

CRUCIFIED FOR YOU

Luke 22-23

Sunday of the Passion (Series C)

April 14, 2019

Trinity Free Lutheran Church, Grand Forks, ND

The gospel lesson for the Sunday of the Passion comes from *The Gospel According to Luke*. It's the full text of chapters 22 and 23. It's a very long reading—almost as long as a regular sermon—so I won't ask you to stand for it. Just sit and listen. The text is on page 746 of the pew Bible, but instead of reading along, it might be better to just listen and picture every part in your mind. Close your eyes if you want. I'll trust that you're not sleeping. Picture the scene in the upper room with Jesus and his disciples sitting on the floor around a low table as Jesus eats with someone he knows already betrayed him. Picture the disciples falling asleep on the wet grass in the garden and the ear of the high priest's servant being sliced off and falling to the ground. Feel the cold of the night and the warmth of the fire as Peter tries to stay warm without being noticed. Sense the hatred as Jesus is mocked, and beaten, and questioned, and questioned some more, and mocked some more. Hear the shrill cry of the crowd as they call for Jesus to be crucified. See the tears and hear the cries of the women mourning. Picture this rocky mount, called "The Skull," where Jesus' hands and feet were strapped to a wooden cross while nails were driven through his wrists and feet. Picture the scene as the soldiers lift the crucifix and set it in place. And then, especially, feel the darkness come over the whole land. Note the solemn agony when the last breath leaves the body of Jesus.

From *The Gospel of Luke*, beginning at chapter 22, we read in Jesus' name.

22 Now the Feast of Unleavened Bread drew near, which is called the Passover. ² And the chief priests and the scribes were seeking how to put him to death, for they feared the people.

³ Then Satan entered into Judas called Iscariot, who was of the number of the twelve. ⁴ He went away and conferred with the chief priests and officers how he might betray him to them. ⁵ And they were glad, and agreed to give him money. ⁶ So he consented and sought an opportunity to betray him to them in the absence of a crowd.

⁷ Then came the day of Unleavened Bread, on which the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed. ⁸ So Jesus sent Peter and John, saying, "**Go and prepare the Passover for us, that we may eat it.**" ⁹ They said to him, "Where will you have us prepare it?" ¹⁰ He said to them, "**Behold, when you have entered the city, a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him into the house that he enters ¹¹ and tell the master of the house, 'The Teacher says to you, Where is the guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?'**" ¹² And he will show you a large upper room furnished; prepare it there."

¹³ And they went and found it just as he had told them, and they prepared the Passover.

¹⁴ And when the hour came, he reclined at table, and the apostles with him. ¹⁵ And he said to them, "**I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. ¹⁶ For I tell you I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.**" ¹⁷ And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he said, "**Take this, and divide it among yourselves. ¹⁸ For I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.**" ¹⁹ And he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, "**This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.**"

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²⁰ And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, “This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood. ²¹ But behold, the hand of him who betrays me is with me on the table. ²² For the Son of Man goes as it has been determined, but woe to that man by whom he is betrayed!” ²³ And they began to question one another, which of them it could be who was going to do this.

²⁴ A dispute also arose among them, as to which of them was to be regarded as the greatest. ²⁵ And he said to them, “The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those in authority over them are called benefactors. ²⁶ But not so with you. Rather, let the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as one who serves. ²⁷ For who is the greater, one who reclines at table or one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at table? But I am among you as the one who serves.

²⁸ “You are those who have stayed with me in my trials, ²⁹ and I assign to you, as my Father assigned to me, a kingdom, ³⁰ that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

³¹ “Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, ³² but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers.” ³³ Peter said to him, “Lord, I am ready to go with you both to prison and to death.” ³⁴ Jesus said, “I tell you, Peter, the rooster will not crow this day, until you deny three times that you know me.”

³⁵ And he said to them, “When I sent you out with no moneybag or knapsack or sandals, did you lack anything?” They said, “Nothing.” ³⁶ He said to them, “But now let the one who has a moneybag take it, and likewise a knapsack. And let the one who has no sword sell his cloak and buy one. ³⁷ For I tell you that this Scripture must be fulfilled in me: ‘And he was numbered with the transgressors.’ For what is written about me has its fulfillment.” ³⁸ And they said, “Look, Lord, here are two swords.” And he said to them, “It is enough.”

³⁹ And he came out and went, as was his custom, to the Mount of Olives, and the disciples followed him. ⁴⁰ And when he came to the place, he said to them, “Pray that you may not enter into temptation.” ⁴¹ And he withdrew from them about a stone’s throw, and knelt down and prayed, ⁴² saying, “Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done.” ⁴³ And there appeared to him an angel from heaven, strengthening him. ⁴⁴ And being in agony he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground. ⁴⁵ And when he rose from prayer, he came to the disciples and found them sleeping for sorrow, ⁴⁶ and he said to them, “Why are you sleeping? Rise and pray that you may not enter into temptation.”

⁴⁷ While he was still speaking, there came a crowd, and the man called Judas, one of the twelve, was leading them. He drew near to Jesus to kiss him, ⁴⁸ but Jesus said to him, “Judas, would you betray the Son of Man with a kiss?” ⁴⁹ And when those who were around him saw what would follow, they said, “Lord, shall we strike with the sword?” ⁵⁰ And one of them struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his right ear. ⁵¹ But Jesus said, “No more of this!” And he touched his ear and healed him. ⁵² Then Jesus said to the chief priests and officers of the temple and elders, who had come out against him, “Have you come out as against a robber, with swords and clubs? ⁵³ When I was with you

day after day in the temple, you did not lay hands on me. But this is your hour, and the power of darkness.”

⁵⁴ Then they seized him and led him away, bringing him into the high priest’s house, and Peter was following at a distance. ⁵⁵ And when they had kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard and sat down together, Peter sat down among them. ⁵⁶ Then a servant girl, seeing him as he sat in the light and looking closely at him, said, “This man also was with him.” ⁵⁷ But he denied it, saying, “Woman, I do not know him.” ⁵⁸ And a little later someone else saw him and said, “You also are one of them.” But Peter said, “Man, I am not.” ⁵⁹ And after an interval of about an hour still another insisted, saying, “Certainly this man also was with him, for he too is a Galilean.” ⁶⁰ But Peter said, “Man, I do not know what you are talking about.” And immediately, while he was still speaking, the rooster crowed. ⁶¹ And the Lord turned and looked at Peter. And Peter remembered the saying of the Lord, how he had said to him, “Before the rooster crows today, you will deny me three times.” ⁶² And he went out and wept bitterly.

⁶³ Now the men who were holding Jesus in custody were mocking him as they beat him. ⁶⁴ They also blindfolded him and kept asking him, “Prophecy! Who is it that struck you?” ⁶⁵ And they said many other things against him, blaspheming him.

⁶⁶ When day came, the assembly of the elders of the people gathered together, both chief priests and scribes. And they led him away to their council, and they said, ⁶⁷ “If you are the Christ, tell us.” But he said to them, “If I tell you, you will not believe, ⁶⁸ and if I ask you, you will not answer. ⁶⁹ But from now on the Son of Man shall be seated at the right hand of the power of God.” ⁷⁰ So they all said, “Are you the Son of God, then?” And he said to them, “You say that I am.” ⁷¹ Then they said, “What further testimony do we need? We have heard it ourselves from his own lips.”

23 Then the whole company of them arose and brought him before Pilate. ² And they began to accuse him, saying, “We found this man misleading our nation and forbidding us to give tribute to Caesar, and saying that he himself is Christ, a king.” ³ And Pilate asked him, “Are you the King of the Jews?” And he answered him, “You have said so.” ⁴ Then Pilate said to the chief priests and the crowds, “I find no guilt in this man.” ⁵ But they were urgent, saying, “He stirs up the people, teaching throughout all Judea, from Galilee even to this place.”

⁶ When Pilate heard this, he asked whether the man was a Galilean. ⁷ And when he learned that he belonged to Herod’s jurisdiction, he sent him over to Herod, who was himself in Jerusalem at that time. ⁸ When Herod saw Jesus, he was very glad, for he had long desired to see him, because he had heard about him, and he was hoping to see some sign done by him. ⁹ So he questioned him at some length, but he made no answer. ¹⁰ The chief priests and the scribes stood by, vehemently accusing him. ¹¹ And Herod with his soldiers treated him with contempt and mocked him. Then, arraying him in splendid clothing, he sent him back to Pilate. ¹² And Herod and Pilate became friends with each other that very day, for before this they had been at enmity with each other.

¹³ Pilate then called together the chief priests and the rulers and the people, ¹⁴ and said to them, “You brought me this man as one who was misleading the people. And after examining him before you, behold, I did not find this man guilty of any of your charges

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against him. ¹⁵ Neither did Herod, for he sent him back to us. Look, nothing deserving death has been done by him. ¹⁶ I will therefore punish and release him.”

¹⁸ But they all cried out together, “Away with this man, and release to us Barabbas”—¹⁹ a man who had been thrown into prison for an insurrection started in the city and for murder. ²⁰ Pilate addressed them once more, desiring to release Jesus, ²¹ but they kept shouting, “Crucify, crucify him!” ²² A third time he said to them, “Why? What evil has he done? I have found in him no guilt deserving death. I will therefore punish and release him.” ²³ But they were urgent, demanding with loud cries that he should be crucified. And their voices prevailed. ²⁴ So Pilate decided that their demand should be granted. ²⁵ He released the man who had been thrown into prison for insurrection and murder, for whom they asked, but he delivered Jesus over to their will.

²⁶ And as they led him away, they seized one Simon of Cyrene, who was coming in from the country, and laid on him the cross, to carry it behind Jesus. ²⁷ And there followed him a great multitude of the people and of women who were mourning and lamenting for him. ²⁸ But turning to them Jesus said, “Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. ²⁹ For behold, the days are coming when they will say, ‘Blessed are the barren and the wombs that never bore and the breasts that never nursed!’ ³⁰ Then they will begin to say to the mountains, ‘Fall on us,’ and to the hills, ‘Cover us.’ ³¹ For if they do these things when the wood is green, what will happen when it is dry?”

³² Two others, who were criminals, were led away to be put to death with him. ³³ And when they came to the place that is called The Skull, there they crucified him, and the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. ³⁴ And Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” And they cast lots to divide his garments. ³⁵ And the people stood by, watching, but the rulers scoffed at him, saying, “He saved others; let him save himself, if he is the Christ of God, his Chosen One!” ³⁶ The soldiers also mocked him, coming up and offering him sour wine ³⁷ and saying, “If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!” ³⁸ There was also an inscription over him, “This is the King of the Jews.”

³⁹ One of the criminals who were hanged railed at him, saying, “Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us!” ⁴⁰ But the other rebuked him, saying, “Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? ⁴¹ And we indeed justly, for we are receiving the due reward of our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong.” ⁴² And he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.” ⁴³ And he said to him, “Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise.”

⁴⁴ It was now about the sixth hour, and there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour, ⁴⁵ while the sun’s light failed. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two. ⁴⁶ Then Jesus, calling out with a loud voice, said, “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!” And having said this he breathed his last. ⁴⁷ Now when the centurion saw what had taken place, he praised God, saying, “Certainly this man was innocent!” ⁴⁸ And all the crowds that had assembled for this spectacle, when they saw what had taken place, returned home beating their breasts. ⁴⁹ And all his acquaintances and the women who had followed him from Galilee stood at a distance watching these things.

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⁵⁰ Now there was a man named Joseph, from the Jewish town of Arimathea. He was a member of the council, a good and righteous man, ⁵¹ who had not consented to their decision and action; and he was looking for the kingdom of God. ⁵² This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. ⁵³ Then he took it down and wrapped it in a linen shroud and laid him in a tomb cut in stone, where no one had ever yet been laid. ⁵⁴ It was the day of Preparation, and the Sabbath was beginning. ⁵⁵ The women who had come with him from Galilee followed and saw the tomb and how his body was laid. ⁵⁶ Then they returned and prepared spices and ointments.

On the Sabbath they rested according to the commandment.

Father, these are your words. Sanctify us in the truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.
Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ.

Behold, your king on his throne. Picture him in your mind.

Luke doesn't have some of the gory details of the other gospels. He doesn't mention the scourge. That was the short whip with sharp stones tied to the end of the straps that they used to rip open Jesus' back before they crucified him. He doesn't mention the crown of thorns, which they pressed onto his head. He doesn't mention the nails driven into Jesus' hands and feet. And he doesn't mention the spear thrust through his side after he breathed his last. There were seven wounds inflicted on Jesus: his back, his head, his two hands, his two feet, and his side. We know about these wounds from the other gospels, but Luke doesn't mention any of them. He does, however, call it what it is: a spectacle (23:48).

Luke shows us other things. He tells us more about the witnesses and their reaction to what they saw.

He records this look between Jesus and Peter after Peter denied Jesus for the third time.

He has more about how Pilate tried to avoid crucifying Jesus. So he records how he sent him to Herod, but Herod, also recognizing that Jesus was innocent, sent him back.

He tells us about the women who were following Jesus on the road to the cross. He had skipped over the part about Jesus being beaten by the soldiers, but he shows us the reaction of these women as they watch Jesus, beaten and bloodied, being led away to be crucified. Luke records how they mourned and lamented (23:27).

He gives us a closer look into the hearts of the two thieves, and how one of them saw Jesus for who he really is: an innocent man and the true King of Israel (23:41).

Luke records the words of the centurion after Jesus breathed his last. Matthew and Mark also record what the centurion says, that Jesus was the Son of God (Matt. 27:54; Mark 15:39), but Luke has a slightly different emphasis. The centurion says, "Certainly this man was innocent!" (23:47). This isn't really different from what Matthew and Mark say, because Jesus' supposed crime was claiming to be the Son of God. If the centurion declares him innocent of this crime, then he recognizes that Jesus was, in fact, who he claimed to be: the Son of God. But one of Luke's emphases is the innocence of Jesus.

And then Luke records the reaction of the crowds when it's all over. This detail is unique to Luke: "And all the crowds that had assembled for this spectacle, when they saw what had taken place, returned home beating their breasts" (23:48). These aren't Jesus disciples. Some of these people cried, "Crucify, crucify him!" (23:21). Others were just walking by and stopped to watch. All the crowds, whether they were for or against Jesus at the start, go home mourning because of what they saw.

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Luke spares most of the gory details, but he describes the way people reacted to what they saw. It's kind of like on TV, when they don't show you the gruesome act of violence, but they show you the faces of the people watching. Maybe they're trying to keep it PG, or maybe they just don't have the ability to depict the violence accurately, so they show you the faces of those who witness it. They show the look of horror. That's what Luke is doing here. He can't describe how awful the crucifixion is. He can't tell us the horror of God hanging dead on a Roman cross. So he describes how the eyewitnesses reacted to it.

So what were they reacting to? Was it just the gruesome sight—blood and exposed flesh—or was there more? Luke tells us about the darkness. It covered the whole land from the sixth hour to the ninth hour (23:44). To translate those hours into our time, that's noon to 3pm. It's not supposed to be dark during those hours, but the wrath God descended upon the earth as he condemned sin in the body of his Son.

Then comes the central moment in all of human history. It is dark, and sad, and tragic, and paradoxically good. "Then Jesus, calling out with a loud voice, said, '**Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!**' And having said this he breathed his last." (23:46). For thirty-some years the Son of God in human flesh had been breathing in and breathing out and breathing in. The breath goes in; the breath goes out; the breath goes in; the breath goes out; the breath goes in—over and over again for thirty-some years. But now the breath goes out ... and nothing. It doesn't go back in. The lungs of God can't pull it back in. So God's heart stops circulating his blood. And God's brain stops sending impulses. In that moment God is dead.

And why? Why all this nameless pain? He's God. He can do whatever he wants. Why die?

O sinless Son of God,
Whose pow'r no tongue can tell,
Why suffer on the cross
The agony of hell?
Why leave your throne in heav'n
To bear this cross below?
The guilt you bore was mine.
The blood you shed was yours.
A paradise to give
O spotless Lamb of God.

The bystanders all went home beating their breasts. "His acquaintances and the women who had followed him from Galilee stood at a distance watching these things" (23:49). None of them understood why. When Jesus rose from the dead, no one said, "I knew it!" They had no idea why Jesus allowed this to happen to himself. For all they knew, the King of Israel, the Christ, the Son of God, had come to a tragic end, and that was the end.

Something must have gone horribly wrong between Palm Sunday and Good Friday. On Sunday the crowds shouted, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!" (John 12:13). But by Friday they were shouted down by another crowd, yelling, "Crucify, crucify him!" This is not the way they thought it would go. They expected their king to do more king-like stuff. How could the King of Israel be killed so brutally? Arrested in the middle of the night ... dead the next afternoon. He didn't even put up a fight. Senseless.

Senseless to everyone except one man. It seems like no one knew what Jesus was doing at the time, that they didn't understand until later, and that we need the preaching of the apostles to

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tell us what this was all about. And this is true; we do need the preaching of the apostles. But Jesus preached it too. All throughout Jesus' ministry, especially during Holy Week, and even from the cross, Jesus is preaching the meaning of the cross. He prays, **"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do"** (23:34). But no one sees that Jesus is doing the one thing necessary for that forgiveness to come ... except one man, the unlikeliest of men. He wasn't one of Jesus' disciples. He wasn't a very good man either, and he knew it (23:41). But for some reason—the Holy Spirit, I suppose—he saw Jesus, beaten, bloodied, and dying on a cross, as the king of heaven and earth. The cross is the supreme revelation of Jesus as the king of heaven and earth. How much did this thief on another cross understand? A lot. Where some saw a condemned criminal, and others saw the tragic end of a good man, the thief saw the King of Israel doing his kingly work. Think about this: it makes no sense for one dying man to say to another dying man, **"Remember me when you come into your kingdom"** (23:42). This is nonsense. How is he supposed to come into a kingdom if he's dead? He can't ... unless his death is actually the way he comes into his kingdom. And it is. That very day Jesus was establishing his kingdom. So Jesus preaches a sermon to his church of one: **"Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise"** (23:43). Not tomorrow, not even Sunday, when Jesus rises from the dead, not the Last Day when he returns, but **"today,"** the day Jesus dies. That is the day he comes into his kingdom. And the thief will come with Jesus into his kingdom.

This is the supreme revelation of God in his kingdom. It's not a powerful military or a wealthy economy. It's a condemned man dying for the sins of the world. It is the Son of God, condemned for you. It is the king of heaven and earth, crucified for you. It is your Savior and King, preparing a kingdom for you. Behold, your king on his throne. Amen.

Now may the peace of God, which passes all understanding, guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus (Phil. 4:7). Amen.