

God's Love – Good Friday - March 29th 2013.

But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:8)

Beloved in the Lord,

God is LOVE. God demonstrated His love for us on Good Friday. Our text today bears this out: ***“But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”*** This is love in its purest form – to lay down your life for someone else. Jesus said: ***“Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends.”*** (Jn.15:13)

Jesus laid down His life for us. He died for you and for me because He loves us. He did not want us to spend eternity lost in hell, but He desired to have us with Him in The Father's house. We hear these words at every funeral:

“Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. ² In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. ³ If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also. ⁴ And you know the way where I am going.” ⁵ Thomas *said to Him, “Lord, we do not know where You are going, how do we know the way?” ⁶ Jesus *said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.” (John 14:1-6)

Clearly Jesus states that His desire is for us to spend eternity with Him, in The Father's House, in Heaven. “That where I am, you may be also.” To make this possible Jesus had to die a substitutionary death on the cross. Without His sacrifice, without His shed blood, the road to the Father's house would be inaccessible to us. Nothing unholy can stand in the presence of a Holy God. Nothing sinful can come into God's presence and we are all sinful. We are born in the state of sin and we have all committed sin; that is broken God's commandments.

We do not have to go further than the first commandment to see that we are guilty under God's law. The first commandment says: ***“You shall have no other god's before me.”*** Every time that God has not been number one priority in our lives we have broken this commandment. Every time something or someone has been more important than God, we have transgressed this commandment. Every time we have withheld anything from God we have broken this law. If you have ever told a lie, if you have ever wanted something that is not yours, if you have ever looked lustfully at another person, you have broken God's commandments. If you have ever made a false claim on your tax return, or not declared some income you have broken God's law. If you have ever participated in gossip you are guilty. If you have ever used God's name in vain you are guilty. I could continue with example after example, but I am sure that you get the picture.

Paul writes in unmistakable fashion in Romans 3:23: ***“for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”*** That little word all means exactly what it says – ALL. That includes you and me. We are all guilty in God’s eyes and according to His law. We are all deserving of eternal punishment – death. It is important that we understand this and then that we hear the Good News:

“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him.” John 3:16-17

Praise God. This is Good News indeed! God so loved us that He gave us Jesus. Jesus bore our punishment. He died in our stead, in our place. He died our death that we may live. He experienced hell that we would not have too. He died that we could live. He did it because He loves us so very much. His blood shed on the cross, paid our sin debt in full. It satisfied the demands of God’s law, that said that without the shedding of blood there can be no forgiveness of sin. It satisfied God’s justice system that said that the wages of sin is death.

Because Jesus was completely innocent, He was completely sinless, He was pure and Holy, His blood was acceptable to a Holy God.

On Good Friday the moment Jesus died, the heavy veil in the Temple that covered the Holy of Holies was torn from top to bottom signifying that God had accepted Jesus blood as full payment for sin. This rending of the veil was God’s work showing that all who would desire to come to Him, could because of Jesus blood.

We read in Hebrews 4:14-16

“Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. ¹⁵ For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. ¹⁶ Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”

Since Jesus has paid the price, we can now come to God with confidence knowing that He will accept us. We can come to Him to receive mercy and find grace in a time of need. Now is the time. Please understand that it is because of Jesus sacrifice, His blood that we can come to Almighty God and receive forgiveness for all our sin. We are living in the period or time of Grace. This time of Grace will end one day, and then it will be too late forever. The person that has not come to Jesus to have his or her sins washed away in His blood, will find themselves standing before the White Throne Judgement. This will lead to an eternity separated from God, in utter despair and loneliness, and darkness, in hell. This is why Paul pleads so earnestly:

Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.²¹ He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” 2 Cor.5:20-21)

“We beg you, be reconciled to Christ.” The question I ask you on this Good Friday is: have you been reconciled to Christ? Have your sins been washed away in the blood of Jesus? Is your name recorded in The Lamb’s Book of Life? Have you bowed your knee before Almighty God and prayed “God be merciful to me a sinner?”

If you haven’t, why not? What are you thinking? Have you bought into the lie of Satan that all will be well and a loving God will not send you to hell? Are you thinking “I’m ok, I’m a good person, I live a good life and do nothing that bad.” Please understand that that is not the issue.

Jesus said: ***“I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.” John 14:6*** No one means no-one! There is only one way to The Father and that way is JESUS. There is salvation in no other. We read in Acts 4:12 ***“And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved.”***

Please, please understand what these words mean. There is salvation in no other. Jesus and Jesus alone saves. But also please understand that everyone who comes to Him in faith receives forgiveness. Jesus does not turn anyone away. He said : ***All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out.” Jn 6:37***

Come to Him today and receive His gift of love. Do not put it off until tomorrow., because tomorrow may never come. Don’t think that you have to understand it all before you come, just come as you are. Do not be afraid. God will not reprimand you, He will receive you into His loving arms, He will accept you into His family as a precious and much loved child.

Listen again to Jesus words: ***“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.¹⁷ For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him.¹⁸ He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.” (John 3:16-18)***

God is love and He does not send anyone to hell. Those who end up there will do so by their own refusal to accept God’s way. Do not be one of them. Come to Him today and receive His forgiveness. He loves you and is waiting.

Amen. Pastor Colvin S. MacPherson Latvian Evangelical Lutheran Church in Sydney.

All Bible quotations taken from New American Standard Bible.