

There's Blood and then There's Blood

Matthew 27:15-25

Lent 1, March 8, 2017

Immanuel Lutheran Church, Broadlands

"Let Him be crucified!" they shouted. They shouted it many times, "Let Him be crucified!" They shouted it over the protests of Pilate, "Let Him be crucified!" Even Pilate, a man unfamiliar with the Scriptures, could see that the death of this man was not right. He washed His hands of the responsibility of the death of Jesus. They took responsibility for it. "Let Him be crucified."

When Jesus was baptized, God the Father anointed Him with the Holy Spirit. On that day Jesus became the anointed one. We translate it as "Christ." Since Jesus is the Christ, He will do everything that God has said in the Old Testament that the Christ would do. The Christ will reign on the throne of David. The Christ will preach the Word of God to the people. The Christ will offer one supreme sacrifice that will take away sin. The Christ will suffer on behalf of His people. The Christ will die on behalf of His people. His death will be the expiation of sin.

Isaiah had prophesied 800 years before the Christ came that the Christ would be a man familiar with sorrow and acquainted with grief. He would be a man from whom men would hide their faces. He would be disfigured beyond human appearance. There would be no beauty or majesty to attract us to Him.

Isaiah would further point out that it was our griefs that He bore. It was our iniquity that He carried. We all like sheep have gone astray and the Lord has laid upon Him the iniquity of us all. The punishment that brought us peace was upon Him and by His wounds we are healed.

Isaiah said that all of this would happen to the Christ. So when Jesus is designated Christ at His Baptism, He is destined to die. That is what Christs do. They suffer on behalf of their people and they die on behalf of their people.

Jesus knew this. That is why he touched the leper and told the leper, "Be clean." Touching the leper defiled Jesus and put Him outside of the presence of God. Being outside the presence of God leads only to death. And so it is with all of the sick that Jesus touched and healed. They all transferred their defilement of death to Him. In exchange He transferred His perfect life to them. They were healed and He became destined for His death, not just any death, but a death that could be avoided, a death on behalf of His people.

Jesus knew this. That is why when Peter finally figured out and confessed that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, Jesus immediately tells His disciples what that means. That means that the Son of Man will be betrayed. They will hand Him over to wicked people. They will kill Him and on the third day He will rise. Being Christ, the Son of the living God, means dying. It His vocation issued to Him by the Father it shall not be avoided.

That is why when Peter tells Him that this shall never happen to you, that Jesus rebukes Peter and tells Satan to get behind Him. What Peter says sounds right. It sounds right that crucifixion will never happen to Him. But avoiding crucifixion is not the vocation of the Christ. The vocation of the Christ is to die on behalf of His people and by so doing relieve them of their iniquities. Therefore anyone who tries to dissuade Jesus from dying on behalf of His people is of the Devil, even if it is Peter who says it. Lots of things that sound right are of Satan. Make no mistake when you hear him. The only way to discern it is by the word of God. Jesus knows the Word of God. He knows what His calling is. He rebukes

Satan even when Satan is speaking through Peter. Jesus will not be deterred from His appointment with His calling. It means His death.

So what do you with the Christ once He is in your custody? You do the only thing that you can do with the Christ when He is in your custody. You crucify Him. And that is what the elders and the chief priests did. The chief priests in bitter irony because they did it in malice fulfill their vocation and sacrifice the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. They call Pilate for His crucifixion.

And once Jesus is crucified, it produces blood.

The blood of Jesus flows from His veins. In fact the latest understanding of crucifixions is that people died of blood loss while they hung on their cross.

The blood is the life of Jesus. You don't need the book of Leviticus to tell you that, but just in case you miss the point the book of Leviticus explains, "The life of the animal is in its blood." Therefore the life of a person is in his blood. Therefore the life of Jesus is in His blood. When Jesus loses His blood, He loses His life.

If Jesus loses His life because He is murdered, then His blood, that is His life, rests on the people who murdered Him. That is a way of speaking that comes from God from of old. When a person is responsible for the death of another person because he murdered him, that murdered person's blood is on the head of his murderer. That murderer is responsible before God for the murder that he committed. He will answer to God both in the State and in eternity. The blood that is on Him is the responsibility that he bears for the death of the other person. Such a blood of iniquity defiles the murderer and cries out to God for justice even as Abel's blood cried out to God for justice from the ground.

That is what the people who request our Lord's crucifixion mean when they say to Pilate, "His blood be on us and on our children." They think that Jesus is an evil person who deserves to die. They think it is therefore appropriate to have Him crucified. They know that God speaks this way also.

If someone commits a capital offense and they are put to death, their blood is on their own head, not on the head of the person who put them to death because the person who died deserved to die because of their capital offense.

The people think that they are just such righteous people and that Jesus is guilty of a capital offense that they are not afraid to say, "His blood be on us and on our children." They think that He is guilty and they are innocent. Thus they are not afraid to say that His blood will be on themselves and on their children.

In reality Jesus is innocent of all charges. Pilate is right. That means that the people are in fact guilty of murder when they cry out for His crucifixion. And when they say that the blood of Jesus be on them and on their children they do not realize that they are calling down God's condemnation on themselves and on their children for putting to death an innocent man. Unless they repent, their own words will testify against them on the Day of Judgment.

But this is not just anyone's blood. This is the blood of Jesus. This is the blood of the Christ. This is the blood of the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

There is other blood of which God speaks besides the blood of responsibility. There is also the blood of expiation. The blood of expiation takes away sin. In sacrifices of old God commanded that animals be offered and that their blood be sprinkled on the altar so that the sins of the people committed in ignorance would be expiated. That is to say that they would be taken away.

Jesus sheds not the blood of an animal. He offers His own blood. He offers it not merely for sins committed in ignorance, but also for sins committed in deliberate rebellion against God. He offers His blood of expiation to those who would commit murder before God. He offers His blood for His enemies.

“Let His blood be on us and on our children.” Yes, let the blood be on us and on our children. On the Day of Pentecost Peter preached his first sermon. It is likely that at least some of the people who demanded the crucifixion of Jesus were back in Jerusalem again to celebrate Pentecost. They heard from Peter that they had killed the Christ. They were guilty of His blood. They were cut to the heart and begged Peter saying, “What shall we do?”

They really felt that there was no option but to suffer hell. They had not just killed anybody; they had killed the Christ. It was not just the blood of anyone who was on them. The blood of Christ was on them and they had asked God to put it on their children as well.

But it is the blood of Christ. The blood of Christ is not the blood of condemnation. It is the blood of expiation. It is not the blood who cries out to God for justice for the blood of Jesus speaks a better word than the blood of Abel. It is the blood who cries out to God for pardon.

And God forgives them. They are baptized. The blood of Jesus is on them and on their children not for condemnation any more, but rather for expiation. They go home with their sins forgiven, devote themselves to the apostles’ doctrines, to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

And so if God forgives the murderers of His only begotten Son by the blood of that Son, then God forgives you by that same blood. May His blood be on you and on your children!

In the Name of Jesus. Amen.