

Lent Vespers 1
4 March 2012
Concordia Lutheran Mission
Terrebonne, Oregon

“Christ Suffered to be Saved on the Cross in order to Save Men from their Sins through the Cross.”

“Save me, O God; for the waters are come in unto *my* soul.”
Psalm 69:1

Introduction

Why does Jesus say this? Jesus is the Savior. Why does Jesus asked to be saved? Jesus asks to be saved because He is suffering that which men needed to be saved from: God’s wrath over their sins. Jesus is suffering the destitution caused by the sins of men and, therefore, the Savior needs to be saved.

Men’s sins require God to save them. Christ bears our sins on the Cross and suffers the consequent destitution. Jesus, therefore, must be saved by God in order for Him to save us from our sins. And because Christ Himself is God, He participates not only in being saved from our destitution, but also in the saving Himself and all of us because while True Man He is also True God.¹

How this can be is beyond human comprehension. But it is beautiful, wonderful, and blessed to behold. And it is blessed because it creates in us the warm confidence of the gracious embrace of God of saving faith.

Christ, then, suffered to be saved on the Cross in order to save men from their sins through the Cross.

¹“The question arises: *In Zech. 9:9, why is the Messiah not called [Savior] in the active sense, but ... ‘saved,’ in the passive sense?* We respond: ... Christ is not only ‘Savior’ but is also Himself ‘saved.’ That is, because He wished to redeem us with His suffering and death, and descended into the depths of our wretchedness, therefore it was necessary that he be saved first, so that, having been saved, he might be able to save us too. ‘I looked around, but there was no helper; I was in anxiety, and there was no one to help’ (namely, among men). ‘My own arm’ (the power of My divinity) ‘has saved Me, and My anger’ (or zeal) ‘has helped Me’ (Isa. 63:5).” *Loci Theologici ... On the Person and Office of Christ*, tr. Richard J. Dinda, ed. Benjamin T. G. Mayes, St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2009 p. 11

I. The Cross of Christ Reveals to Men How Christ Bore God's Wrath for the Sins of All Men.

A. Psalm 69 is a Messianic Psalm.

During this season of Lent we will be meditating on **Psalm 69**. **Psalm 69** is a Messianic Psalm. That means it's a psalm about the Person and Work of the Messiah, Jesus Christ.²

There are different kinds of psalms³. There are, for example, psalms that teach (didactic psalms), psalms of comfort, and psalms of petition (supplicatory). The Fountainhead of all

²“Des Messias Gebet in seinem Leiden.” (The Messiah's Prayer in His Suffering.) *Die Bibel oder die ganze Heilige Schrift Alten und Neuen Testaments, nach der deutschen Uebersetzung Dr. Martin Luthers* (The Bible or the Entire Holy Scripture, Old and New Testaments, according to the German Translation of Dr. Martin Luther), St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1905, p. 588.

“The psalm speaks literally about the suffering of the Lord in His own person.” Martin Luther, *Luther's Works*, Vol. 10, p. 351.

“But we ask: who is it that is speaking, sighing, and praying in Ps. 40 and 69? It is not David, nor for that matter any other pious servant of God, but is Christ, the Son of David. Ps. 40, 7: ‘Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me’ puts it beyond a shadow of a doubt that the Messiah is speaking all the words of Ps. 40. The Messiah is He who is coming. What is written in the book, in Scriptures concerns and refers to the Messiah alone. See Heb. 10, 7. And the words contained in Ps. 69, 9: ‘For the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up; and the reproaches of them that reproached thee are fallen upon me’, which in the New Testament, in John 2, 17 and Rom. 15,3 are referred explicitly to Christ, attest that Christ is the Subject of Ps. 69.” The Rev. Dr. George Stoeckhardt, *Christ in Old Testament Prophecy*, tr. the Rev. Erwin W. Koehlinger, Ft. Wayne: Concordia Theological Seminary Press, p. 11.

“We cannot comprehend this anguish of Christ, for it is with us just as it was with the apostles, who slept and slumbered through it all. ... One has various types from the saints in the Old Testament on practically every aspect of Christ's sufferings. But, regarding this inner (spiritual agony) and pain, one actually has no type. One would like to point to the fact that Jonah says that while in the belly of the ‘whale-fish’ ... he cried out from the belly of hell, thinking that he was forsaken before the eyes of God, [and] that his soul despaired within him, Jonah 2. David, also, sometimes complained about the anguish in his heart; however, it is all to be regarded as nothing compared to the spiritual sufferings of Christ; as insignificant as a tiny drop compared to a huge ocean.” The Rev. Dr. John Gerhard, *An Explanation of the History of the Suffering and Death of our Lord Jesus Christ*, tr. Elmer M. Hohle, ed. David O. Berger, Malone, TX: Reprstination Press, 1999, p. 63.

“Of the general contents of the psalter, Luther writes: ‘It should be noted that the entire Psalter deals with five subjects; therefore we divide it into five parts. In the first place, some psalms prophesy of Christ and of the Church, or the saints, what would happen to them, etc.; and to this class belong all the psalms in which there are promises given to the pious and threats to the ungodly.

psalms are the Messianic psalms. The Messianic psalms teach and sing about the Person and Work of Christ for the salvation of sinners.⁴ And because the psalms are the church's hymn book, they have to flow from the Psalms about Christ, the Gospel, for only the Gospel teaches us to praise God aright.⁵

Messianic Psalms, then, are God's hymns about His Messiah. The word Messiah comes from the Hebrew word *meshiach*. *Meschiach* means anointed (Christ is the word originated from the Greek which means "anointed"), as, say, we would anoint someone with oil. But Jesus was not

In the second place, there is a number of doctrinal psalms, which teach us what we should do and what omit according to the Law of God; and to this class belong all the psalms which condemn the doctrine of men and extol the Word of God. In the third place, there are several psalms of consolation, which comfort the sorrowing and suffering saints, and, on the other hand, condemn and terrify the tyrants. .. In the fourth place, there are a few psalms of prayer, in which we pray to God and cry in all distress; and to this class belong all psalms which lament and mourn and cry over the enemies. In the fifth place, we have psalms of thanksgiving, in which we laud and praise God for His various benefits and His assistance; and to this class belong all psalms which praise God in His works, these being the finest and principle psalms. ... But we must know that the psalms cannot be just exactly and even divided into such part and verses, for sometimes two, three, and even all five divisions, as noted above, are found in one psalm, so that prophecy, doctrine, consolation, prayer, and thanksgiving are found together. But this division serves for the better understanding of the psalms and that we may the more easily learn and remember them.” P.E. Kretzmann, *Popular Commentary of the Bible: The Old Testament: The Poetical and the Prophetical Books, Vol. II*, St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1924, pp. 59-60.

“Of special interest to us are the Messianic psalms, including Ps. 2, 8, 16, 22, 24, 40, 45, 47, 68, 72, 89, 93, 97, 110, 118; they refer to the Messiah, the promised Redeemer of the world, portraying more or less vividly and completely His person and work, His birth, betrayal, agony, and death, His triumph over death, His ascension into heaven and enthronement at the right hand of God the Father Almighty.” *ibid.* p. 59.

Our Lutheran Confessions declare that seeking the remission of sins from Christ is the highest worship: “Nothing greater could she ascribe to Christ. To seek from Him the *remission of sins* was truly to acknowledge the Messiah. This worship is the *highest worship* of Christ.” *The Apology of the Augsburg Confession, Article III. Of Love and the Fulfilling of the Law*.³³ *Triglotta*, p. 163, emphasis added.

As for the word “hymn”, the English word hymn comes from the Greek word “*hymnos*”. “*Hymnos*” is a song of praise to a god or hero. (“*hymn, ode, in praise of gods or heroes ...*.” *A Greek-English Lexicon*, Compiled by Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, Revised and Augmented Throughout By Sir Henry Stuart With The Assistance of Roderick McKenzie, *With Supplement* 1968, Oxford: The Clarendon Press, p. 1849, s.v. “**hymnos**”.) The God and Hero of the Christian faith is our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Thus Christian hymnody sings the Praises of our God and Savior Jesus Christ for His Work to Redeem us from our sins.

anointed with oil, but rather with the Holy Spirit because **A.** Jesus is God and, therefore, possesses God's Holy Spirit without measure⁶, and **B.** was anointed with the Holy Spirit in order to save men from their sins.⁷

Psalm 69, then, is a Messianic Psalm that teaches us about the Person and Work of Christ to save us from our sins, especially His suffering in the midst of His Passion and His glorification after His resurrection from the dead.⁸

B. Christ's humiliation means He is a Savior who saves men through being saved because He truly bears the guilt and punishment of their sins.

Psalm 69 immediately plunges us into the dark waters, the foreboding depths, and deep quagmire of Christ's Passion: He is forsaken of God. Nothing is more unspeakable or dreadful than to be forsaken of God. For all the good that we enjoy and all the blessings, pleasantries, and support we have come from God. But when God removes Himself, then, all good retreats irretrievably and all that remains is everything absent the goodness of God and the dissolution of our existence, even our *terra firma* is removed and we sink in the quicksand like mire without peer.⁹ It is an incomprehensible, dreadful, and suffocating darkness. Consequently, Jesus says:

6“ For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure *unto him*.” **St. John 3:34.**

7“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised.” **St. Luke 4:18.**

8“**The Messiah's Vicarious Suffering.** ... The psalm is referred to seven times in the New Testament, either by quotation or by unmistakable implication, as prophetic of Christ and the Messianic period. Cp. John 15, 25; 2, 17; Matt. 27, 34; John 10, 29.” The Rev. Dr. P. E. Kretzmann, p. 128.

9“In Scripture the word *standing* ... is used metaphorically both in a grammatical and physical sense. And it must properly be so taken here ... in the sense of a foothold or settled ground, on which a man can stand with his feet, so that they do not slip into the deep and are submerged. And thus Christ did not have such a foothold on life that would keep Him from falling altogether into death. But if He had only suffered without going into death all the way, He would assuredly have had a place on which to stand firmly.” Martin Luther, *Luther's Works*, Vol. 10, p. 355.

Save me, O God; for the waters are come into My Soul; I sink in deep mire where there is no standing, I am come into deep waters where the floods overflow me.¹⁰

Christ is truly enduring that wrath of God, which removes any ground upon which He may stand, removes any and all security and plunges Him into the endless quagmire and quicksand of God's wrath. It is a helpless and terrifying experience. The Rev. Dr. George Stoeckhardt writes:

Christ it is therefore who in the passages from the Psalm quoted is conversing with God as one otherwise converses with God. Here we see into Christ's soul and mind.¹¹ Here Christ appears as true man, who has completely assumed the likeness of His brothers. He tastes and experiences all the manifold distress of human life, which ends ultimately in death. His way leads through great tribulation, through deep waters. Torrents of water seek to drown Him. He finds Himself deeply engulfed in mire, in horrible pit. Countless adversaries surround Him, persecute, abuse Him. And He is not insensible and apathetic toward such great distress. He is miserable. And he is in pain and is frightened. Water comes all the way up to His very soul. The outrage breaks His heart and sickens Him. What otherwise a poor weak human being feels, that He feels also. And in His fear and anxiety He calls and prays to God and waits in expectation for the goodness, grace, help, and deliverance of God, just as any human being makes his anxieties, his troubles known to God in prayer and supplication and takes comfort in the mercy and help of his God. It is, however, a great comfort for us poor, weak human beings to have such a Christ, to have such a Savior, who in all things was tempted as we are and who therefore has compassion for His brothers according to the flesh and who, wherein He is tempted, is able to help those who are being tempted.¹²

10Psalm 69:1-2.

11The Rev. Dr. Raymond Surburg writes: "Luther and the Lutheran Confessions accepted the teaching of the New Testament that in the Psalms there were numerous predictions about the Messiah. Moorehead wrote concerning this matter: 'The Psalms are full of Christ. They speak about His humiliation and exaltation, of His rejection by the world and of His final triumph over all opposition. But they go deeper, as we may say; deeper even than the gospels; they *let us into the thoughts and feelings when the billows of wrath were rolling over Him, when the heavy cloud of judgment which was all our own burst upon His devoted Head.*'" *Exegetical Essays and Materials Dealing with the Interpretation of the Psalms*, Ft. Wayne, IN: Concordia Theological Seminary, Press, p. 28, emphasis added.

12Christ in Old Testament Prophecy, pp. 11, 12.

And so Christ cries out “Save me”, indicating that Christ is a Savior who saves through Himself being saved because He truly suffers what we need to be saved from, God’s condemnation and rejection over our sins. The Rev. Dr. John Gerhard writes:

The question arises: *In Zech. 9:9, why is the Messiah not called [Savior] in the active sense, but ... ‘saved,’ in the passive sense?* We respond: ... Christ is not only ‘Savior’ but is also Himself ‘saved.’ That is, because He wished to redeem us with His suffering and death, and descended into the depths of our wretchedness, therefore it was necessary that he be saved first, so that, having been saved, he might be able to save us too. ‘I looked around, but there was no helper¹³; I was in anxiety, and there was no one to help’ (namely, among men). ‘My own arm’ (the power of My divinity) ‘has saved Me, and My anger’ (or zeal) ‘has helped Me’ (Isa. 63:5).¹⁴

Because Christ truly suffered our calamity caused by sin, He cries out for God to save Him. The Rev. Dr. Francis Pieper writes of how Christ truly forsook His Divine Majesty and Power in order to truly submerge into the dark and terrifying abyss of God’s everlasting wrath:

Christ could not dispense with His Deity in the state of exinanition. He had to attach the full weight of His deity to His obedience, suffering, and death, as Scripture tells us Gal. 4:4-5 and Rom. 5:10. Facing death, He had to be the mighty God that He might be able by His death to overcome death, to raise up again the temple of His body (John 2:19, 21), to take up His life again (John 10:18). Jesus Christ “died not simply as any other man, but in and with His death conquered sin, death, hell and eternal damnation”.... To be able to render such perfect obedience in the stead of men, to suffer and die for them, He had to renounce not seemingly, but the actual full use of the form of God. Our reason cannot perceive how all this is possible, but we believe it on the basis of Scripture.¹⁵

Remarkably, Christ is a Savior who needs to be saved. Herein we see how completely Christ assumed our destitution because of our sin. He sunk into the irretrievable depths of God’s wrath

13Compare also **Psalm 22:11**: “Be not far from me; for trouble *is* near; for *there is* none to help.”

14*Loci Theologici ... On the Person and Office of Christ*, tr. Richard J. Dinda, ed. Benjamin T. G. Mayes, St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2009 p. 11

15*Christian Dogmatics*, Vol. II, p. 289.

because of our sin and suffered every last aspect of that dreadfully helpless condition we all have earned. And because Christ suffered every last aspect of our destitution, there is no more to suffer and, thereby, He vanquished it.

C. Christ's Active Obedience moved God to answer His prayer to save and deliver Him.

And notice that Christ in the midst of this unparalleled anguish did not curse God¹⁶, but called upon Him to save Him. This prayer in the midst of rejection reveals to us once again Christ's remarkable obedience to God, His *Active Obedience*¹⁷, even in the midst of extreme suffering. In Christ's suffering, we have seen Christ's *Passive Obedience*¹⁸, i.e. He remained obedient even while on the receiving end of suffering and punishment. But in the midst of that suffering He also continued to fear, love, and trust in God above all things¹⁹ and, thereby, fulfilled the law even under the most arduous of circumstances. The Rev. Dr. George Stoeckhardt writes of Christ's remarkable obedience and worship of God in the midst of God's rejection of Him:

Yet, while Christ knows Himself totally forsaken of God in the abyss of hell, He cries, "My God, My God!" Even in such an abject condition, as He was in, He still clings to God as His personal God. This was a God-pleasing prayer that as it were issued from the pit of hell. This is something extraordinary, something unheard of. In the midst of the torments of hell Christ asserts that as His Son He will cling to God and claim Him as His own! Never before and never after has such a confident prayer issued from the abyss of hell on the part of those who are damned in that place. Ordinarily from those who suffer the torments of the damned come only cries and

¹⁶In the midst of extreme suffering, Job's wife urged Job to curse God and die. "Then said his wife unto him, Dost thou still retain thine integrity? curse God, and die." **Job 2:9.**

¹⁷"As my *Priest*, Christ *fulfilled the Law* in my stead perfectly (active obedience), *sacrificed Himself* for me (passive obedience), and still *intercedes* (pleads) for me with His heavenly Father." *The Small Catechism*, question 132 B, p. 108.

¹⁸"As my *Priest*, Christ *fulfilled the Law* in my stead perfectly (active obedience), *sacrificed Himself* for me (passive obedience), and still *intercedes* (pleads) for me with His heavenly Father." *The Small Catechism*, question 132 B, p. 108.

¹⁹"**THE FIRST COMMANDMENT.** Thou shalt have no other gods before Me. *What does this mean?* We should fear, love, and trust in God above all things." *The Small Catechism*, p. 5.

sighs of despair, never prayers of faith. It was by this prayer that Christ conquered and overcame the power of hell.²⁰

Well, this is all the gates of hell need: a man worshiping God perfectly in the very pit and throne of hell. The gates of hell now are overthrown by man and, therefore, never can be and never were a dwelling place reserved for man but for the devil and his angels – hence, the gates of hell cannot prevail against the Church.²¹

For Christ says that hell is a place prepared for “the devil and his angels.” Why doesn’t Jesus include also men? Jesus doesn’t teach that hell is prepared for men because God intended no man to go to hell because He sent His Only-Begotten Son into the world to save all men from their sins. Christ completely wiped out hell for all men because He perfectly atoned for the sins of men by His obedience, obedience even unto the death of the Cross. If men perish and spend eternity in hell, it’s not because God desired it, but rather because they rejected Christ and His Work in their behalf. So, God has to use a “second-hand” hell, as it were, one prepared for the devil and His angels, because God desired no man to perish.

Remarkable. With such splendid prayer and delightful obedience, who could not help but embrace such a man and answer His prayer to save Him. And that’s exactly what God did. He delivered Christ from His suffering. In **Psalm 69** Jesus says:

For the LORD heareth the poor, and despiseth not his prisoners. Let the heaven and earth praise him, the seas, and every thing that moveth therein.²²

St. John the Apostle writes:

Jesus answered and said unto the, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.²³

²⁰*Lectures on Select Psalms*, tr. the Rev. Dr. H. W. Degner, Ft. Wayne, IN: Concordia Theological Seminary Press, p. 67, underscore added.

²¹“And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”

²²**Psalm 69:33-34.**

²³**St. John 2:19.**

Wait. Christ says *He will raise up His own body?* But I thought it was God who delivered Him? It is God who delivers Him because Jesus, while True Man, is also True God. *So, Christ is a Savior who saves through Himself being saved and He Himself saving Himself because while True Man and, therefore, needing salvation, is also True God, the Almighty Savior.*

How can this be? No one knows how the Lord can do such things. But one thing we do know: There is nothing too hard for the Lord.²⁴

This Blessed Truth is simply beyond human comprehension, but it is wonderful and blessed to behold and comforts men with God's goodness and graces men with God's mercy and saving faith.

And so Christ, because He is the Almighty God, is pleased with His own obedience and on that basis He, along with the Father and the Holy Spirit, delivers Him from His suffering, gaining for men the victory over sin, death, and the power of the devil and winning for them life eternal.

II. Christ Saves Men through His Word and Sacraments.

And now, miraculously and beautifully, through Christ's Atoning Sacrifice for men, He turns waters from curse to blessing in the Gospel. In **Psalm 23** David writes of the peace of the Gospel as "still waters", not turbulent waters, but still, peaceful waters:

He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.²⁵

Christ our Good Shepherd does not lead us beside the raging waters of God's wrath because He has already calmed those waters through His Atoning Work. All that remains now is the still waters of God's peace and joy with men.

Because of Christ's Work on the Cross, water is used to bless us in the Gospel²⁶, namely, Holy Baptism, with Christ's salvation. St. Paul the Apostle writes:

²⁴**Genesis 18:14.**

²⁵**Psalm 23:2.**

²⁶The Gospel is the Word and the Sacraments. "But let us speak of the word *liturgy*. This word does not properly signify a sacrifice, but rather the public ministry, and agrees aptly with our belief, namely, that one minister who consecrates tenders the body and blood of the Lord to the rest of the people, just as one minister who preaches tenders the Gospel to the people, as Paul says, I Cor. 4, 1: *Let a man so account of us as the ministers of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God, i.e. of the Gospel and the Sacraments.* And 2 Cor. 5, 20: *We are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in God's stead, be ye reconciled to*

Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall also be *in the likeness of his resurrection*.²⁷

St. Paul writes that by His Passion, suffering the turbulent waters of God's wrath, Christ fashioned for us the Blessed Waters of Holy Baptism in order to save us:

... Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.²⁸

Luther writes:

[H]oly baptism was purchased for us through this same blood, which was shed for us and with which he paid for sin. This blood and its merit and power he put into baptism, in order that in baptism we might receive it. For whenever a person receives baptism in faith this is the same as if he were visibly washed and cleansed with the blood of Christ. For we do not attain the forgiveness of sins through our work, but rather through the death and the shedding of the blood of the Son of God. *But he takes this forgiveness of sin and tucks it into baptism*.²⁹

And because Holy Baptism was fashioned by Christ's Passion in order to bestow the benefits of His saving work on us, the Blessed Waters of Holy Baptism saves us. St. Peter the Apostle writes:

God. Thus the term leitourgia agrees aptly with the ministry." *The Apology of the Augsburg Confession, Article XXIV. (XII.): Of the Mass, Of the Term Mass.* 80, 81, Triglotta, p. 411.

²⁷**Romans 6:3-5.**

²⁸**Ephesians 5:24, 25-26.**

²⁹*Luther's Works*, Vol. 51, p. 325.

The like figure whereunto *even* baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.³⁰

Conclusion

Christ suffered to be saved on the Cross in order to save men through the Cross. How He can do this is beyond human comprehension. But we know He can because Christ is God and nothing is too hard for the Lord.

Christ's suffering on the Cross also includes our redemption through the Gospel. For through His Passion Christ fashioned the Blessed Waters of Holy Baptism in order to bestow up us His saving work through the forgiveness of sins and faith.

Now no destitution awaits us because of our sin because Christ has suffered all of it and God has delivered Him from all of it. Now we have nothing but the peaceful waters of God's love and joy, life eternal, and look forward to the resurrection when Christ our Savior returns in glory.

Amen.

³⁰**I Peter 3:21.**