

“Paid in Blood”

John 19:17-30

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

As we gather together on this dark and solemn evening, in remembrance of the cross of grief and shame on which our Lord Jesus was hanged, you look upon that cursed tree and know that should be you. Nails and spear piercing the perfect and innocent flesh of the Son of God must be an injustice. It cannot be that He should die when He has done nothing to deserve death, and yet He hangs, arms outstretched, beaten, and bloodied with thorns upon His head. The Lamb of God, pure and holy, dies in thirst and utter anguish as He proclaims with His dying breath, “It is finished.” It is a hard thing for any Christian to hear that their Savior was treated in such a way, even to the point of His death. No pomp, seemingly no glory, and nothing but darkness, blood, and languishing upon the hill of Calvary. How could this possibly be the covenant that He has made with us and sealed in His blood?

And yet, we cannot look away, or rather we ought not look away. Our sinful flesh tries with all its might to take our eyes away from the body of Christ as it languishes there upon the cross. The evil one in his false sense of victory wants the cross to be nothing more than a couple pieces of wood that held a dying criminal. But he has no power with which to change what has happened there. The world has no power to change what has happened there. Satan convinces people all over the world that it’s offensive to see the body of Jesus upon the cross. Churches all over the world display empty crosses because they “believe in a risen Savior, not a crucified one.” The insanity of that statement knows no bounds. And that is the devil at work to make the world and your sinful flesh be convinced that Jesus’ death was a nominal thing, simply a passing event that happened along the way of His perfect life.

But no matter how hard it may try, and no matter how much the devil schemes and deceives, the sinful flesh has no ability to undo what Jesus suffered in your place. In the darkness of the ninth hour, the Lord and Savior of mankind gave up His spirit, exchanging His life for yours so that sin would no longer have any power over you. By His blood shed upon the cross, you have been purchased back from the power of sin, death, and the devil. Jesus did indeed hang upon that cross of His shame, so that He would be glorified by the Father as the acceptable sacrifice for the sins of mankind. That payment, His vicarious death, is one that God requires, and it requires perfection and blood in order to satisfy His righteous demands. Jesus is that perfection, and your ransom has been paid in blood—the holy, innocent blood of God’s only begotten Son.

Rev. Josh A. Killion
Trinity Lutheran Church - Austin, Texas
Good Friday (4/3/2026); John 19:17-30

We sang just a moment ago: My burden in Thy Passion/Lord, Thou hast borne for me/For it was my transgression/Which brought this woe on Thee./I cast me down before Thee/Wrath were my rightful lot;/Have mercy, I implore Thee;/Redeemer, spurn me not! What a beautiful confession of the truth of what is being done on Golgotha, and a tremendous confession of sins to boot. It is indeed your transgressions which have brought the woe, pain, and suffering upon Jesus. The sins of the whole world bore down upon Him as the Lamb of salvation shouldered their weight in humility. The entirety of God's wrath was heaped on His Son, though it was not His rightful lot. That wrath belonged to you. It belonged to every sinner that is descended from Adam, which means all mankind. No exceptions, no dodging, and no being good enough to avoid it.

Everyone who bears the sinful flesh has contributed to the death of Jesus by sinning grievously and often. No one can get away from that. The sinful nature, that Old Adam that is within every man, woman, and child on this earth is cunning and deceitful. Used by the evil one, he seeks your demise, and is proud of the part he has played in the death of your Savior. He pokes and prods you to keep on sinning, believing that somehow he can keep Jesus there on the cross, and the redemption He has gone there to win will be for naught. He is indeed deceitful and crafty, but that old man is not the brightest bulb in the box. There is one that is always brighter, and that is the new man that lives within you by virtue of your baptism into Christ's death.

That new man is able to look upon the cross where the scourged and bloody body of your Lord hangs and implore His mercy. Your old Adam points at it and wants you to see your sin that put him there and believe that there is no hope for you. But you pray to your Redeemer, "Spurn me not!" In your confession of sins, you proclaim that you are a poor, miserable sinner, beaten down by your sinful nature to the point of utter helplessness. So, in the face of despair, which the devil seeks to keep you in, you ask the mighty Redeemer to have mercy upon you, to forgive and renew you by the blood He sheds as the payment for those sins. What joy there is in the face of such sorrow!

It is more likely that you will look to the cross and see the shadow of death and the sorrow of your Savior dying there than the joy of its purpose. The more likely thing is to do as the disciples did (save for John) and avoid the cross altogether, believing that as He dies all has been lost. Being reminded of the Lord's Passion should not cause you to hide in fear, but to mourn knowing that all has been accomplished. You mourn the death of Christ as one who has been washed in His blood, as one who has been forgiven for His sake alone. You mourn as one who can look beyond His death and know that Easter is coming, when He will rise from the grave. He does not go down to Sheol to stay. He is buried in death so that He might defeat the grave.

Sin, death, and the devil are mighty foes, but the victory over them is accomplished by Jesus at the cross. He proclaims, “It is accomplished (τετέλεσται),” with His dying breath to show that nothing is left to be done. Atonement has been made for all sin, and thus death can no longer claim those who have been called by the Lord, and Satan’s ability to use sin as a weapon is no more. All has been finished. All prophecy fulfilled, all promises kept. The ransom has been paid in blood, so that your blood would not be demanded of you. There is nothing left for you to do, no matter what any false teacher may try to convince you to the contrary. Jesus’ work of salvation at Calvary is enough.

Do not give in to the works-righteousness mentality. It’s easy to fall into because your sinful flesh wants the credit that it has done nothing to deserve. It wants the credit that only belongs to Christ. Only Jesus paid the price for sin, and only He was the perfect Lamb of sacrifice for all mankind. No one has the capability to free themselves from the bondage of sin. No one has the capability to pay the price that your righteous Father in heaven demands. Without your Savior’s intercession at the cross, there is no hope. There is only death, sadness, mourning, horror, abuse, pain, and suffering for those who choose to live a life outside of Christ. They cannot see the truth of what happens at the cross, nor do they want to see it.

Yet, there is horror, sadness, and mourning this day as you take to heart the scourging, beating, degradation, and death of your beloved Savior, Jesus Christ. But in the sight of such anguish, you look in faith to the truth of what all of that means for you. It means that you no longer have to face death in fear. You no longer have to fear God’s wrath for your sin. Christ took all of God’s wrath for you upon the cross, and every pain He felt that should have been yours was willingly taken for the benefit of your salvation. There is no greater love that you can know other than what the Lord Jesus has endured for your redemption. Jesus said as much in John 15:13 as He ate with His disciples in the upper room, “Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down His life for His friends.”

The “someone” that Jesus spoke of was Himself. You have His love because of His sacrifice, only because of His willingness to take the punishment of sin upon Himself instead of it being upon your own head. The burden of guilt is His, and the sentence has been carried out. By His vicarious atonement, His bloody death upon that cursed tree, you have been given the faith necessary to confess what He has done for you.

He has redeemed me, a lost and condemned creature, purchased and won me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil. He did this not with gold or

silver, but with His holy, precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death, so that I may be His own, live under Him in His kingdom, and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness...(Luther's Small Catechism, The Creed, The Second Article).\

Your redemption is paid in blood, the blood of the Lamb who was slain and now lives and reigns to all eternity. His death has secured your salvation, but that is not the end. He will lie in the tomb, descend into hell and declare victory over the devil, and then rise again victorious on the third day. Let not your mourning and sadness overtake you. Look with restrained joy to the promise of your resurrection, which is assured by the resurrection of your Lord Jesus Christ on Easter morning. "It is finished," Jesus has said, and there is no greater comfort than to know that all has been accomplished for you by His blood and His victory over death and the evil one. Ephesians 2:13, "But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ." Amen.