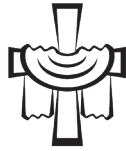


Good Friday

April 18, 2025



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. He has redeemed me, a lost and condemned creature, and has freed me from sin, death, and the power of the devil, not with silver and gold, but with his holy and precious blood and his innocent suffering and death.

—Martin Luther—

The Small Catechism

PROCLAMATION POINTS

The following are some thoughts and questions to be used for a text study on the weekly lessons, or for jump-starting the imagination of the preacher and hearer in preparing for the proclamation event.

Isaiah 52:13–53:12

In the first chapter of the Gospel of John, in the context of Jesus' incarnation, we hear: "He came to his own, but his own people did not receive him" (John 1:11). From his very birth, the Lord Jesus Christ was scorned and rejected by the people, born in a stable among the animals in the company of shepherds and sheep.

Here in this passage from Isaiah, we see this same reality carry through to his death, as Christ is once again pushed away and reckoned among the animals. "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have all turned to our own way, and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all" (Isaiah 53:6). We are the wandering sheep, but Christ becomes for us the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.

- *What consistency is there between Jesus' incarnation and his act of atonement on the cross?*

The story of the stable and the sheep, as well as the story of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross, is not a story of some unfortunate accident. It's not a case of being in the wrong place at the wrong time. Quite the opposite: Jesus was in the right place at the right time. God knew exactly what he was doing.

- *In what sense did God's plan of salvation assume rejection? What does this say about his faithful commitment to us?*

Psalms 22

The words of Psalm 22 are heard on Jesus' lips, spoken from the cross: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Psalm 22:1 = Mark 15:34). Like all of us do in the face of suffering, Jesus asked the question of "Why?"

- *When we ask God why something bad has happened, are we really looking for an intellectual answer? If God did give us a complete explanation of the reason for suffering, would that satisfy us?*

The truth is, Jesus knew why he was there. He, no doubt, could explain it better than anyone else. This shows us there is something deeper in his "why?" and the pain that he was willing to share with us.

- *In what sense are the questions of "why" that we ask God, really an appeal to God in faith?*
- *How does Jesus demonstrate that true faith is experienced at its deepest when we are in the midst of suffering? How does his question from the cross give us the grace to call upon God in our times of need?*

Hebrews 4:14–16; 5:7–9

Have you ever been seriously ill and had well-meaning folks say things to you such as, "I know what you're going through"? Often people share with us their own experience in a similar circumstance.

- *Do you tend to find that approach comforting or insulting? Do you think, "you have no idea what I'm going through"? Or are you encouraged in knowing that others can sympathize?*

Perhaps it is not an "either/or" but simply the difference between sympathy and compassion. Compassion is having caring feelings for those who are going through hardship; sympathy means we feel for a person because we've gone through those same hardships ourselves.

The author of Hebrews proclaimed that we have every reason to be confident in Jesus Christ because he suffered with us all that we suffer, and yet he did it without sin. Jesus is not only compassionate to our human plight, but he is also sympathetic because he's been there. We can draw strength and courage from Jesus when we suffer because of all he suffered before us: rejection, persecution, beatings, betrayal, abandonment, and even death.

- *In what ways do you draw strength and comfort from Christ knowing he has experienced all that you have?*

John 18:1–19:42

One of the seven last words of Christ found in the Gospel of John is the phrase "I thirst" (Jn. 19:28). Not only did he experience a literal thirst on the cross, he demonstrated the spiritual thirst spoken of in Psalm 63: "O God, you are my God, I seek you, my soul thirsts for you; my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water." Ironically, it was Jesus' experience on the cross that quenches our thirst for righteousness.

- *How does Jesus provide for our spiritual thirst in a way we could never provide for ourselves?*

Martin Luther once compared the cross to "the tree which Moses was commanded to cast into the waters of Marah, that is, into the bitterness of suffering, and they were made sweet." Luther said: "There is nothing that this Passion does not sweeten, not even death itself." Through suffering and death, Jesus brings us redemption.

- *How does Jesus' suffering allow us to look differently at our own suffering? How does Jesus' death change our death into a victory, rather than a curse?*