

Good Friday – March 30, 2018
Text: Psalm 22
Theme: Forsaken For Us

It seems so strange that we would call this black day good. It was on this day that the Lord Jesus hung on the cross, died and was damned. He suffered physical pain with which very few of us can identify. Some of us have had great pain connected with various ailments but I know for a fact that none of us have ever been crucified. Now, while there may be some things comparable in pain to crucifixion, I think no one would argue that Christ endured great pain indeed.

However, the physical pain was not the worst thing he endured. Christ was a sinless man who should not have suffered for anything. What added to the pain of crucifixion was that on that cross he carried the sins of more than one person. Everyone else dies carrying at most his own sins, and that seems to be plenty. Christ died carrying the sins of the world. Imagine carrying the guilt, shame and sorrow of every sin that had ever been committed since the beginning of the world and every sin that would be committed before the end of the world.

Finally, no matter how much any human being has suffered, no one can even imagine suffering the tortures of Hell. As wonderful as we imagine heaven to be, we cannot even fathom the joys that await us

there. Likewise, as hideous as we imagine Hell to be, we cannot even imagine the horror that is to be found there.

And yet, this day that seems to encapsulate all that is bad or evil in the world is called good. And it is good, not because of what happened to our Lord but because of the result of what happened. It is good because it is on this day that our debt of sin was paid and an end was brought to the power of sin, death and the devil in our lives. Christ did not just die! What good would that have done? Christ paid a debt by offering himself to take our place in Hell. That's what it means when we say he was forsaken for us. You and I deserved what he took upon himself. We are the ones who should have been forsaken for all of the times we ignore God's will and whore after the gods of happiness and pleasure; for all the times we doubt his power and consume our lives with worry; for all the times we spit in his face by mouthing pleasant Christian platitudes but treating human beings like trash. We're the ones who deserve to be forsaken. Not Christ. But he was forsaken, so that we NEVER would be forsaken. So that we never could be forsaken.

Tonight we walked again with Christ, and to mark our path, we used the seven last words he spoke from the cross. It is important that we understand why we do this. We do not do this to reenact the event. We would have to be pretty morbid people to enjoy gathering together and reenacting the night our Lord died a hideous death and was damned. In

fact, I would think we might just want to forget it if it were just a reenactment. We could just skip from Maundy Thursday to Easter - or better yet - leave out Lent altogether and go right from Christmas to Easter!

But what we do tonight is not just a reenactment. What we do tonight is not necessarily to focus on the death of Christ but rather to focus on the reason for and result of his crucifixion and damnation. Tonight we reexamine the lengths to which our Lord went to make absolutely sure that we would never be forsaken. And we do this because it is in understanding exactly what he did that empowers us to live as people who are truly freed from the tyranny of sin.

We focus on this year after year because we so quickly forget that we live in a state of grace in which we can never be forsaken. Hard times come along in our lives as they inevitably do and what do we so often do? We get mad at God as though he is a capricious god who doles out pleasure like candy and if our life isn't sweet enough, then God must be shirking his responsibility. It never occurs to us that 9 times out of 10, when things turn sour in our lives we did it to ourselves. I mean if one is fifty pounds overweight, works in a stressful job and smokes two packs a day, is it God's fault that he had a heart attack? Or if one lives a life that is financially beyond his means and he eventually goes broke, is it God's fault? But sometimes, something unpleasant happens and that something

truly is out of the blue. It had nothing to do with any choices, good or bad that you made, but even then it's not God's fault, because we live in a sin fallen world, and everything comes unraveled in a sin fallen world, and the fact that the world is sinful is our fault too.

Tonight, we walk with Jesus to his death and remind ourselves that God is never the one with whom we should be angry, but rather God is the one on whom we are invited lean. He does not forsake us. He carries us. We damage our lives with sin time and time again, and he continues to lift us up and rescue us from our peril. The Devil tempts us to sin in various ways and we gladly dance after him, and then, when we are good and mired down in the muck, we complain that God has forsaken us. Now not only does this offend Scripture, it offends common sense. If God ever forsakes us, what did Jesus do? We forsake God all the time, but because of Christ's work, we are never forsaken.

Tonight we remind ourselves again of the day our Lord screamed out from the cross "My God, My God why have you forsaken me?" With that moment he paid the price of sin, so that we need never ask that question.