**Lent Vespers IV,**

**The Fifth Week in Lent,**

17 March 2021.

*Concordia Lutheran Mission,*

Terrebonne, Oregon.

**“Christ was Saved in order to Save Sinners.”**

Save me, O God; for the waters are come in unto *my* soul.

**Psalm 69:1.**

**Introduction**.

Why would Christ the Savior cry out to be saved? Afer all, I thought Christ was the Savior. What kind of a Savior needs to be saved? A remarkable Savior needs to be saved. Christ is that remarkable Savior because He didn’t stand on firm ground and reach down to pluck us from the suffocating mire and quicksand of sin. No. Christ plunged into the quicksand of sin that was swallowing us and all men up and Himself swallowed it up for us.[[1]](#footnote-1)1 Now no quicksand of sin remains for men.

Moreover, Christ establish firm ground by His Holy Life Lived for us and for all men to stand upon and live forever.

Chris was Saved in order to save sinners and give life everlasting.

**I. Christ was Saved in order to Save Men from Sin.**

**A. The consequences of sin shown in Christ’s Passion.**

While Christ’s Passion shows to men the consequences of sin, His Passion was not intended for that but to comfort sinners with the Knowledge of Salvation. The Lutheran Church confesses:

Yes, what more forceful, more terrible declaration and preaching of God's wrath against sin is there than the suffering and death of Christ, His Son? But as long as all this preaches God's wrath and terrifies people, it is not yet the preaching of the Gospel nor Christ's own preaching, but that of Moses and the Law against the impenitent. For the Gospel and Christ were never ordained and given for the purpose of terrifying and condemning, but for comforting and cheering those who are terrified and timid.[[2]](#footnote-2)2

In **Psalm 69** we hear Christ in the midst of His Passion.[[3]](#footnote-3)3Jesus says:

Save me, O God; for the waters are come in unto *my* soul. I sink in deep mire, where *there is* no standing[[4]](#footnote-4)4: I am come into deep waters, where the floods overflow me.[[5]](#footnote-5)5

Because Christ bears the sins of men, God withdraws His support from Him. Without the *terra firma* (firm ground) of God’s support sound and sure footing disappears from Christ and He sinks helplessly into the bottomless mire and quicksand of sin.

Christ reveals that God has forsaken Him. Jesus says:

I am weary of my crying: my throat is dried: mine eyes fail while I wait for my God.[[6]](#footnote-6)6

God has forsaken Him because He bears the sins of all men and the Lord holds Him accountable for them, even though Christ has never sinned[[7]](#footnote-7)7. Jesus says:

O God, thou knowest my foolishness; and my sins are not hid from thee.[[8]](#footnote-8)8

Christ, therefore, suffers the fate of all sinners. God withdraws His support and Christ sinks into the bottomless and everlasting quagmire of sin, having no firm footing on which to stand.

**B. Christ Saves by Himself being Saved from the Consequences of Our Sins.**

Thus we see that Christ Saved sinners by Himself suffering the consequences of sins for us and for all men. As man sank into the everlasting quagmire and quicksand of sin, Christ did not stand on the shore of firm ground and extend a helping hand but He rather plunged into the quicksand Himself, suffered it, and expunged it. The prophet Zechariah reproduces Jesus’ teaching in **Psalm 69** that He is a Savior who saves by Himself being saved:

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: He *is* just, and [being saved], afflicted ... .[[9]](#footnote-9)9

John Gerhard writes of Christ suffering what we should have suffered in order to save us and all men from sin:

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 helper1[[10]](#footnote-10)0; 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).1[[11]](#footnote-11)1

While Christ truly suffered to be saved, He also saved Himself because, while True Man, He is also the True, Almighty God. The Apostle St. John writes:

Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. Then said the Jews, Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days? But he spake of the temple of his body.1[[12]](#footnote-12)2

The Rev. Dr. George Stoeckhardt writes of Christ’s Passion:

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.1[[13]](#footnote-13)3 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.1[[14]](#footnote-14)4

Thus Christ suffered to go through the destitution of our sin and be saved so He could eliminate our suffering Save all men from their sins.

**C. Christ sets men on the Firm Footing of God’s Everlasting Righteousness**.

Moreover, Christ not only dived into and expunged the endless quicksand and mire of sin for us and for all men, but He also placed us and all men on the Firm Ground of God’s Righteousness by His Obedience to God for us. This Blessed Work Christ accomplished by His Holy Lived for us and for all men. Jesus says He came to fulfill the law, namely, to obey God in all His commandments:

Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.1[[15]](#footnote-15)5

Christ obviously did this for us and for all men because we have not kept God’s commandments. Christ did not do it for Himself because He is the Righteous God who has no need of such human experiences. The Apostle St. Paul writes of Christ obeying God’s commandments for us:

But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent for the Sprit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba Father.1[[16]](#footnote-16)6

Jesus says:

... the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.1[[17]](#footnote-17)7

Christ’s Entire Holy Life lived for us and for all men sets us on the everlasting firm ground and sound footing of the Righteousness forever pleasing to God.

**II. Christ Sets Men upon the Solid Rock and Firm Footing of the Gospel in order to Save and Give Life Everlasting.**

**A. The Gospel sets men upon the everlasting sound ground and firm footing of God’s Righteousness in Christ.**

Through the Gospel Christ sets all men upon His solid rock and firm footing of His Righteousness forever pleasing to God. Jesus says:

And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed *it* unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peer, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.1[[18]](#footnote-18)8

The Lutheran Church confesses:

In all these passages Peter is the representative of the entire assembly of apostles [and does not speak for himself alone, but for all the apostles], as appears from the text itself. For Christ ask not Peter alone, but says: *Whom do ye say that I am?* And what is here said [to Peter alone] in the singular number: *I will give unto thee the keys; and whatsoever thou shalt bind*, etc., is elsewhere expressed [to their entire number], in the plural Matt. 18, 18: *Whatsoever ye shall bind* etc. And in John 20, 23: *Whosesoever sins ye remit*, etc. These words testify that the keys are given alike to all the apostles, and that all the apostles are alike sent forth [to preach]. ... Therefore it is necessary that in these passages Peter is the representative of the entire assembly of the apostles, and for this reason they do not accord to Peter any prerogative, aor superiority, or lordship [which he had, or was to have had, in preference to the other apostles]. ... However, as to the declaration: *Upon this rock I will build My Church*, certainly the Church has not been built upon the authority of man, but upon the ministry of the confession which Peter made, in which he proclaims that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. He accordingly addresses him as a minister: *Upon this rock*, i.e. upon this ministry [Therefore he addresses him as a minister of this office in which this concession and doctrine is to be in operation, and says: *Upon this rock, i.e.,* this preaching ministry.]

The Rock of which Christ speaks is the Gospel, His Word and Sacraments. God’s Word and Sacraments, while most humble in appearance to the world, nevertheless are God’s Rock because the Gospel by faith places men upon the *Terra Firma* of the Righteousness of Christ forever pleasing to God. Consequently, no matter what, believers remain forever on the Sound Ground and Sure Footing of the Righteousness of Christ forever pleasing to God. Jesus says:

Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.1[[19]](#footnote-19)9

Likewise the Apostle St. Paul writes that the Gospel places us upon the firm and everlasting solid ground of Christ’s Righteousness and Holiness for us:

Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner *stone*; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.2[[20]](#footnote-20)0

**B. The Gospel yields everlasting life**.

Because the Gospel, namely, God’s Word and Sacraments, places us upon the Sure and Certain Footing of Christ’s Righteousness forever pleasing to God, then, no matter the vicissitudes of this life, we gain life everlasting. The Apostle St. Paul writes:

But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared. Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he save us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior; that being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.2[[21]](#footnote-21)1

**Conclusion**.

Christ is a Remarkable Savior. Christ saves by plunging Himself in the mire, squalor, and quicksand of our sin to expunge it completely in Himself.2[[22]](#footnote-22)2 Being saved from that, Christ has completely eliminated everlasting quagmire of our sin and caused us to escape.

By His Holy Life Lived for us, Christ sets on the everlasting Firm Ground of His Righteousness forever pleasing to God, granting, thereby, to us life everlasting.

Christ places us on the Firm Ground and Rock of His Righteousness by the Gospel through faith. The Firm Ground of God’s Word and Sacraments sets our feet in eternity and preserves forever unto life everlasting and the resurrection of the body when Christ returns again in glory on the Last Day.

***Amen.***

1. 1“He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth: for the LORD hath spoken *it*.” **Isaiah 25:8**. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. 2*The Formula of Concord*, **Article V.12**, Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions, A Reader's Edition, p. 555. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. 3**Psalm 69** is a Messianic Psalm teaching us about the Work and Person of Christ to save men from their sins.

   “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 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.

   The 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. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. 4“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. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. 5**Psalm 69:1-2**. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. 6**Psalm 69:3**. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. 7The prophet Daniel prophesied that Christ would, indeed, suffer, but not because of anything He had done but rather because He bore our burden and the burden of all men. “And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself ... .” **Daniel 9:26**, underscore added. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. 8**Psalm 69:5**. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. 9**Zechariah 9:9**, translation is mine. “[be saved] is the only correct translation and suits the context. ... literally, being saved, unfailingly delivered. So He is already presented in the word of prophecy. See Is. 53:8; Ps. 22, where He, forsaken of God, cries to God for deliverance (vv. 1, 2, 8, 11-21), confesses that from His mother’s womb He depended on God’s aid (v. 9 f.), and in answer to His prayer is delivered (vv. 21b-25). See also Matt. 26:38 ff.; Luke 12:50; 22:41 ff.; 23:46; John 11:41f.; 12:27 ff.; Heb. 5:7-9. Even though He was forsaken of God for a little while, He was delivered from the depths of hell, was crowned with honor and glory in answer to His prayer (Heb. 2:9 f).” The Rev. Dr. Theodore Laetsch, *Commentary on the Minor Prophets*, p. 454.

   “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. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. 10Compare also **Psalm 22:11**: “Be not far from me; for trouble *is* near; for *there is* none to help.” [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. 11*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 [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. 12**St. John 2:19-21**. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. 13The 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. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. 14*Christ in Old Testament Prophecy*, pp. 11, 12. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. 15**St. Matthew 5:17**. “**What the benefits of the Gospel are.** ... Furthermore, that we may understand and note more accurately the benefits of Christ offered by the Gospel, it should be noted that they are partly privative [namely, removing sin and its consequences] and partly positive. The privative consist of the removal of evil things ... ; the positive, of the adding of effects ... His perfect fulfillment of the Law in our stead. You see, Christ came into the world for the very purpose that He might ‘fulfill the Law’ (Matt. 5:17). ‘He is the end ... , the fulfillment, of the Law for the righteousness of every who believes’ (Rom. 10:4).” The Rev. Dr. John Gerhard, *Theological Commonplaces On The Gospel, On Repetance*, tr. Richard J. Dinda, edited by Benjamin T. G. Mayes, Heath R. Curtis, St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, no date, pp. 14, 15, amplification in brackets added. Privative here refers to privation of sin. Privation means loss of something, e.g., food or shelter. For someone to suffer privation means to suffer a loss of something that benefits one’s life. Here privation means to suffer a loss of sin and its consequences. That, indeed, is the best privation any human could experience. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. 16**Galatians 4:4-6**. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. 17**St. Matthew 20:28**. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. 18**St. Matthew 16:17-18**. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. 19**St. Matthew 7:24-27**. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. 20**Ephesians 2:19-22**. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. 21**Titus 3:4-7**. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. 22“Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stipes ye were healed.” **I Peer 2:24**. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)