

**Jesus said, “For where two or three are gathered in my name,
there am I among them.” – Matthew 18:20**

**Holy Trinity Lutheran Church (LCMC)
Springfield, GA
Home Worship Bulletin
May 17, 2020 – the 6th Sunday of Easter**

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

The sign of the cross may be made by all in remembrance of their Baptism.

In the name of the Father, and of the + Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen**

Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid: Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you and worthily magnify your holy name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. But if we confess our sins, God who is faithful and just will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Silence for reflection and self-examination.

Most merciful God, **we confess that we are in bondage to sin and cannot free ourselves. We have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. For the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy on us. Forgive us, renew us, and lead us, so that we may delight in your will and walk in your ways, to the glory of your holy name. Amen**

Almighty God, in his mercy, has given his Son to die for us and, for his sake, forgives us all our sins. As a called and ordained minister of the Church of Christ, and by his authority, I therefore declare to you the entire forgiveness of all our sins, in the name of the Father, and of the + Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen**

GREETING

Alleluia! Christ is risen. **Christ is risen indeed. Alleluia!**

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. **And also with you.**

SALUTATION

The Lord be with you. **And also with you.**

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Let us pray. **O God, from whom all good things come: Lead us by the inspiration of your Spirit to think those things which are right, and by your goodness help us to do them; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen**

+LITURGY OF THE WORD+

FIRST READING

Acts 17:16-31

¹⁶ Now while Paul was waiting for them at Athens, his spirit was provoked within him as he saw that the city was full of idols. ¹⁷ So he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and the devout persons, and in the marketplace every day with those who happened to be there. ¹⁸ Some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers also conversed with him. And some said, “What does this babbler wish to say?” Others said, “He seems to be a preacher of foreign divinities”—because he was preaching Jesus and the resurrection. ¹⁹ And they took him and brought him to the Areopagus, saying, “May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting? ²⁰ For you bring some strange things to our ears. We wish to know therefore what these things mean.” ²¹ Now all the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there would spend their time in nothing except telling or hearing something new. ²² So Paul, standing in the midst of the Areopagus, said: “Men of Athens, I perceive that in every way you are very religious. ²³ For as I passed along and observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription: ‘To the unknown god.’ What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. ²⁴ The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, ²⁵ nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything. ²⁶ And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, ²⁷ that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us, ²⁸ for “‘In him we live and move and have our being’; as even some of your own poets have said, “‘For we are indeed his offspring.’” ²⁹ Being then God’s offspring, we ought not to think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of man. ³⁰ The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, ³¹ because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.”

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

PSALM OF THE DAY

Psalm 66:8-20

⁸ Bless our God, you peoples; make the voice of his praise to be heard,

⁹ **who holds our souls in life, and will not allow our feet to slip.**

¹⁰ For you, O God, have proved us; you have tried us just as silver is tried.

¹¹ **You brought us into the snare; you laid heavy burdens upon our backs.**

¹² You let enemies ride over our heads; we went through fire and water, but you brought us out into a place of refreshment.

¹³ **I will enter your house with burnt-offerings and will pay you my vows,**

¹⁴ which I promised with my lips and spoke with my mouth when I was in trouble.

¹⁵ **I will offer you sacrifices of fat beasts with the smoke of rams; I will give you oxen and goats.**

¹⁶ Come and listen, all you who fear God, and I will tell you what he has done for me.

¹⁷ **I called out to him with my mouth, and his praise was on my tongue.**

¹⁸ If I had found evil in my heart, the Lord would not have heard me;

¹⁹ **but in truth God has heard me; he has attended to the voice of my prayer.**

²⁰ Blessed be God, who has not rejected my prayer, nor withheld his love from me.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit; as it was in the beginning is now, and will be forever. Amen. Alleluia! Alleluia!

SECOND READING

I Peter 3:13-22

¹³ Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good? ¹⁴ But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, ¹⁵ but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, ¹⁶ having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame. ¹⁷ For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil. ¹⁸ For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit, ¹⁹ in which he went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison, ²⁰ because they formerly did not obey, when God's patience waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through water. ²¹ Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, ²² who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him.

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

THE HOLY GOSPEL

John 14:15-21

The Holy Gospel according to St. John. **Glory to You, O Lord.**

¹⁵ "If you love me, you will keep my commandments. ¹⁶ And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, ¹⁷ even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you. ¹⁸ "I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. ¹⁹ Yet a little while and the world will see me no more, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. ²⁰ In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. ²¹ Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him."

The Gospel of the Lord. **Praise to You, O Christ.**

THE SERMON

Dr. James Cavanah

Today, we turn our attention to a single verse in the Second Lesson, I Peter 3:18. There, Peter wrote, "For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit."

Now, it is important to note the use of the word "suffered". In the English Standard Version (ESV), the version that we use in worship at Holy Trinity, Peter's words are translated as "For Christ also suffered once for sins." But this is not the best meaning of the Greek text. The original language is better translated, "For Christ also suffered and died once for sins."

If you were to search a variety of English translations of this passage you would find some say that Christ "suffered once for sins" and others, like that of John Wycliffe (Wycliffe's English Translation) and the New American Standard Bible (NASB), read this way, "Christ died

once for our sins.” The better translation into our English language is this, “Christ suffered and died once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous.”

As you know, the world is filled with the biographies of famous people. The lives of the great and famous fill volumes of books. Normally, famous people are remembered for their accomplishments, the things they did in life. For example: When you think about George Washington, you immediately think of a great general, the first president of the United States, the Father of our Country. When you think about Benjamin Franklin, you remember he discovered electricity. When you think about Thomas Edison, you remember he invented the light bulb. Moving to the other side of the spectrum, when you think of Adolph Hitler, you think of pure evil and the atrocities of the Holocaust. You see great famous people, good and bad, are usually remembered for the things they did in life.

Seldom do biographers spend time writing solely focused on the deaths of their subject. However, when we come to Jesus, this is what we see. About one-third of the four Gospel accounts, is devoted to the death of Jesus.

When Jesus Christ was about thirty-three years old, He died as a common criminal. He died nailed to a cross. Other than the fact that he died as a relatively young man, on the surface there seems to be nothing unusual about that statement. The reason why that seems to be a routine statement is because death comes to everyone. The renowned Irish author George Bernard Shaw compiled a statistical study on the subject of death. In his study he came to this striking and profound conclusion: “One out of one people dies.”

But Jesus was totally different. His conception was different. His birth was different. He was born of a virgin. His life was totally different. He was absolutely sinless. HIS death was totally different from every other human being. Jesus died to save sinners. He died to pay the penalty for our sins. He died as “the propitiation” for our sins (Romans 3:25; Hebrews 2:17; I John 2:3; and I John 4:10). In this respect, Jesus was born not so much to live to free us from sin but to die that we might live free from the power of sin in this life and the penalty of sin in the life to come.

The great preacher, Dr. R. G. Lee, put it like this: “His death prearranged, prophesied, and provided by God, was no afterthought. Jesus was born with the shadow of the cross upon Him. With the shadow of the cross upon His heart, He learned to walk, He learned to talk, and He learned to work. From His earliest moment upon this earth it (His death) was His burden by day, His pallet by night.”

When you think about Neil Armstrong, you know he was the first man to step foot on the moon. When you think of Sir Edmund Hillary, you know he was the first to climb Mount Everest. When you think about Walt Disney, you think about Mickey Mouse. But when you think about Jesus, the most significant thing He ever did was to die.

Two thousand years after Jesus left this earth physically, the universal symbol of the movement that He began, is not a cradle, not a crown, not an empty tomb, but a cross. The cross is God’s flashing neon sign pointing us to eternal life, peace with Him, forgiveness and acceptance, a personal relationship with the Living God is only through the death of Jesus.

A single verse, I Peter 3:18, gives us a simple, short, succinct, and yet practically exhaustive teaching on the importance of the death of Jesus Christ. In this one verse we learn two crucial truths about that death of Christ and His provision for our everlasting life (John 3:16).

First, the death of Jesus Christ was a sacrificial death for our sin – “For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous.” Now I call it a sacrificial death because Hebrews 9:26 tells us, “[Jesus] has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.” You will never understand the death of Jesus until you understand its relationship to sin.

We all know that death is universal. Death is inevitable. Death comes to all of us. None of us will escape its power. Medicine cannot prevent it; it can only postpone it. Everybody, at

one point or another, asks the question: “Is there life after death?” But nobody asks the question: “Is there death after life?” We already know the answer to that question. Death is universal.

The death of Jesus was different from any other death in human history. Consider, if you will, there are actually four ways of dying. First, there is execution (whether lawful or unlawful); secondly there is suicide; thirdly, there is accidental death; and fourthly, what we call “natural causes.” Though these explain the how of death, they do not explain the why of death.

The Holy Scriptures teach us the why of death. God’s Word reveal that people die because of sin. Adam was not born to die. He was born to live. He was morally and spiritually perfect. He was created in the image of God. Death was not a part of the original creation. Death is a curse for sin and disobedience to the command of God. God told Adam and Eve, “If you eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you will surely die” (Genesis 2:16-17). In those verses, for the very first time man heard the word “die.”

Adam and Eve did eat, and they died. From the moment they sinned, their bodies became subject to disease, decay, deterioration, and death. Their spiritual death was immediate, and their physical death was inevitable.

Every human being ever since that time has died with only two exceptions (Elijah). What happened to Adam happens to us. Adam became a sinner. We are born sinners. We call this original sin. Because we are born sinners, we commit actual sins. Paul explained it this way, “Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned” (Romans 5:12).

As someone said, “All the world is a hospital, and every person in it is a terminal patient.” The only human being who voluntarily chose to die, who did not have to die, was the Lord Jesus Christ. That’s why He said in John 10, “I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself” (John 10:17-18). In Matthew 27:50 we are told that Jesus “yielded up His spirit.” He died voluntarily for our sins. He died that we may live.

One day, an Army Chaplain was going around speaking to soldiers who had been wounded in battle. He came to one soldier who was missing his right arm. Trying to comfort the soldier, the Chaplain said, “Private, I see you lost your right arm fighting for your country.” The Private replied, “No, sir, I did not. Chaplain, I didn’t lose my arm—I gave my right arm fighting for my country.” Likewise, Jesus did not lose His life—He gave His life for you and me. The death of Jesus Christ is a sacrificial death for our sin. A death that gives us life. A death He voluntarily gave for you and me.

Secondly, the death of Jesus was a sufficient death for our salvation. Peter wrote, “For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit.”

Jesus died for the express purpose of bringing you and me into a right relationship with God. Plain and simple, the death of Jesus Christ was the Father’s appointed means to give you and me everlasting life. Peter’s words tell what the death of Jesus accomplished but we are not told specifically why we needed to be brought back to God?

We need to take a moment to get waist deep in good theology. The Holy Bible clearly reveals that God is not just a God of love. He is also Holy, Just, and Righteous. He is absolutely perfect! It’s not very popular to say that or to teach it. It’s not very pleasant for us to hear it. The God of love (John 3:16-17) is also the God of wrath (Romans 1:18-32). In fact, the Bible scholar, A. W. Pink, wrote that in the Bible “There are more references to the anger, fury, and wrath of God than there are to His love and tenderness” (A. W. Pink, The Attributes of God, Cited by John Blanchard, Will the Real Jesus Please Stand UP, p. 93).

In Psalm 7:11 the psalmist wrote, “God is a just judge, and God is angry with the wicked every day.” The Psalmist does not mean that God is throwing a temper tantrum in heaven. God’s wrath is His perfectly righteous and proper personal and holy reaction against sin. We need to understand this fact in order to comprehend exactly what happened on the cross. In Matthew

27:46 we read, “And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, ‘Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?’ that is, ‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?’” Paul wrote about the sacrificial and substitutionary death of Christ on the cross for you and me with these words, “For our sake he (God the Father) made him (God the Son, Jesus) to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him (Jesus Christ) we might become the righteousness of God” (II Corinthians 5:21).

Can you remember that day when you first experienced the power of a magnifying glass? If you were like me, you were only a child. Perhaps you went outside and assembled a small pile of leaves. Then you held the magnifying glass at just the right angle and at just the right distance. You watched. You could see the light focused in one area. You began to see a little smoke. Then it happened! The leaves burst into flames. Somehow that glass lens was able to focus the rays of the sun into a single intense ray of heat that burst the leaves into flame.

Now, picture the world. A globe spinning in space. A ball covered with billions of people. Then comes the heat of the righteous judgment and wrath of God. It is bearing down on the human race. Imagine this as a great cosmic magnifying glass. The focus is upon a hill outside of Jerusalem. There are three crosses there with a man nailed to each cross. On the center cross is Jesus and He is the focal point of God’s wrath. When Jesus was crucified, the wrath of God was focused on Him. As Peter wrote, “For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit.” As a result, the holiness, the justice, the righteous demands and the perfection of God’s Law were eternally satisfied. Paul wrote, “There is therefore no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus” (Romans 8:1).

Peter wrote, “The righteous died for the unrighteous.” If you are going to know Jesus, in a dynamic, growing, and personal way, you must know Him in His sacrificial and vicarious death for your salvation. He died as the Lamb of God. He as the Father’s selected substitute in our place. He died a sacrificial death, the righteous for the unrighteous, the just for the unjust, that He might give to you and me the gift of salvation.

I like the way one of my professors put it. The late English theologian Dr. John R. W. Stott wrote, “The concept of substitution may be said, then to lie at the heart of both sin and salvation. For the essence of sin is man substituting himself for God, while the essence of salvation is God substituting Himself for man. Man asserts himself against God, and puts himself where only God deserves to be; God sacrifices Himself for man and puts Himself where only man deserves to be. Man claims prerogatives, which belong to God alone; God accepts penalties which belong to man alone” (John R. W. Stott, The Cross of Christ, p. 160).

History reveals that one day Napoleon was in a conference room with some of his generals. They were discussing the world’s situation, the campaigns, and the conquests of Napoleon. On the wall was a map of the world, The British Isles, the one country Napoleon could not conquer, were painted in red. Napoleon pointed to the British Islands and said, “Had it not been for that red spot, I would have conquered the world.”

Today and every day, Satan points to the blood of Jesus shed on the cross at Calvary and says, “Had it not been for that one red spot, I would have conquered the world.” The death of Jesus Christ on the cross is the symbol of our victory. It is through His substitutionary death that Jesus eternally secured our salvation. **Thanks be to God!**

APOSTLES’ CREED

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth,

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.

He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit,

And born of the virgin Mary.

He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried.

He descended into hell.

**On the third day he rose again.
He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.
Amen!**

THE PRAYERS

Let us pray for the whole people of God in Christ Jesus, and for all people according to their needs.

Almighty God, You so loved the world, that You gave Your One and only Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. Lord in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Lord Jesus Christ, through Your death You conquered Satan, sin, death, and the grave. Through Your death, You have given us life, a hopeful and triumphant life in this world and everlasting life in the ages to come. We praise Your holy name for the gifts of life, forgiveness, acceptance, love, peace, comfort, assurance, and Your presence in the Person of the Holy Spirit. Lord in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

O Holy Spirit, bless the Church of Jesus Christ our Saviour and Lord. Fill us with Your presence and wisdom; give us a love for the church, the Gospel, each other, and the world, Conform us to the image of Christ. May all our thoughts, words, and deeds reflect our new life in Christ. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Blessed God, we pray for Your Holy Catholic (Universal) Church. We pray especially for the LCMC, for our sister churches, pastors and congregations. We pray for our partners in the work of the Gospel: World Mission Prayer League, Mission on the Move, Treutlen House, Family Promise, Habitat for Humanity, God's Mission House, Tartu Theological Academy, St. Paul Lutheran Seminary, and all who faithfully serve You in proclamation of Your One True Gospel. Lord in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Almighty Father, we pray for our nation and all of our elected and appointed officials and who serve in our courts. We ask that You would give them wisdom in all their labours. We pray for our nation's military, especially for Dustin, and for all those deployed. Holy Father watch over and protect our First Responders, our medical workers, and all people engaged in their careers, employments, and callings. Lord in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Gracious God, we pray for those in need of work and for those that have families to support. We pray for those who have lost their jobs and are in need of employment. Watch over them and meet their needs according to Your riches in glory. Lord in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

All Knowing Lord, be with our students and teachers and those who work in our educational institutions. We pray especially for the "Class of 2020" and those graduating from high school, colleges, and universities. Give them diligence, wisdom, understanding, and motivation to look to You for their futures. Lord in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Heavenly Father, we pray for so many in need: for our members Carol, Elizabeth & Fulton, Charles & Loretta, Mary Will, Margaret, Brenda & Carl, Patricia, Doris, Harper, Preston, Angie, Debbie, and Dawn; for our extended family and friends Becky, Darwin, Pr. Robert, Merry, Elizabeth, Bobby, Raymond, Steve, Christopher, Tracy, Alice, Shirley, Jim, Monteen, Charlene; Fran, and Izzy for our homebound Betty Jo, Linda, Eva Belle; and for those serving in the military, Dustin and Marcus. Lord in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Holy and Righteous Father, we pray for You to intervene in our world. Allow us to very soon gather in Your holy house that we may worship and praise Your name together in corporate worship. And send Your Holy Spirit into our world again, as You have done in the past, to bring about a great revival and calling of all people to salvation in Christ our Saviour. Lord in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Gracious God, hear our prayers and receive them for the sake of the crucified and risen one, your Son our Lord, Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

As our Saviour taught us we are bold to pray: **Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed by thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.**

GREETING OF PEACE

The peace of the Lord be with you always. **And also with you.**

BLESSING

The Lord bless us and keep us. The Lord make His face shine on us and be gracious to us. The Lord look upon us with favor + and give us peace. **Amen.**

DISMISSAL

Let us go in peace to serve the Risen Lord. Hallelujah!