

Good Friday Evening
April 2, 2010


Rev. David A. Kind
University Lutheran Chapel
Minneapolis, Minnesota

✠ Jesu juva ✠

PAYING THE PRICE

The Passion According to St. John (18:1-19:37)

Grace, mercy and peace be unto you from God the Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen

ver this Lenten season we have been examining different parts of the Creed. But tonight we get the very heart of what the Creed is about; to the very heart of the Christian Faith. For tonight, through the voice of St. John, we see the Passion and the death of our Lord, Jesus Christ.

In the Creed, whichever of the three ecumenical creeds you wish to consider, this event is mentioned with only a few words. The Apostle's Creed puts it this way: "who suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried." Luther, in his explanation of the Creed in the Small catechism uses more words than that. He said: "I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the Virgin Mary, is my Lord, who has redeemed me, a lost and condemned creature, purchased and won me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil..." Tonight I'd like to focus on three of these words Luther uses: redeemed, purchased and won.

What happens in the Passion and on the Cross is, in one way of looking at it, transactional. Throughout the Scriptures mankind is said to be held captive by its enemies. Think about it. Who can free himself from the grip of sin? Who can break down the doors of his or her own tomb? Who can come back up from the pits of Hell, once consigned to that wretched place? Because of your sin, the enemies held you completely captive. But Christ came to free you. Hence Jeremiah prophetically states: "the Lord has redeemed Jacob, And ransomed him from the hand of one stronger than he." Again in Hosea, the Lord says: "I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death." There is something that must be paid to free mankind from this bondage, an expense that is paid by the ones freeing them, for those in captivity have nothing of worth to offer.

St. Paul speaks of us having been bought. Again the transaction here is between one master and another. You see the bondage under which we were held also has the image of slavery in it. Not only were we held by enemies, but we were enslaved by them, so that according to the flesh we served only the sinfulness within us, not God. We were ruled by sin, lived in sin, and sought our place and future through sinning. St. Paul says those who are carnal are "sold under sin" (Romans 7:14). But he also says in I Corinthians that you have been bought by Christ, so that now you are His possession and no longer slaves to sin, and now instead are to be a "slave of righteousness" (Romans 6:18).

Another image is that of mankind as being the spoils of the war that wages between God and the enemies of man. Man is helpless on his own in this war, unarmed, utterly weak, easy pickings for the enemies. But Christ enters in to fight for us, and according to I Corinthians “gives us the victory”; and we, being the spoils of war, so to speak, are won for Him.

And in Matthew’s Gospel, Jesus likens sinners to those who are in debt, owing more than they can possibly ever earn in a lifetime. This debt is not owed to the enemies of mankind, but to God, against whom every sin that man commits is directed. This debt must be paid if man is not only to be saved from the old enemies, but saved from God’s wrath as well, which purpose these enemies unwittingly serve. And so Christ pays the debt for us.

All of these transactions are worked out at once. One event satisfies every requirement here. But the one payment is exceedingly costly. And so today we see our Lord pay by means of enduring betrayal and abandonment by those closest and dearest to Him, by enduring the false accusations of those who hated Him, by enduring beatings and mocking, by enduring trial and condemnation though innocent, by enduring scourging, and a coronation with thorns, by enduring the rebellion of His people who cry out for His death, by enduring the miscarriage of justice by those too weak to enforce it, by enduring shame and nakedness, by enduring nails driven into flesh, by enduring the thirst of one who is bleeding to death, by enduring the suffocation of one smothered by his own weight as it hangs from the wood, by enduring at last death as cries out “It is finished” and breathes His last. How has Christ redeemed, purchased and won me? “not with gold or silver, but with His holy, precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death.”



And He does this out of love for you. He is merciful and gracious, expecting no payment in return, except your trust. He has done it, again as Luther says: “that I may be His own and live under Him in His kingdom, and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness, even as He is risen from the dead, lives and reigns to all eternity.” He has done it simply for the love of you, His creature, and by baptism, His child. There is nothing you need do, but believe. As He said on the cross, “It is finished”. The transaction is complete. All has been paid. And you are free of your bondage, of your slavery, of your doom, and of your debt. You are forgiven, redeemed, purchased and won, for Christ was crucified, died and was buried to do this for you; to Him be all honor and glory, now and forever. Amen.