

The Problem of Sin

Good Friday – 4/2/21 – Mt. Calvary Luth.
Text: Psalm 51:1–7

v.1, [David's cries out,] **“Have mercy on me, O God, according to Your steadfast love; according to Your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions.”**

Introduction

✘ Tonight we move our attention to the second, great holy day in our Lord's Passion – what we have come to know as Good Friday. It is on this day that Jesus dealt head on with the situation; with biggest problem facing every man, woman and child ever to live on this earth, from the moment of their birth – *The Problem of Sin*.

→ We call this day “holy” because there is no other day in all of history like it. Just as the term “holy” means to be set apart and different from the norm, so this day; the day on which an innocent man, our Savior was nailed to a cross to pay for the sins of the entire world, is a day completely apart from any, and every other day.

I. The fault of sin is man's

✘ In Psalm 51 King David confesses in verse five that He “was brought forth in iniquity”; that “in sin did” his mother conceive him. This is one of the many proof texts in Scripture for what we call the doctrine of original sin.

→ All Lutheran congregations and pastors confess the same thing regarding original sin and the cause of sin. In the Augsburg Confession, one of our original confessional statements from the time of Luther, we confess, “It is taught among us that since the fall of Adam, all human beings who are born in the natural way are conceived and born in sin. This means that from birth they are full of evil lust and inclination and cannot by nature possess true fear of God and true faith in God” (AC, art. II).

→ This sin damns and brings eternal death upon all people who are not born anew through Baptism and the Holy Spirit. As for the cause of sin, although God created all things in perfection, He is not the cause of sin. No, that is located in the will of all those who have wickedly rebelled against God and His perfect design and intent; that's you...and that's me.

✘ So what does this mean for us then? What is the bottom line? Our necks, my friends, are in the noose. The fault for sin is ours, not God's. The ancient evening liturgy called *Compline* has a line in the confession of sins portion that says it very well. It goes like this, “I confess to God Almighty...that I have sinned in thought, word, and deed by my fault, by my own fault, by my own most grievous fault” (*LSB*, pg. 254).

→ Yes, that is the ugly truth that cannot be ignored on this holy night. It applies directly to every human being ever on earth, save one. If we are willing to be fully exposed as we must, this confession makes us all squirm.

✘ To make this confession is to go back to the Garden of Eden; to recall with horror the unending litany of sins in Scripture. Cain's murder of his blood brother. Miriam's disobedience. David's adultery with Bathsheba. Bathsheba's adultery with David. Absalom's rebellion against his father. Peter's denial of Christ. Judas's betrayal of Jesus. Thomas's unbelief of his Lord's resurrection.

→ But here's the deal - my own personal litany is just as horrible, and so is yours. I bet if we were to go over to that cross where we nailed our most troublesome sins on Ash Wednesday, we would find a similar listing of sin to this: Greed, Hate, Selfishness, Lying, Cowardice, Lust, Perversion, Gossip, Wanting to get even, Playing the hypocrite, Holding to false teaching, and more. Where does all of this begin? Original sin; the cause of sin; from inside of me!

→ But ... I don't really want to know my transgressions. Yet as David confessed, "...my sin is ever before me" (v.3). Especially on this day when I see how much damage my sin really causes. My sin...your sin is the reason that the sinless Son of God is hanging on a cross; the reason for the nails, the cries and the agony.

- ✘ And that is why today is Good Friday. In Jesus; in that one Man's sacrifice; in His death, the price for all sin is being exacted. Yes, 1 Timothy 2:5 says, "There is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus". That one Mediator is bridging the chasm that sin creates between God and man.

II. The cure for sin is God's

- ✘ The second stanza of the Sermon Hymn that we just sang gives a beautiful description of God judging our sin in Jesus:

What Thou, my Lord, hast suffered
Was all for sinners' gain;
Mine, mine was the transgression,
But Thine the deadly pain.
Lo, here I fall, my Savior!
'Tis I deserve Thy place;
Look on me with Thy favor,
And grant to me Thy grace. (*LSB* 449:2)

→ That is just what Scripture tells us. Man is the transgressor, but Jesus suffers for it. From early on in the Christian Church this act of Christ has had a label: *Christ's substitutionary atonement*.

- ✘ You see, God demands perfection. But man can't give it. And so God demands blood for imperfection. But which man could ever supply it? God chooses. God sends a man – His only Son. Scripture calls this "*justification*".

→ Again, in the Augsburg Confession we hear our historical confession: "Furthermore, it is taught that we cannot obtain forgiveness of sin and righteousness before God through our merit, work, or satisfactions, but that we receive forgiveness of sin and become righteous before God out of grace for Christ's sake through faith when we believe that Christ has suffered for us and that for His sake our sin is forgiven and righteousness and eternal life are given to us" (AC IV).

→ There it is: God's work, through His Son, declares the sinner righteous. And what are the results? We are free from sin; justified (i.e. proclaimed innocent by God because of Jesus). It's a beautiful word and a beautiful doctrine because it comes in the work of our Beautiful Savior.

- ✘ Even before Jesus came the Old Testament preacher Isaiah preached of this judgment of God upon man's sins. He witnessed to it in Isaiah 53:5, "He was wounded for our transgressions; He was crushed for our iniquities; upon Him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with His stripes we are healed".

→ Yes, Isaiah preached the Gospel. He preached of Christ's vicarious satisfaction; the substitutionary atonement of the Suffering Servant for the peace and healing of sinful man.

Isaiah preached the forgiveness of sins won by Jesus on this holy day some 2000 years before the Word of God was discovered by Martin Luther.

✘ In fact, I would be so bold as to say that perhaps no pre-Jesus preacher preached the Gospel and justification as beautifully as Isaiah. And perhaps no post-Jesus preacher preached it as beautifully as St. Paul. Paul knew that God was reconciling Himself to us through Christ hanging on the cross.

→ We heard about it in our Epistle Reading earlier where Paul confessed that in Christ God was not counting mankind's trespasses against them. He taught in 2 Corinthians 5:21 that "for our sake [God] made [Jesus] to be sin who knew no sin, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God". Paul knew man and he knew God and he knew that the problem of sin could only be dealt with entirely by God.

✘ What a wonderful Gospel we preach, even on this dark and woeful night. Jesus alone brings health to the sick; power to the weak; and life to the dead.

→ The noose of the Law on your neck that took life from you has been released. Instead another Man hangs; another Man takes your punishment.

→ If you are in Christ, you have new life; you are dead to sin and alive to receive good things from your heavenly Father. Why? because of the very things that David knows of and cries for in Psalm 51, God's grace, mercy, forgiveness, life and salvation.

Conclusion

✘ Tonight the Holy Spirit has gathered us together to remember the events of the death of Jesus, our Savior. These events are the result of the wickedness of mankind; men and women like us; sinners of every color, age, race, and political description; each one under his/her own devices and influenced by the cunning tricks of the evil one.

→ None are excluded: men and women, walking children, tiny babies – sinners all, but sinners for whom Jesus suffered and died this night; sinners whom God has cured for eternity in His Son, the Christ.

→ He, and He alone, has washed you in His blood so that you are now "whiter than snow" (v.7) Amen.