

Pastor Joe Polzin
 Mark 15:21-39
 “Eyes on Jesus – *God’s Eyes*”
 Year A – Good Friday
 April 10, 2020

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

Our series during this Lenten season was called, “Eyes on Jesus,” and it focused on what was seen through the eyes of various people during the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ—we’ve heard about the perspectives of Judas, Peter, the disciples, the chief priests and scribes, Pontius Pilate, the Roman soldiers, and the Jewish crowd. Yesterday, we meditated on how there is much more than meets the eye in the Upper Room during the Last Supper. But today, Good Friday, we’ll now view Jesus’ crucifixion through the eyes of God—what the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit saw, and what was accomplished by them at the cross for each one of us and for our salvation.

First, what did God the Father see on Good Friday? No doubt, he saw his only-begotten Son suffering and dying unjustly on a Roman cross. Can you imagine one of us watching our own child die this way? Probably the only one who could even come close to that was Mary, as she was there watching everything unfold. But even then, it’s truly unimaginable. As sinful mortals, we cannot understand what it’s like to be the immortal, holy God, and to have the Father’s heart, which was grieved beyond our understanding.

Yet, what’s even more unfathomable is that God loves you so much that he willingly permitted this to happen to his beloved Son. The Apostle Paul wrote that the Father “did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all” (Romans 8:32), and that “God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8). He didn’t wait around for us to clean up our act first, but while we were still ungodly and his enemies, he allowed his Son to be killed in our place, under his righteous judgment against the sin of the world.

This also means that we, in our sin, provoked the death of Jesus. On the Day of Pentecost, 50 days after Jesus’ resurrection, Peter preached, to the crowd in Jerusalem, “This Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men” (Acts 2:23). The Father gave the Son to the world, but we “crucified and killed” him. Peter is also talking to you and me. We may not have been present at Jesus’ crucifixion, but we are certainly indicted in the crime. Whether a sinner lived in the first century or twenty-first century, the guilt and blame is all the same: we all crucified the Son of God by our sin.

In the Lenten hymn, “Upon the Cross Extended,” we sing this:

I caused Your grief and sighing
 By evils multiplying
 As countless as the sands.
 I caused the woes unnumbered
 With which Your soul is cumbered,
 Your sorrows raised by wicked hands. (*LSB 453:4*)

As we acknowledge our sin and unworthiness, we also need to see ourselves nailing Jesus to the tree, but at the same time, knowing that his crucifixion was “according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God” the Father. And why, what was the value in this plan? The Father saw, and now we can see by faith, God’s own glory being manifested to the world through his Son.

This is what Jesus prayed for, just hours before his crucifixion: Jesus “lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said, ‘Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you, since you have given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do’” (John 17:1–4).

The work resulted in Christ dying on the cross. And the Father and the Son both glory in having that kind of mercy on sinners. That is what they accomplished during all of Christ’s perfect life, suffering, death, and resurrection. The Father sees all of your sin taken upon Jesus on the cross, and he sees Jesus literally become the curse of sin for you, hanging on the cross. Moreover, he sees his wrath against sin being poured out upon the Son and the gates of hell prevailing over him. But the Father sees Jesus taking your place to save you, so that your sins may be forgiven, and that he may be glorified.

How about the Son’s perspective? Jesus always knew that his name means “the Lord saves,” so although he sees himself as the object of the Father’s wrath, he also see himself as the object of your salvation. He drinks the cup of the Father’s wrath down to its dregs, finally crying out in abandonment to his Father, “My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?”

But this is no cry of despair. He suffers abandonment from his Father, he suffers the pains of a sinner condemned to hell, but still he looks to his Father with perfect love and trust: “My God,” he cries, with unbroken faith. And then, with the words “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit” (Luke 23:46), he breathes his last. He knows his Father still loves him and, what’s more, will raise him from the dead on the third day, just as he had said.

On Good Friday, what does Jesus see when he looks at you and all of us sinners? He recognizes you as the cause of his woe, but he chooses not to hold this against you. The Lamb of God bears this willingly. He wants nothing other than to be your Savior. He looks at you and then prays, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” He stares into your sinful eyes and says, “I love you all the same. I and my Father have such great love for you that we would make this sacrifice for you. I am offering myself under the Father’s wrath in your place to save you from your sins and spare you from hell.”

Finally, then, what does the Holy Spirit see? First, he sees the Son and comes to Jesus’ aid as he offers his life as a ransom to the Father. We don’t know the ins and outs of how the Trinity works, but the Epistle to the Hebrews says that Christ, “through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God” (Hebrews 9:14), thus accomplishing our redemption by the blood of his cross. Jesus had been anointed by the Spirit in his own Baptism, and we know that the Spirit is the Helper, so it makes sense that the Holy Spirit not only helped Jesus fulfill all righteousness during his earthly ministry but also helped him offer himself to the Father on the cross when the time was fulfilled.

Second, on Good Friday, the Spirit sees that everything necessary for the salvation of sinners is achieved by the Son. Again, Jesus had promised just hours before his death, “When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth . . . He will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you” (John 16:13–

15). Here we see the Holy Trinity working together in their natural perfect harmony. The Father gave the Son the task of redeeming the world. The Son willingly took this task upon himself. And the Holy Spirit joyfully proclaims this Gospel to you, so that you may enjoy the benefits of Jesus' sacrificial death.

The Spirit has now taken what is Christ's and makes it yours. He took the righteousness of Jesus and instilled it in the waters of Holy Baptism to make it a life-giving water for you, rich in grace, and a washing of new birth for you into God's eternal kingdom. He takes the forgiveness of Jesus and declares it to you through the Gospel and through the words of Absolution. And he presents to you the body given and blood shed for you on the cross to be received for the forgiveness of sins, for life, and for salvation in Holy Communion. It's the Holy Spirit who enables the means of grace to do exactly that, deliver God's grace to you.

On Good Friday, the eyes of God see everything necessary to save you from sin, death, and hell. Although your own eyes look upon your guilt, unworthiness, and impurity, the Father looks upon your sin forgiven for the sake of his Son, the Son credits his own righteousness to your account, and the Holy Spirit makes you a participant in the righteousness of Jesus.

You are baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, so you may keep this truth on your mind, in your heart, and before your eyes at all times: that when God looks at you, he sees the apple of his eye, a beloved child united with his Son in death and raised up to new and eternal life with him. In Jesus' name. **Amen.**

And now may the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. **Amen.**

(Sermon adapted from the series, *Eyes on Jesus*, copyrighted by Concordia Publishing House [St. Louis], 2019.)