**The Festival of Good Friday**,

19 April 2019,

*Concordia Lutheran Mission,*

Terrebonne, Oregon.

“God Finished Sin and Death for Men by His Passion.”

When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished:

and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.

**St. John 19:30.**

**Introduction**.

By His Passion Jesus put an end to all human suffering. Jesus put an end to all human suffering because He suffered the wrath of God over the sins of men. Sin creates all manner of human suffering because it induces the wrath of God forever.

To undo that consequences of sin Jesus took it upon Himself to bear the guilt of man’s sin and, thereby, bear God’s wrath over those sins. On the Cross Christ bore the full brunt of God’s wrath for all the sins of all men everywhere all the time. He finished it. Now not one scintilla of wrath of God remains for any one. God is reconciled to man in the Passion of Christ. In this way, Christ put an end to all human suffering.

Notice also that Jesus suffered the wrath of God *before* He expired, before He breathed His last, before body and soul separated. Normally, the abiding wrath of God settles in after a man breathes his last. In Christ’s case, however, He breathed His last after He endured God’s everlasting wrath. Consequently, Jesus turned death into mere sleep because He removed the abiding wrath of God.

Because Jesus finished God’s wrath over sin by His Passion, He put an end to all human suffering by His Passion and ushers men into life eternal.

**I. Christ Finishes Sin and Death by Finishing God’s Wrath by His Passion.**

**A. Death means the settling in the abiding wrath of God forever.**

In Christ’s Passion we see He truly suffered a human death because His body and soul separated. The Apostle St. John writes:

When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.[[1]](#footnote-1)

The separation of body and soul is the definition of human death.[[2]](#footnote-2) Jesus clearly suffered a human death. While the Personal Union (the union of the human nature with the Divine Nature in the Person of the Son of God[[3]](#footnote-3)) did not dissolve, the human nature truly did.[[4]](#footnote-4) The Personal Union remained and the Almighty God truly suffered through the rending of body and soul for us and for all men in order that He might suffer it for us and all men to overcome it.

Most folks think the moment of expiration is the most dreadful aspect of death. The moment of expiration, namely, the rending of body and soul, however, is the not most dreadful component of death. The Most dreadful part of death is the settling in of the abiding wrath of God forever. The Apostle St. Paul writes:

The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin *is* the law.[[5]](#footnote-5)

Sin is the sting of death because it garners the abiding wrath of God forever. Consequently, the sting of death is not the moment one breathes his last, but rather the settling in of the abiding wrath of God forever.

**B. Christ ends sin and death by ending the wrath of God over the sins of men by His Passion.**

It is the wrath of God that Jesus put an end to when He said from the Cross before He died, “It is finished.” Christ put an end to God’s wrath because He put an end to sin by paying the price for us and for all men for sin. No sin; no wrath.[[6]](#footnote-6) This putting an end to sin by Christ on the Cross was the fulfillment of prophesy. The prophet Daniel wrote of Christ putting an end to sin for us and for all men:

Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, an to anoint the most Holy [namely, the Messiah].[[7]](#footnote-7)

Christ put an end to sin because He truly suffered the wrath of God for us and for all men. David writes of Christ suffering the wrath of God for us:

My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? *why art thou* *so* far from helping me, *and from* the words of my roaring? O my God, I cry in the daytime, but thou hearest not; and in the night season, and am not silent.[[8]](#footnote-8)

Luther writes of Christ’s suffering for our sins and the sins of all men:

In this verse [**Psalm 8:5**] David describes how miserably Christ will be forsaken. No human words can describe this as clearly, briefly, and simply as it is here. He is not speaking of the physical suffering of Christ, which was also great and difficult, but of His sublime, spiritual suffering, which He felt in His soul, a suffering that far surpasses all physical suffering. He describes the highest degree of this suffering and says: “Thou wilt let Him be forsaken of God for a little while.” What this is, no man on earth understands, and no man can reach or express it in words. For to be forsaken of God is far worse than death. ... There is no doubt that in the spirit David is here looking at Christ as He struggles with death in the garden and cries out on the cross, “My God, My God, why has Thou forsaken Me?” (Matt. 27:46) For that is His real, sublime, spiritual suffering, which no man can imagine or understand. In the garden He Himself says, “My souls very sorrowful, even to death” (Matt. 26:38). This is what He wants to say: “I have such sorrow and anguish that I could die of sorrow and anguish.” He withdraws from His disciples about a stone's throw (Luke 22:41), kneels down, and prays. In prayer He begins to struggle with death, and He prays more fervently. His sweat becomes like drops of blood that fall on the ground. David is talking here about this sublime, spiritual suffering, when Christ fought with death and felt nothing in His heart but that He was forsaken of God. ... And in fact He was forsaken by God. This does not mean that the deity was separated from the humanity -- for in this person who is Christ, the Son of God and of Mary, deity and humanity are so united that they can never be separated or divided -- but that the deity withdrew and hid so that it seemed, and anyone who saw it might say, “This is not God, but a mere man, and a troubled and desperate man at that.” The humanity was left alone, the devil had free access to Christ, and the deity withdrew its power and let the humanity fight alone.[[9]](#footnote-9)

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

The old Theologians assert that Christ actually endured the torments of hell, when He uttered those mysterious words: “Why has Thou forsaken Me?” ... By that outcry Christ asserts that He was really forsaken of God, forsaken, as only the damned in hell are forsaken. This marks the peak of His suffering. This indicates the height of His anguish. God had withdrawn from Him all help and protection and had delivered him up to darkness and death. At the same time, God had withdrawn from Him every token of grace and comfort. He was totally forsaken of God. Christ no longer saw or felt a ray of divine mercy. He was now actually and really suffering the pangs of hell, which otherwise only those experience who are banished to that place of eternal torment. As men live here in time, they may already feel the crushing burden of God’s wrath and curse resting upon them, yet there are always some evidences of God’s goodness at hand, such as the light they see and the air they breathe. However, in hell such evidences of God’s kindness have vanished altogether. They see and feel only God’s burning wrath and un-abating fury. Such was the condition that Christ was in, when on the cross He cried: “My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?” Christ felt Himself completely forsaken.”[[10]](#footnote-10)

Because Christ is the Almighty God in the flesh, He was able to bear all the wrath of God and bring it to a conclusion, or finish it. Hence, in fulfillment of prophesy said, “It is finished.” The Rev. Dr. Francis Pieper writes:

How could the Almighty die? Scripture tells us that the Son of God simply did not use the power which was at His disposal. John 10:18: “No man taketh it [My Life] from Me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again.” That explains His poverty, His limited knowledge, indeed the whole state of exinanition [humiliation]. Christ’s arrest was due solely to His non-use of the power at His command. He permitted the band of soldiers to bind Him, though but a moment before, by His omnipotent word, He had cast that same band to the ground (cf. John 189:12, 6). ... . Christ could not dispense with His Deity in the state of exinanition [humiliation]. 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 the 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.[[11]](#footnote-11)

**C. Jesus converts death to sleep because He has finished sin and death by His Passion.**

Notice, however, that Jesus suffered the abiding wrath of God for sin forever *before* He expired, i.e., before He breathed His last, because He was forsaken of God before He expired. The normal order is to breathe one’s last and the abiding wrath of God over settles in forever. Jesus, however, reverses the order. What does this mean? It means Jesus has converted death into mere sleep. For death is, as Scripture states, the settling in of the abiding wrath of God forever after a man breathes his last; that is hell. *Now that Jesus has reversed the order by suffering hell before He expires, recovery from death, miraculously by the Passion of Christ, becomes the norm and men awaken from death as they do sleep.*[[12]](#footnote-12) The Lutheran Church confesses:

And death itself serves this purpose, namely, to abolish this flesh of sin, that we may rise absolutely new. Neither is there now in the death of the believer, since by faith he has overcome the terrors of death, that sting and sense of wrath of which Paul speaks 1 Cor. 15, 56: *The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the Law*. This strength of sin, this sense of wrath, is truly punishment as long as it is present; without this sense of wrath, death is not properly punishment.[[13]](#footnote-13)

Luther writes of death in Christ:

Christ is saying to us ... I can very readily raise you from the dead – as easily as you rouse someone from sleep – and desire very much to do so, having both the necessary power and intention. ... It follows from this, therefore, that those who lie dead and buried in the churchyard and under the ground sleep more lightly than we do in our beds. We know it can easily happen that a person sleeps so soundly that he is called ten times before he ever hears. But the dead hear that lone word of Christ and wake up. The moment he speaks that one word, "Young man, I say unto thee, Arise!"; "Lazarus, come forth!"; "Talitha cumi, Damsel, I say unto thee, Arise!" they hear in that very instant. And on Judgment Day, when he speaks that one word, the dead will hear in that very same moment and come forth from the graves. It is true, we sleep much more soundly in bed than we do in the churchyard! Thus before our Lord God, death is not death but a sleep. For us, when we die it is and is termed death, but before God it is but a sleep and a very light sleep at that.[[14]](#footnote-14)

The Rev. Dr. Francis Pieper, quoting Luther, writes of Scripture calling death sleep because of Christ’s Passion:

Luther says: “Scripture has a lovely manner of speaking of death and the deceased,” and then proceeds to set for this “lovely manner,” ... : “Scripture does not call it death, but a sleep,” ... . “We must henceforth learn a new speech and language in speaking of death and the grave ... .That is not a human, earthly language, but a divine, celestial language. For the Christians this should be a familiar, common, and current speech.”[[15]](#footnote-15)

Because Jesus finished sin and death and by His Passion, He has converted death into mere sleep from which He awakened on the Third Day and from which we and all men shall awaken on the Last Day when He returns again in glory.

**II. Christ Bestows the Blessings of His Passion upon Men by the Gospel.**

**A. The Gospel incorporates men into the Blessed Death and Resurrection of Christ.**

Christ has Fashioned by His Passion Memorials of His Death for us in order to convey to us and all men the Fruits of His Passion. One of those Memorials Christ Fashioned for us by His Passion is the Blessed Sacrament of Holy Baptism. The Apostle St. Paul writes:

... 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.[[16]](#footnote-16)

Luther writes:

... holy baptism was purchased for us through this same blood, which he 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 of sin with the blood of Christ. For we do not gain 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 sins and tucks it into baptism.[[17]](#footnote-17)

Likewise, Jesus left us a Memorial of His Passion in the Sacrament of Holy Communion. The Apostle St. Paul writes:

And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is m body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also *he took* the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft ye as ye drink of it in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord’s death till he come.[[18]](#footnote-18)

God’s Sacraments, therefore, are God’s Saving Visible Gospel. The Lutheran Church confesses:

But just as the Word enters the ear in order to strike our hearts, so the rite itself strikes the eye, in order to move the heart. The effect of the Word and of the rite is the same, as it has been well said by Augustine that a Sacrament is a *visible* *word*, because the rite is received by the eyes, and is, as it were, a picture of the Word, signifying the same thing as the Word. Therefore the effect of both is the same.[[19]](#footnote-19)

Through the Gospel, namely, through God’s Word and Sacraments, God incorporates us into Jesus’ Blessed Death and Resurrection. The Apostle St. Paul writes:

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 baptized into the likeness of his death, we shall also be *in the likeness* of *his* resurrection.[[20]](#footnote-20)

On Good Friday, Jesus was not only Atoning for our sins on the Cross, but He was also Fashioning for us by His Passion the Gospel through which Gospel we receive His Blessed Work for us and for all men.

**B. The Gospel saves.**

Because the Gospel incorporates us into Christ’s Blessed Death and Resurrection for us and for all men, it saves and gives life everlasting. The Apostle St. Peter writes:

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[[21]](#footnote-21) toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ ... .[[22]](#footnote-22)

**Conclusion**.

Good Friday is good because by His Passion Christ put an end to the wrath of God, sin and death and, thereby, put an end to all human suffering.

This Blessed Deliverance comes through the Gospel whereby we are incorporated in Christ’s Blessed Death and Resurrection and gain life eternal and the resurrection of the body.

**Amen.**

1. **St. John 19:30**, underscore added. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. “Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was; and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.” **Ecclesiastes 12:7**. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. “**What two natures, then, are united in Christ? The *divine* and the *human natures* are united in Christ*, both natures together forming one undivided and indivisible person* (personal union)**.” *The Small Catechism*, edited with annotations by the Rev. Dr. Edward W. A. Koehler, Ft. Wayne: Concordia Theological Seminary Press, p. 140. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. “And in fact He was forsaken by God. This does not mean that the deity was separated from the humanity -- for in this person who is Christ, the Son of God and of Mary, deity and humanity are so united that they can never be separated or divided -- but that the deity withdrew and hid so that it seemed, and anyone who saw it might say, ‘This is not God, but a mere man, and a troubled and desperate man at that.’” Martin Luther, *Luther's Works*, Vol. 12, p. 126. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. **I Corinthians 15:56**. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. “And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.” **Jeremiah 31:34**. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. **Daniel 9:24**, underscore and amplification in brackets added. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. **Psalm 22:1-2**. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. *Luther's Works*, Vol. 12, p. 124, 126, 127. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. The Rev. Dr. George Stoeckhardt, *Lectures on Select Psalms*, tr. the Rev. Dr. H. W. Degner, Ft. Wayne: Concordia Theological Seminary Press, pp. 68, 67. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, Vol. II, pp. 285, 289, amplification in brackets added.

    “**134. Wherein did Christ’s State of Humiliation consist?** Christ’s State of Humiliation consisted in this, that according to His *human* nature, Christ did *not always* and *not fully use* the divine attributes *communicated* to His human nature.” *The Small Catechism*, p. 109.

    “The use or non-use of the divine majesty was regulated by His office as Redeemer.” The Rev. Dr. Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, Vol. II, p. 286. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. “The dying of Christians is no longer death in the full sense because they are delivered from the thing that makes death terrible -- the [sense of divine wrath], as the Apology states. ... *Trigl.* 290, XXIV, 56: ‘That sting and sense of wrath of which Paul speaks 1 Cor. 15:56: “The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the Law.” This strength of sin, this sense of wrath, is truly a punishmente as long as it is present; without this sense of wrath, death is not properly a punishment.” The Rev. Dr. Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, Vol. III, p. 510. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. *The Apology of the Augsburg Confession*, **Article VI: Of Confession and Satisfaction**.56. 57, *Triglotta*, p. 299. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. *The Complete Sermons of Martin Luther*, Vol. V, p. 32. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. The Rev. Dr. Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, Vol. III, p. 511, footnote 15. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. **Ephesians 5:25**, **26-27**. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. *Luther’s Works*, Vol. 51, p. 325.“This Baptism is also founded upon the name of Christ ... because it was purchased by Christ’s vicarious satisfaction, as Eph. 5:26 expressly teaches, ‘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.’” The Rev. Dr. Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, Vol. III, p. 259. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. **I Corinthians 11:24-26**. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. *The Apology of the Augsburg Confession*, **Article XIII (VII): Of the Number and Use of the Sacraments**.5, *Triglotta*, p. 309. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. **Romans 6:3-4**. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. “The Greek word for ‘answer’, as is universally accepted, has in forensic language become a technical term for ‘agreement’. Contained in the original meaning of the word was the fact that the signing of an agreement began with the question: ‘Do you solemnly promise?’ This was eventually lost in idiomatic usage so that by this word as legal expression the Greek came to think only of the legal stipulation itself. And this meaning fits admirably in our passage, the only one in which the word is found in the New Testament. Baptism is the stipulation, or, to say with Luther, ‘the covenant of a good conscience’ in relation to or with God. Baptism cleanses the conscience from sin and its guilt, generates a good conscience which looks up to God joyfully and confidently, standing in union and communion with God. On the basis of this passage from Peter we commonly speak of the baptismal covenant. Cremer’s explanation keys in with this: ‘The claim, the title, which a good conscience has to God.’” The Rev. Dr. George Stoeckhardt, *Lectures on the First Epistle of St. Peter*, tr. Erwin W. Koehlinger, Ft. Wayne: Concordia Theological Seminary Press, no date, pp. 165, 166. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. **I Peter 3:21**. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)