

MIDWEEK REMINISCERE

Text: 1 Peter 2:21-25; St. Matthew 10:34-39; LSB 432

IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, AND OF THE ✠ SON, AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. AMEN.

*In silent pain the eternal SON Hangs derelict and still;
In darkened day His work is done, Fulfilled, His FATHER's will.
Uplifted for the world to see He hangs in strangest victory,
For in His Body on the tree He carries all our ill.*

There is no forgiveness of sin without the Body and Blood of CHRIST, even as we are told by the author of Hebrews. For he writes: “...*without shedding of blood there is no remission.*” But it is not just any blood that makes atonement for sin. It is the Blood of CHRIST, shed upon the Cross for you and me.

But that is not what we want. What we want is an antiseptic JESUS. A JESUS with no pain, no blood, no death. A cross with no corpus—no body. We want a JESUS holding little lambs in His arms; a JESUS who reminds us of nothing but sweet love. Yes, we prefer a “*smiley face*” JESUS, because a “*smiley face*” JESUS is not a threat to our love of sin.

I once knew a woman who said she did not like the crucifix because it reminded her of the pain and suffering of our LORD; that it was her sins that killed JESUS. Exactly! Is that not the point? To see the crucifixion in any other light is to deny sin and death, and not just the death of the SON of God, in which we all had our part, but our death and our sin as well. But do you not know that we must pass through death to receive the gift of new life in CHRIST, and the forgiveness of our sins as well?

But, from where comes this gruesome death? Who is responsible? JESUS is accused by the Jews; He is condemned to death by the Gentiles; He is tortured by His enemies; He is forsaken by His best friends, the disciples. JESUS suffers before men who take Him captive, beat Him with whips, and crucify Him. He suffers before rulers, high priests, learned Pharisees, and common men and women like you and I. All of these killed JESUS and mocked Him as He died, but it was God the FATHER, who delivered Him up.

But why? For what purpose? To what end?

*He died that we might die to sin And live for righteousness;
The earth is stained, to make us clean And bring us into peace.*

*For peace He came, and met its cost; He gave Himself to save the lost;
He loved us to the uttermost and paid for our release.*

You see, the Cross and crucifixion, through a strange reversal, do not mean death alone, but life—our life. For it is in the death of JESUS on that cruel tree that we too, are put to death in order that we may be raised again to newness of life with CHRIST in Baptism. In the Cross of CHRIST, we die to sin so that we may live unto righteousness—*“by His stripes we are healed.”*

Could there not have been a different way? After all, God is love and a God of love cannot condemn His own SON to die—can He? Yet, He did. He did because there is more to God than love. God is also perfect justice, and judgment, and divine wrath over sin. But JESUS did not die because of *His* sin. Even a cruel murderer like Pontius Pilate recognized and declared JESUS innocent. No, JESUS is without sin. The sin for which JESUS suffered and died was yours.

You see, the Cross of CHRIST itself exposes the absolute depth and hopelessness of your sin. The Cross exposes the lust you have for the woman next door; it exposes the envy you have because your neighbor has a nicer home or car than do you. The Cross exposes the lies you told to your parents, your teachers, your spouse. The Cross exposes your hate, pride, greed, covetousness. The Cross exposes you for who you really are: a lost and condemned creature who cannot by His own reason or strength save himself or herself. The Cross of CHRIST is God’s statement that there was no other way out for you; no other way by which you might receive eternal life instead of the death you deserve. The Cross of CHRIST is God’s final answer to sin.

It is in the Cross of JESUS CHRIST that God revealed His true self to you, baring His sacred heart to you. Yes, the Cross is God’s love letter to you because He is, after all, perfect love.

*For strife He came, to bring a sword, The truth to end all lies;
To rule in us, our patient LORD, Until all evil dies:
For in His hand He holds the stars, His voice shall speak to end our wars,
And those who love Him see His scars And look into His eyes.*

Therefore JESUS brings a sword. For He brings the Word of the Cross with which He defeats Satan and all his lies. He brings the Word of the Cross where Blood and Water flowed freely from His wounded side. The Water poured over us and the Blood poured into us, making us His own, taking away our death and filling us with His life. The same Word of the Cross is spoken over us in Holy Absolution, announcing to us what is accomplished on that bloody instrument of torture and death.

Listen closely and you will hear JESUS speak the Word of the Cross. Listen and you will hear, *“I forgive you all your sins.”*

IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, AND OF THE ✠ SON, AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. AMEN.

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