

19 April 2019  
Holy and Good Friday

St. Athanasius Lutheran Church  
Vienna, VA

Jesu Juva

Holy and Good Friday Meditations  
Isaiah 52:13-53:12; Hebrews 4:14-16; 5:7-9; John 18-19

**OT and Epistle Meditation:**

High priests passed through the curtains and into the holy of holies, into the presence of God, in the Tabernacle and the Temple.

Jesus passed through the heavens, into the presence of His Father. Our great High Priest who offered Himself as the sacrifice for the sin of the world.

He knows the onslaught of temptation, yet He did not succumb to it.

He prayed as we do, to Him who was able to save Him from death, but *was* He heard? He died, after all. But He was heard, for He was saved - not from death, but by rising from the dead. And so He became the source of eternal salvation, saving us from death, too. All who obey Him. All who repent and believe the Gospel. For that is what He preached, from beginning to end. Salvation by grace through faith alone. Through Him alone. Our suffering servant.

The one Isaiah described.

The one who bore our sin in His body.

The one marred beyond human semblance.

The majestic one, yet with no form or majesty when you looked at Him.

The one despised and rejected by men.

The one bore our griefs and sorrows.

The one stricken, smitten, and afflicted for us.

The one wounded for our transgressions and crushed for our iniquities.

The perfect lamb led to slaughter.

All this, for you.

That you may be His own.

We could ask why. Maybe we should. But we'll never understand the answer, the love. We can only see it, hear of it, and marvel at it. And we do. Tonight. That's what this night is all about. Not mourning, not pity, not sorrow. But to marvel at the love of God, shown to us this night. That a few moments in darkness tonight yield to an eternity in light. With the one who loves you more than we could ever imagine. The one who loves you like this.

### **Meditation #1** (John 18:1-11):

Gardens are supposed to be places of rest and peace, of calmness and serenity. Into just such a garden satan injected sin and evil, unrest and rebellion, and so it has been ever since. And so the Garden of Gethsemane. The betrayer comes in this place of peace and prayer with his cohort of soldiers and officers.

Jesus, though, will not play their game. He could. He showed them that He could, causing them all to fall to the ground with simply His Word. For that is His weapon, and a most powerful one at that. But then He returns to peace. For that is why He came. A world created peaceful but then plunged into not peace will become peaceful again. Through Him.

So put your sword away Peter, He says. Wrong weapon. Cutting off ears will do not good, just as neither would cutting off hands and feet and gouging out eyes do no good in eliminating the sin that begins in our hearts and minds. Only the Word of God can do this. And He will. He goes now, just as it is written of Him.

Yet how often do we choose the wrong weapon, like Peter? Instead of the Gospel, instead of forgiveness, we strike with our own swords. No. Put your sword away. Listen to the Word. Hear Him die, that we may live. In peace again.

### **Meditation #2** (John 18:12-27):

Jesus is bound. Or is it Peter? Jesus doesn't act as one who is bound, but free. Peter, though, is bound. In fear, in sin, in death. Even to the point of doing what he thought he would never do: deny his Lord. Three times.

You know how it is. So did the apostle Paul who said: *The good that I would do I do not do; but the evil I do not want to do, that I do* (Romans 7). Peter didn't want to deny Jesus. It must have seemed like an out of body experience to him, like hearing someone else say those words that were coming out of *his* mouth. Those words he vowed he would never say.

But there is no contradiction with Jesus, no inner turmoil, no confusion. What He speaks in private He speaks in public. And His words and deeds agree. For Jesus, while divine and human, is not saint and sinner like us, but the sinless Son of God. And He will do as Caiaphas so unknowingly prophesied: ***He will die for the people.*** He will lay down His life for you. And when the day of the judgment of all flesh comes, announced not by the crow of a rooster but the blast of a trumpet, Jesus will not deny knowing you. But confess: I am one of them, and he, she, is with me.

### **Meditation #3** (John 18:28-40):

**What is truth?** That is what Pilate asked. But why did he ask it? Did he think the truth unknowable? Was he sneering at the thought of there being this thing called truth? Or did he think it didn't matter? **What is truth?** What does truth matter? What difference does it make? What is that to me? Pilate would do what was expedient, what was necessary.

It is the question many are asking in our day and age. What difference does the truth make? What is that to me? The truth is often inconvenient and messy. The truth is sometimes hard to hear. So better to do what is expedient, what is necessary, whatever I think is good and best and right for me.

But Jesus said that He came *to bear witness to the truth*. It matters to Him. For the truth is the only thing that saves. The truth of our sin, the truth of our Saviour. What is expedient and necessary may help for a bit, but only the truth can help for eternity. Pilate had blinders on - he was thinking only of the here and now and this problem before him. As we often do. But Jesus was thinking of much more than that. This moment in time would serve an eternal purpose, far more important. A kingdom not of this world.

Lord Jesus, help us see that kingdom, not our own. And lead us there, in truth.

### **Meditation #4** (John 19:1-16a):

**Behold the man!** Behold what man has become. How far has man fallen. Created to have dominion over creation and care for it. Created to love and be in fellowship with God. Now, treating each other like this. Flogging. Mocking. A crown of thorns. Behold the man, and men behaving like animals.

**Behold your King!** That's what Pilate said next. **We have no king but Caesar**, the chief priests answered. Just as Old Testament Israel rejected God as their king in favor of having an earthly king, so again. Sad. Sad then, and sad now.

Normally, Pilate would have been happy to hear such allegiance to Caesar. But not now, not here, not like this. It didn't make sense. The Jews had always resisted Caesar and his rule, not exalted him. So now he was out of options. He had tried. Jesus was not guilty. He said it three times. He meant it. He knew it. But what is truth, right? That's just not always how the world works. Sometimes, well, duty calls. **So he delivered him over to them to be crucified**. The guilt was theirs, not his. At least, that what he wanted to believe . . .

**Meditation #5** (John 19:16b-24):

Each of the soldiers got a piece of Jesus, a piece of His clothing, to take Him with them; a souvenir. Or was it payment for services rendered? Well, it was according to Scripture and the prophets, so it had to be so.

Jesus has garments for us, too. But not of linen or flax, seamless or not. He clothes us with His righteousness. The righteousness He earned here, on the cross, for us. That we might never be naked, never without His righteousness before God, but clothed in His purity. And this clothing He has for the whole world. It is not divided up or cast lots for - a little Jesus here, a little Jesus there. But all of Jesus for all of us.

And so we take Him home with us, having received Him here in His Word. And in the end, He will take us home with Him, too. To live with Him forever.

**Meditation #6** (John 19:25-30):

***It is finished.***

The pain is finished.

The suffering and agony is finished.

The bleeding is finished.

The mocking and taunting is finished.

The forsakenness is finished.

The humiliation is finished.

The darkness is finished.

The atoning for the sin of the world is finished.

The breathing is finished.

The dying is finished.

The life is finished.

The redemption is finished.

The old testament is finished.

***It is finished.***

And it is beginning.

The rest is beginning.

The new testament is beginning.

The resurrection is beginning.

The forgiveness is beginning.

The restoration is beginning.

The exaltation is beginning.

The joy is beginning.

The light is beginning.

The victory is beginning.

The giving is beginning.

The kingdom is beginning.  
The feasting is beginning.  
The life that will not end is beginning.  
It is beginning.

For He bowed His head and gave up His spirit. He handed over the Spirit. To us, the Church, His Bride. So for us, too, it is finished. The old life, the old man. And it is beginning. The new life, the new man. For in Christ, you are a new creation.

**Meditation #7** (John 19:31-42):

It was the day of preparation for the Sabbath, for the Passover. But this was also the day God had been preparing for since the beginning. The day all the types and prophecies had pointed to. When the shepherd would die for the sheep. When God would die to save His creation. When we would see the love of God in all its height and width and length and breadth. A love bigger than we could ever imagine.

So the body of Jesus is laid in a tomb. But not by any of the twelve, as we might expect; one last, loving act. No, it is a man named Joseph instead. And Nicodemus. Perhaps it is better that none of the twelve did it - cannot now accuse them of faking the resurrection.

But who is Joseph? We don't know much about him. But Nicodemus we know, we've met before. And he seems like a new man. He came to Jesus at night the first time, as John said. Now, he is different; bold. Perhaps the words of Jesus came true for him and he was born again, born from above. Perhaps he looked at the cross as his ancestors had looked at the bronze snake on the pole, and believed. And believing received life.

Would we have been so bold? Hard to think so. We fail and fall at so much less. But we, too, look at Jesus on the cross and believe. Believe Him the Son of God. Believe Him the promised Messiah. Believe Him our substitute. And that is enough. With such faith the poison of the serpent's bite is thus healed and we do not die. Through the water and the blood that flowed, too, are we given life. We are washed. We eat and drink. And we are new men and women. Born from above. Born from the one who came from above, but descended to us, that we who have descended into sin, might rise with Him.

And you have. That's what this night is all about. The dying of the Life, and the living of the dead.

In the Name of the Father, and of the (+) Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.