

## **Palm/Passion Sunday**

Luke 23:1-56.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for the sermon is the Gospel Reading we heard before from Luke 23.

**23** However, they were insistent, demanding with loud voices that He should be crucified, and their voices began to prevail. **24** Then Pilate decided that what they demanded should be done. **25** He released the man who had been thrown into prison for insurrection and murder, for whom they were asking, and he delivered Jesus for them to do what they wanted.

**26** As they led Jesus away, they took hold of Simon, a man from Cyrene, who was coming in from the country, and they laid the cross on him, to carry it behind Jesus. **27** A large crowd of the people followed Him. The women in the crowd were mourning and weeping for Him. **28** Jesus turned to them and said, “Daughters of Jerusalem, stop weeping for Me! Rather, weep for yourselves and for your children! **29** For indeed the days are coming when people will say, ‘Blessed are the barren women, the wombs that have not borne children, and the breasts that have not suckled!’ **30** Then people will begin to say to the mountains: ‘Fall on us!’ and to the hills: ‘Cover us!’ **31** For, if they do these things to the green tree, what will be done to the dry one?”

**32** Two other men, who were criminals, were also led out to be executed with Him.

**33** When they came to the place that is called “The Skull,” they crucified Him there with the criminals, one at His right and the other at His left. **34** Then Jesus said, “Father, forgive them! For they do not know what they are doing.”

They divided His clothes among them by casting lots. **35** The people stood there watching. The rulers were also sneering, “He saved others. Let Him save Himself if He is the Christ of God, the Chosen One!”

**36** The soldiers also mocked Him, coming and offering Him wine-vinegar. **37** They said, “If you are the King of the Jews, save Yourself!”

**38** There was also a written notice above Him, “This is the King of the Jews.”

**39** One of the criminals who hung there was blaspheming Him: “Are You not the Christ? Save Yourself and us!”

**40** However, the other criminal rebuked him. He said, “Do you not even fear God? For you are under the same condemnation. **41** We are also being punished justly. For we are getting what we deserve for what we have done. However, this Man has done nothing wrong.”

**42** Then he said, “Jesus, remember me when You come into Your kingdom!”

**43** Jesus told him, “Truly, I tell you, today you will be with Me in paradise.”

**44** It was now about the sixth hour, and darkness came over the whole land until the ninth hour, **45** because the sun stopped shining. The curtain in the temple was torn in two. **46** Jesus cried out aloud, “Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit.”

After He had said this, He breathed His last. **47** When the captain saw what had happened, he praised God and said, “Certainly this Man was righteous.”

**48** When all the people who had gathered to witness this sight saw what had happened, they beat their breasts and went away.

**49** However, all those who knew Him, including the women who had followed Him from Galilee, stood at a distance, watching these things.

**50** There was a man by the name of Joseph, a member of the Jewish council, a good and righteous man, **51** who had not consented to their decision and action. He was from Arimathea, a Jewish city, and he was waiting for the kingdom of God. **52** He went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. **53** Then he took it down, wrapped it in linen, and laid it in a tomb cut in the rock, in which no one had yet been laid. **54** It was the Day of Preparation, and the Sabbath was about to begin. **55** The women who had come with Him from Galilee followed closely behind. They observed the tomb and how His body was laid. **56** When they went back they prepared spices and perfumes. Then they rested on the Sabbath according to the Commandment.

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us in your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ, Peace be with you.

Christ before Pilate is called an evil-doer. St. Augustine says, Ask those whom Christ rescued from the bonds of the Devil, those whom He made well from their illnesses, cleansed from leprosy, those whose ears, eyes and mouth He opened, those whom He awakened from the dead if Christ was an evil-doer, how could it be, - since, Christ had taken upon Himself all the world's sin and transgression. How could anyone call Him an evil doer, before Pilate's seat of judgment; He stood there not only before the world's judgment, but also before the Judgment of God. ...

In this way, Christ redeemed us from the accusations of the Law. Our first parents had claimed for themselves false honours; they wanted to be like God; and they didn't want to surrender or relinquish the tribute of obedience to God the Lord. To atone for this sin - which we also inherited - Christ suffered these false accusations. Although He indeed could have easily defended Himself, He quietly remained dumb like a little lamb which is led to the chopping block; and He didn't open His mouth. He rescued us, so that on Judgment Day we wouldn't have to be struck dumb before the divine Judgment. ...

*We pray. O Lord Jesus Christ, You who in an innocent manner were accused as an evil-doer for the sake of our sins, let Your holy suffering benefit us poor evil-doers. Amen.*

Take note of the clear testimony of Pilate. He found nothing in Christ worthy of death. Had Christ inherited the least sin or committed one Himself, then His suffering could not have helped us. However, since He suffered everything in innocence, it was also sufficient for our reconciliation and atonement.

Many martyrs and saints have suffered much, but none of them suffered anything for us. For even though they well may have been innocent before the judgment of men and experienced injustice, they nevertheless were not innocent before the judgment of God. It is written that before God no man is innocent. But Christ was absolutely innocent in all things. His conception is holy, His birth is holy, His life is holy throughout, and so He was able to give His life as a guilt-offering. ...

Herod wasn't concerned about innocence or guilt. He had wanted to see Jesus for the longest time. He had the notion that Christ would perform some sort of fantastic miracle in order to please him and to try and gain favour to be set free again. However, since Christ knew very well that Herod was asking out of curiosity and thoughtless frivolity and self-righteousness, and not out of a desire for the truth, He answered him nothing. As Solomon says in Proverb 26:4, **Do not answer a fool according to his foolishness, so that you may not be like him yourself!** Pilate had sent the Lord Christ to Herod, fully hoping that by this means he would be rid of Him. But his plan failed, since Herod sent Christ back to him again.

Now, the Jews had introduced the custom that at the Passover a prisoner was requested to be released. So they would be reminded of the great deeds of God, who had freed them as poor captive slaves from the house of servitude and led them out of Egypt. God the Lord had not commanded them to do this custom, but they had introduced it out of their personal devotion, and probably to make themselves look important and kind. It would have been better if they had been satisfied and content with the remembrance of the Passover lamb, which God had specifically instituted for them to remind them of their rescue from Egypt. They should have let the evil-doers to their just desserts.

When the people reminded Pilate of this old custom and petitioned for the release of a prisoner, Pilate placed the two before them, Christ and Barabbas, in the hope that the Jews would surely ask for the release of the Lord Christ, since Barabbas was a common public murderer and rebel. But the high priests and elders stirred up the people and persuaded them to ask for Barabbas and do away with Christ. **The whole crowd then began to shout aloud: "Away with this Man! Release Barabbas for us!"** [V18.]

*We pray. O Lord Jesus Christ, may Your holy patience, when You bore the violent screams of the Jews, become for us a help and a comfort when our conscience screams against and over us. Protect us, O Lord and God, that we indeed never come to the place where there is eternal screaming and wailing. Amen.*

In Exodus12 God the Lord commands that the Paschal lamb should be slaughtered in such a way that from the stretched-out body the blood would flow abundantly. Christ is the true Passover Lamb, to whom Exodus points to. He didn't want to let Himself simply be killed, but rather to suffer death in such a manner that with His body stretched out He would freely pour out His blood. Indeed, He wanted to shed His blood abundantly not only on the Mount of Golgotha and on the wood of the cross, but also in the judgment hall of Pilate. Here He

was gruesomely scourged, mutilated with thorns on His head, and also was despised, spit upon, and mocked, so that He indeed might suffer sufficiently and pour out His blood with ample abundance for our sake. ...

How richly fulfilled are the words of the prophet Isaiah, ch.50, about the Lord Christ: I held up My back to those who beat Me, My cheeks to those who pulled on My beard. I did not hide My face from their shame and spit. I presented My face there like flint. \*St. Bernard says: "He was whipped for you, so that He could free you from the whipping of eternal wrath; He was crowned with thorns for you, so that He could crown you in heaven; He was wounded for you, so that He could heal you."

In Luke 12 Christ says: A servant who knows the will of his Lord, but does not act according to it, such a one must suffer many stripes. Adam was such a disobedient servant. He knew God's will, and at the same time he refrained from doing it. Therefore, he should have eternally suffered many stripes - and we along with him, because we inherited such guilt and indeed are likewise often disobedient servants. In Isaiah.1 we are described in this way: **From the soles of our feet to the top of our heads, there is nothing healthy about us. Rather, we are covered with spiritual wounds, stripes and boils which are not treated or bandaged. In order, then, that such pathetic soul-wounds of ours might be healed, behold how Christ endured such stripes and wounds.** St. Paul testifies of himself and of all the re-born that **nothing good resides within our flesh and that evil lusts break out through every member and strive against the Law of God.** Thus, we did not just deserve a gentle spanking with a switch, but a severe scourging. So that we, then, might be rescued from these, Christ is viciously scourged.

*We pray. O Lord Jesus Christ, may Your scourging and stripes be a healing medication for our soul; may Your holy blood wash us from all our sins; may Your crown of thorns cut our heart so that with a penitent heart we fruitfully contemplate Your holy suffering. Amen.*

Crucifixion was a horrible way to die. In Deu.21 it says **For a hanged man is under God's curse.** We should also see that since Christ was willing to die on the wood of the cross, He was announcing His intention to restore what Adam had broken on the wood of the forbidden tree. There the first Adam had stretched out his arm to the forbidden tree, thereby bringing death upon all his descendants. Here the second Adam stretches out His arms on the tree of the cross and brings to us life and salvation. ...

It's recorded that Christ prayed for His crucifiers: Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do, the first words which Christ spoke on the cross. In the Old Testament, as the sacrifice was being offered, the high priest at the same time had to instruct the people about its true benefit. Christ, the High Priest of the New Testament does this as well; He teaches that this sacrifice is intended for the forgiveness of sins. We should not think that Christ was praying only for the Jews and soldiers who at that time crucified Him. No, this prayer applies to all of us. He was crucified for the sake of all of our sins.

*We pray: O Lord Jesus Christ, You became a curse on the tree of the cross for us. O Eternal High Priest, by Your intercession for us, may we benefit from Your holy suffering and obtain forgiveness of sins. Amen.*

St. Matthew and Mark record that at first both criminals reviled the Lord Christ, but Luke tells us that later one is converted. The Holy Spirit worked in his heart, so that he ceases his slander, rebukes the other criminal's blasphemy, and admits that they are getting what their deeds deserve. He says to Christ: **Lord, remember me, when You come into Your kingdom.** At once, he obtains from the Lord the comforting declaration: **Truly I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.** Christ gave more than what was asked of Him;

Here we may consider that by the death of Christ the way to Paradise, has once more been opened. After the Fall, the way to life had been closed to us. However, Christ has once again found the way to life. From now on, the souls of repentant sinners enter into life through Him, to be with Him in Paradise and behold His glory. In Paradise there is fullness of joy and a delightful existence at the right hand of God, just as in former times the earthly Paradise was a place of joy and the land of the living. There, no excruciating agony can touch us, since we are guarded and kept by God's fatherly hand.

The evangelists also record the darkness of the sun which at that time occurred over the entire land. It lasted for three whole hours. Eclipses don't happen during a full moon, - the Passover was celebrated at the full moon. An eclipse, however, occurs during the new moon. This unnatural darkness takes place at noon day, when the

sun usually shines the brightest. \*\*Orosius and others report that at that time one could see the stars in the sky, and that it was as dark as night. \*\*\*Dionysius Areopagita records that he also saw the darkness, and, since he could not find any natural cause for it, he concluded that either the Lord of nature was suffering, or else the world was perishing.

By this darkness is signified, first of all, that the sun was, as it were, showing sympathy for the Lord Christ, and that the heavens became black because God's Son was made to suffer shamefully on the cross. The sun was struck with dread and put on, as it were, a black garment in sorrow. The heavens were appalled and darkened over the fact that the Jews had crucified the Lord of glory. So with this darkness of the sun is fulfilled the threat to the Jews in Jer.15 **that the sun will go down on them at high noon.**

In Exodus.10, there were three entire days of thick darkness throughout all Egypt when God wanted to rescue His people from their slavery. In the same way, because God the Lord now intended to rescue His people from their hellish slavery by the death of Christ, there was darkness over the entire land. The darkness also signified that Christ - the Sun of Righteousness and Light of the world - intended to walk into the dark valley of death so that His eyes might be darkened in death. The fact that the sun became so frighteningly darkened also indicates that God looked with wrath upon His Son, since the sins of the entire world were laid upon Him.

The darkened sun shows that the agony and darkness of hell fell upon the Lord Christ for the sake of our sins so that we might come to eternal light. We had altogether deserved to be cast into eternal darkness. But Christ stepped into our place, allowing darkness and the agony of hell to come over Him so we might be freed from it.

After this, Christ shouts out loudly: "Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit," the final word of Christ from the cross. But death didn't overcome Christ in the same way that it overcomes us. Death, as it were, knew in advance that Christ was going to devour it and conquer it. That's why Death did not want to step up too close. Christ shouted out loudly, and His clear voice causes Death to tremble. By giving up His spirit, Christ proved what He said in John 10: **I have the power to give up My life; nobody takes it from Me, unless I Myself give it up.** But with the rest of us, our souls must leave the shelter of the body at death, whether they do so willingly or not. But with Christ it's different. He's not dying out of necessity or force. Instead He dies willingly.

Then the curtain in the temple was torn into two pieces, from the top to the bottom. This curtain was a beautiful, thick, tapestry of blue linen, scarlet and rose red and twisted white linen, artistically crafted. It was hung in the Temple, to separate the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place, the inner place where stood the Ark of the Covenant and the Throne of Grace, where the high priest alone went in only once a year to sprinkle blood for the people. This curtain tore apart after the death of Christ to announce that Christ, our only High Priest, has now entered into the Most Holy Place and established an eternal redemption by the sprinkling of His own blood. By Christ's blood and death we are given access to the Throne of Grace. For this ripping apart of the curtain declares that the ceremonies of the Old Testament have now reached their end. These outward ceremonies all pointed to Christ. So, through the death of Christ the external, figurative worship and regulations of the Old Testament had now been abolished. ... For the New Testament of God's eternal grace has come to us, through the blood and death of Christ.

*We pray. O Lord Jesus Christ, God's Son and the Lord of all creation, hide us in Your wounds. Amen.*

The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. **Amen.**

\* Bernard of Clairvaux, O.Cist (Latin: Bernardus Claraevallensis; 1090 – 20 August 1153) was a French abbot and a major leader in the reform of Benedictinemonasticism that caused the formation of the Cistercian order. \*\* Paulus Orosius (/ˈpɔːləs əˈrouzəs/; born c. 375, died after 418 AD) — less often Paul Orosius in English — was a Gallaecian Chalcedonian priest, historian and theologian, a student of Augustine of Hippo. \*\*\*Saint Dionysius the Areopagite (/ˌdaɪəˈnɪsiəs/; Greek: Διονύσιος ὁ Ἀρεοπαγίτης) was a judge at the court Areopagus in Athens who lived in the first century. As related in the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 17:34), he was converted to Christianity by the preaching of Paul the Apostle during the Areopagus sermon.  
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Palm Sunday the Passion of Christ 2019

P People loved by God, let us come before our Father's throne of grace with confidence through our Lord Jesus and, in the power of His Spirit, ask His mercy for all in need.

*Brief Silence*

P For the holy Church of God throughout the world, that God the almighty Father gather and guide it so that we may worship Him in peace and tranquillity, Lord in Your mercy,

**C Hear our prayer.**

P For, this and all congregations of the AELC and ULMA. For our pastors and their families and church workers, that they may be faithful and their service fruitful, and teach us that we do not live by bread alone but by every word that comes from the mouth of God, Lord in Your mercy,

**C Hear our prayer.**

P For those who do not believe in Christ, that the light of the Holy Spirit may show them the way to salvation, Lord in Your mercy,

**C Hear our prayer.**

P Your Word commands us to pray for all those in authority so we commend all who have been entrusted with authority in our land, For those who make, administer and judge our laws; for the causes of peace and justice, here and throughout the world; for those in the armed forces who protect and defend us against our enemies; for laws that are good and just and for judges who are wise and faithful, for those who care for the sick and injured, especially doctors, nurses, technicians, and all medical workers, the police the SES and fire brigades, that they carry out their calling with joy and dedication as they seek to preserve life and care for all, protect them from evil and guide them in paths that are pleasing to You. Lord in Your mercy,

**C Hear our prayer**

P For our families of our Church, that the Word of God may guide and govern the lives of our children, For hearts and minds eager to give back to our bountiful God, that by the working of the Holy Spirit we thankfully and willingly return to Him the firstfruits of all He gives to us, that He would use those offerings to extend His kingdom of grace, Lord in Your mercy,

**C Hear our prayer.**

P Merciful Lord, You know the sufferings of Your people and the needs of all who cry to You. Grant to us what is good and needful for us, [ especially remembering, ] and lead us to trust in Your mercy so that we may neither despair in our need nor grow weary of the burdens of this mortal life. Hear us on behalf of all whom we name before You in our hearts; Lord in Your mercy,

**C hear our prayer.**

P Gracious Lord, You offer grace to Your people in Your holy body and precious blood in the Sacrament of Holy Communion. Assure us of our salvation through this wonderful gift, that we would faithfully receive the blood and body of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. Lord, in Your mercy,

**C hear our prayer.**

P Join our prayers and praises with those of Your faithful people of every time and every place and unite them in the ceaseless petitions of our great High Priest until He comes again in power and great glory as victorious Lord of all. Through Him, with Him and in Him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all glory and honour is Yours, almighty Father, Son and Holy Spirit., forever and ever!

**C Amen.**