettling. And it should be. But there is more. We must look deeper – for God would have us look into this event to know the most important truth of the gospel: **He did this for you.**

The psalm we consider this evening is attributed to David; however the words spoken only find their fullest sense in the mouth of Jesus. You might say his fingerprints are all over this. You might say, his hands and feet are nailed to this prophecy. In three places, this psalm is directly quoted in Matthew chapter 27. In three other places, it is alluded to – including the reference in verse 16 to literally, boring a hole through his hands and feet. What this means is that over 4 centuries before crucifixion had even been invented, the nails are already fastened. Here in Psalm 22, the eternal Son of God enters into an ancient voice – a voice which 1000 years later will be heard echoing from the cross. A voice which 3000 years later, echoes in our hearts tonight. We turn to the prophecy of Psalm 22 this evening – where Christ Jesus our Lord faces death and speaking through the psalmist David He offers this prayer:

### Psalm 22:1–21

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| 1 My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?<br><i>Why are You so far from helping Me,<br/>And from the words of My groaning?</i> | 12 Many bulls have surrounded Me;<br>Strong <i>bulls</i> of Bashan have encircled Me.  |
| 2 O My God, I cry in the daytime, but You do not hear;<br>And in the night season, and am not silent.                            | 13 They gape at Me <i>with</i> their mouths,<br><i>Like</i> a raging and roaring lion.                                       |
| 3 But You <i>are</i> holy,<br>Enthroned in the praises of Israel.  | 14 I am poured out like water,<br>And all My bones are out of joint;<br>My heart is like wax;<br>It has melted within Me.    |
| 4 Our fathers trusted in You;<br>They trusted, and You delivered them.   | 15 My strength is dried up like a potsherd,<br>And My tongue clings to My jaws;<br>You have brought Me to the dust of death. |
| 5 They cried to You, and were delivered;<br>They trusted in You, and were not ashamed.   | 16 For dogs have surrounded Me;<br>The congregation of the wicked has enclosed Me.   |
| 6 But I <i>am</i> a worm, and no man;<br>A reproach of men, and despised by the people.  | They pierced My hands and My feet;   |
| 7 All those who see Me ridicule Me;<br>They shoot out the lip, they shake the head, <i>saying</i> ,                              | 17 I can count all My bones.<br>They look <i>and</i> stare at Me.  |
| 8 “He trusted in the Lord, let Him rescue Him;<br>Let Him deliver Him, since He delights in Him!”                                | 18 They divide My garments among them,<br>And for My clothing they cast lots.  |
| 9 But You <i>are</i> He who took Me out of the womb;<br>You made Me trust <i>while</i> on My mother’s breasts.                   | 19 But You, O Lord, do not be far from Me;<br>O My Strength, hasten to help Me!  |
| 10 I was cast upon You from birth.<br>From My mother’s womb<br>You <i>have been</i> My God.                                      | 20 Deliver Me from the sword,<br>My precious <i>life</i> from the power of the dog.  |
| 11 Be not far from Me,<br>For trouble <i>is</i> near;<br>For <i>there is</i> none to help.                                       | 21 Save Me from the lion’s mouth<br>And from the horns of the wild oxen!<br>You have answered Me.                            |

This Word of the Lord was spoken for you.

The scene of an accident often draws the attention of passers by. Cars slow down, not just for emergency personnel, but because there is something intriguing about the brokenness of the situation. As long as you have no involvement in the tragedy, as long as you don't know any of the people involved, it is easy to slow down, observe, gawk a little, and then move on with your life unchanged.

But what happens when you discover the person being pulled out of that wreckage is a loved one? What happens when you discover that the person who caused the crash was you? What happens when you find yourself right in the middle of it all, your own fault – and not just that – but you realize that what you did was no accident. You can hardly pass by and move on without having your life changed.

So easily we look on as if we had no involvement with this. No part to play in this tragedy. It is something we'd like to imagine God had no part in either. A scene we can acknowledge and pass on. We are thankful it was not us; we are thankful it was not because of anything we did; and we are thankful it was not because of anything our God did either. A tragedy, that is all it is. Jesus was surrounded by the congregation of the wicked – and they put him to death. It was simply the death of an innocent man at the hands of an unjust people.

But then we hear it from his own lips:

*... at the ninth hour He cries out with a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?"*

What does this mean? He does not put this on the Jews? The chief priests? Pilate? No, rather He calls upon God for an explanation. "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?"

And there is no answer. God is no where to be found. The one just hours earlier he prays to as Father, is now a Father that cannot be found. And suddenly we realize this scene is not what we thought. This is no accident. It is not a mere tragedy. This is an event of God's doing. He has left Him. Deserted of His own Son.

And so he cries out: "Why?" because he is alone. He is alone and no one, not even God can help him. The Father he knew so well, the Father who raised him from the womb, who caused his conception by the Holy Spirit, the One who appeared to him at his baptism calling him his beloved Son, the God who heard his prayers, who strengthened

him in distress, who worked great works through him, was now gone. For as Isaiah writes, the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

How you view this scene depends on your level of involvement. As they surround the cross looking on, they suppose they have no involvement. They surround Him with open mouths. They gape at him like a raging and roaring lion. They taunt him and mock him. He is looked upon as a worm, and not a man. Those who stand by with mouths hanging open, gawking at him, begin to spit out their words at him – “He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now if He will have Him; for He said, ‘I am the Son of God.’ ” (Matthew 27:43). They suppose that this proves they had no involvement in it. If Jesus were the Son of God, this would never be happening.

And so it goes for us too in the weakness of our flesh. If God loved us, there would be nothing to suffer, no reason to die. We suppose that God’s goodness would bring only things we perceive as good. Things that feel good. Things that bring good health, a good living, a good future – we flee with the disciples from the judgment from God that Jesus faces; we flee from this pain, this ugliness of who we are in our flesh. “Let God deliver Him!”

So we pass by with open our mouths, claiming no involvement: we do not know the man. This way we can move on with out lives – no, it is not for us, it does not involve us, and we too desert him on the cross. so that he says, “there is none to help.”

That is “why.”

The real suffering is not merely the suffocation that crucifixion causes; but the Spirit who no longer breathes within. The cross is the mouth of hell as Jesus is swallowed by our guilt and our sins and God’s wrath. This is more than death by crucifixion, it is death by forsakenness. And that is what hell is – the absence of God’s presence. And he is no longer to be called a Son. He is deserted in the dust of death.

Having stopped long enough, we are able now to see who this is being pulled from the wreckage. The limp body being taken down from the cross. We know this man. We know him all too well. But we must look. God wants us to look deeper and know this is why it has been done. So that you would know Him. So that you would know He did this for you.

In Handel’s great work, *the Messiah*, he makes the movement from the works of Christ to the passion of Christ with the chorus: “Behold the Lamb of God.” In this transition, Handel leads us deeper and deeper into the Passion account... “Behold the Lamb of

God..." "Behold the Lamb of God..." "Behold the Lamb of God..." Voices, soprano, alto, tenor, bass, voices one upon another, speaking through each other and building upon one another... "that taketh away the sin of the world." Leading us deeper and deeper into his sufferings, closer and closer to him, that we might behold this event, this scene, not as an accidental tragedy, but as the event in which God takes away the sin of the world.

"It is finished." Hear him cry! And as Paul writes: "God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." He did this for you to free you from the gaping jaws of hell and release you to the open gates of heaven. He did this so that in death you would never be alone. He did this for you.

The last thing we want when facing suffering or death is to be alone. But it is easy to feel alone when those times come. As you are wheeled down the hallway into surgery you feel quite helpless. You are taken into the operating room, and even though there are many people around you, you still can feel quite alone.

But in the prayer of this psalm, we are never alone; for God has answered the prayers of His Son.

In one last breath, Jesus prays: "You have answered Me." Or as Luke records: "Father, into Your hands I entrust my spirit." He once again calls him Father. He is no longer alone. He entrusts himself to the hope of the resurrection and finds a peaceful departure.

If we should not recover from that operation or from that tragic scene or from that death bed, that is what we pray for: a peaceful departure. We don't want a lot of pain; we would like to be surrounded by those who love; we don't want to be alone. And this final prayer of Jesus is our prayer, answered already in the sacrifice of Christ.

Whatever the tragic and painful scene in your life, whatever the wreckage that leaves shrapnel and scars in your body or mind – as you face the moments ahead, as you are wheeled into the operating room, as you lay on your deathbed – you are never alone. You will not be surrounded by the congregation of the wicked, but so long as we have God's Word we are surrounded God's promises. Our Father is with us to the end – having given up His Son for you, having forgiven all your sins, having made peace through the blood of the cross, He will not leave you alone.

So as we leave this scene, we depart in peace. We've stopped long enough now to realize what has happened; we've learned of our involvement, we've discovered this

was no accident, and we've realized the one who is pulled from the wreckage is one we love more than anything. Yet as we stand in stunned silence, wanting to look away, God tells us to look deeper. And as we do, we notice who it is that pulls him from the wreckage. This dead Jesus is entrusted into the hands of God the Father. The sacrifice is accepted. The work is finished. And there will be no more death, no more sorrow, no more pain, no more sin as our bodies too are entrusted to the hands of God our Father. Therefore as we look ahead to the joy of Easter, we discover a new beginning and new life for each of us in this story.

**He did this for you.**

Amen.