

**Crucifixion**

(***Albrecht Durer***, ***Large Passion***)

**Holy Week.**

“You see, therefore, that what we call the mass is a promise of the forgiveness of sins made to us by God, and such a promise as has been confirmed by the death of the Son of God. For the only differences between a promise and a testament is that the testament involves the death of the one who makes it. A testator is a promiser who is about to die, while a promiser (if I may put it thus) is a testator who is not about to die. This testament of Christ is foreshadowed in all the promises of God from the beginning of the world; indeed, whatever value those ancient promises possessed was altogether derived from this new promise that was to come in Christ. Hence the words ‘compact,’ ‘covenant,’ and ‘testament of the Lord’ occur so frequently in the Scriptures. These words signified that God would one day die. ‘For where there is a testament, the death of the testator must of necessity occur’ (Heb. 9[:16]). Now God made a testament, therefore, it was necessary that he should die. But God could not die unless he became man. Thus the incarnation and the death of Christ are both comprehended most concisely in this one word, ‘testament.’” **Martin Luther**, *Luther's Works*, Vol. 36, p. 38, underscore added.

**The Festival of Maundy Thursday**,

**1 April 2021**,

C*oncordia Lutheran Mission*

Terrebonne, Oregon.

**“God Bequeaths to Men**

**the Forgiveness of Sins of the Cross of Christ.”**

And he said unto them, This is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many.

**St. Mark 14:24.**

**Introduction**.

 God does not forgive men’s sins but rather forgives men’s sins by bequeathing to men the Forgiveness of sins for Christ’s Sake.

 God bequeaths the Forgiveness of sins because the Forgiveness of sins is God’s Last Will and Testament to mankind.

 Because God made a Testament, God had to die; for without death a testament doesn’t work.[[1]](#footnote-1)1 God, however, in and of Himself cannot die.[[2]](#footnote-2)2 Consequently, we see that God became man in order to make a Testament to men.[[3]](#footnote-3)3 In that Testament, God bequeaths to men that which is most needed: the Forgiveness of His Atonement for those sins on the Cross.

 God bequeaths to men His Forgiveness of the Cross through the Gospel. Through the Gospel God bequeaths to men the Forgiveness of sin, life everlasting, and all the Blessings the come with life with God.

 God does not Forgive men’s sins but Bequeaths to men through the Gospel the Forgiveness of Sin of the Cross of Christ and in that way Forgives men’s sins. .

**I. The New Testament is the Forgiveness of Sins through the Cross of Christ.**

**A. The New Testament is the Forgiveness of sins.**

 Scripture prophesied that the New Testament would be the forgiveness of sins.[[4]](#footnote-4)4 God prophesied in the prophet Jeremiah:

Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah ... . But this *shall be* the covenant in that day with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it on their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, 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 remember their sin no more.[[5]](#footnote-5)5

 The New Testament is the Forgiveness of sins for Christ’s Sake according to Old Testament prophecy.

**B. The Forgiveness of sins comes through the Cross of Christ.**

The New Testament was effected by the Cross of Christ.The Apostle St. Paul writes:

For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scripture; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures ... .[[6]](#footnote-6)6

The Rev. Dr. John Gerhard writes of the Great Cost at which our Forgiveness was Purchased:

... Christ prayed for His crucifers: **Father, forgive them,** He says, **for they know not what they do,** the first word which Christ spoke on the cross. In the Old Testament, as the sacrifice was being offered, the high priest at the same time had to instruct the people about its true benefit. Christ, the High Priest of the New Testament, also does this; and He teaches that this His sacrifice is intended for the forgiveness of sins. Also, since Christ suffered not for himself but for us ... He, as it were, forgets His agony and concerns Himself with us human beings and prays that God would forgive us for what we were doing to Him. He thus here portrays Himself as our true Advocate, 1 John 2, who pleads on our behalf before the heavenly Father with the power of His sacrifice. He holds before Him, as it were, His wounds and petitions that God would allow His wrath to abate. Just as in those times Christ’s petition was so powerful that many of those who helped crucify Him were converted and the remainder were given forty more whole years in which to repent, ... so now Christ’s intercession retains its power to this very day. For we should not think that Christ was praying [only] for the Jews and soldiers who at that timed [sic] crucified Him. Rather, this prayer applies to us all. He was crucified for the sake of all our sins, Isa. 53; and with our sins we caused Him pain and effort, Isa. 43. And if we still at times go forth with confidence (brashness) and don’t realize what we are doing – that is, we don’t realize the consequence of lying in sin, nor do we consider what a serious matter the wrath of God is – behold, with His intercession Christ presents the very best and obtains so much that God grants time for repentance and does not so quickly destroy with His wrath. Ponder here also the incomprehensible patience of Christ, how He in His distress also prayed for His worst enemies who dealt with Him so pitiably and horribly. They had affixed Him with nails so hat He could do not other good for them. Only His tongue remained which even so, because of torture, stuck to the roof of His mouth, Psa. 22. Yet, He used it still to pray for His crucifers. Indeed, how distant are those from this example of Christ who do not pray for their enemies. Even more distant are those who return evil with evil. Farthest away of all are those who deliberately offend their neighbors. From this, God graciously preserve us. Amen.[[7]](#footnote-7)7

 This Great Passion or Suffering was the Suffering of the Son of God, God Himself in the flesh. God Himself Suffered for us and died to Atone for the sins of men. God in and of Himself could not die, but now that God has become Man, God could and, indeed, did Suffer and Die for the sins of all men. The Lutheran Church confesses:

*We Christians must know that if God is not also in the balance, and gives the weight, we sink to the bottom with our scale. By this I mean: If it were not to be said [if these things were not true], God has died for us, but only a man, we would be lost. But if “God’s death” and “God died” lie in the scale of the balance, then He sinks down, and we rise up as a light, empty scale. But indeed He can also rise again or leap out of the scale; yet He could not sit in the scale unless He became a man like us, so that it could be said: “God died,” “God’s passion,” “God’s blood,” “God’s death.” For in His nature God cannot die; but now that God and man are united in one person, it is correctly called God’s death, when the man dies who is one thing or one person with God.*[[8]](#footnote-8)8

 Thus, God could only make a Testament were He to die. God could only die were He to become man. Luther writes:

You see, therefore, that what we call the mass[[9]](#footnote-9)9 is a promise of the forgiveness of sins made to us by God, and such a promise as has been confirmed by the death of the Son of God. For the only differences between a promise and a testament is that the testament involves the death of the one who makes it. A testator is a promiser who is about to die, while a promiser (if I may put it thus) is a testator who is not about to die. This testament of Christ is foreshadowed in all the promises of God from the beginning of the world; indeed, whatever value those ancient promises possessed was altogether derived from this new promise that was to come in Christ. Hence the words “compact,” “covenant,” and “testament of the Lord” occur so frequently in the Scriptures.1[[10]](#footnote-10)0 These words signified that God would one day die. “For where there is a testament, the death of the testator must of necessity occur” (Heb. 9[:16]). Now God made a testament, therefore, it was necessary that he should die. But God could not die unless he became man.1[[11]](#footnote-11)1 Thus the incarnation and the death of Christ are both comprehended most concisely in this one word, “testament.”1[[12]](#footnote-12)2

**II. The Gospel is the New Testament and God Bequeaths to Men the Saving Forgiveness of Sins and all the Gifts of Heaven.**

**A. God does not forgive men's sin but forgives men’s sin through the bequeathment of the Last Will and Testament of the Son of God.**

 Because Christ Suffered to die for the sins of men in order to bequeath to them in His Last Will and Testament, we see that God does not forgive men’s sin but forgives men’s sins by bequeathing to men the Forgiveness of sins through the Last Will and Testament of God. The Evangelist St. Mark writes:

And he said unto them, This is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many.1[[13]](#footnote-13)3

 This Testament is exceedingly grave, important, and blessed, because it is the Last Will and Testament not just of a man, which is sufficiently grave in and of itself, but also of God Himself. Martin Chemnitz writes:

**The words of the Lord’s Supper are not to be treated in a light or frivolous way, but with great reverence and respect and in the fear of the Lord, because they are the words of the last will and testament of the Son of God.** ... In the second place, when the last will and testament of a man has been executed, we are required under the law to observe the words with special care so that nothing be done which is either beside or contrary to the final will of the testator. Even the civil laws regard such a will as so sacred that they have determined that those who have made any profit at all from the will for themselves shall be deprived of it, and their inheritance through the provision of the laws themselves shall be taken away from them as being unworthy, on the grounds that they have departed from the will of the testator as it is stipulated in the words of the testament. Now, because the Son of God in His last will and testament has not permitted His heirs the liberty of believing or doing whatever seems good to them, but has willed that we believe what he has spoken in His words of institution and do what He has commanded, therefore we should give very careful thought that we do not thrust anything upon these words of the last will and testament of the Son of God, lest we deprive ourselves of the benefit of eternal happiness conveyed to us by His will or our inheritance itself be taken from us as being unworthy because we have departed from the will of the Testator as it has been given to us in the words of His last testament. There is no doubt that all too many will come under this judgment, sad to say, because of their shameful contentiousness.1[[14]](#footnote-14)4

 The infinite and boundless gravity of Christ’s Testament is a source of great security for us because our future blessings and life are grounded in the Last Will and Testament of God Himself.

**B. God bequeaths Forgiveness and all the Gifts of the Kingdom of Heaven through the Gospel.**

Because Christ bequeaths to men the Forgiveness of sins through His Passion by the Gospel, all blessings men enjoy are bequeathed to them through the Last Will and Testament of the Son of God. We enjoy the Blessings of our wife, husband, children, hearth and home, work and play, because these blessings are bequeathed to us by the Passion of Christ in His Last Will and Testament. For example, Solomon writes:

Lo, children are an heritage of the LORD: *and* the fruit of the womb *is his* reward.1[[15]](#footnote-15)5

Why does Solomon say heritage (inheritance) and not just gift from the Lord? Solomon writes this way because the gifts God Blesses men with after Adam’s fall into sin are gifts bequeathed to men through the Last Will and Testament of the Son of God and, therefore, are an heritage or inheritance. Thus when we look upon our spouse, children, house, home hearth, work or hobbies, we do well to keep in mind that these Precious Gifts are bequeathed to us through the Last Will and Testament of the Son of God, which Testament came at the Price of His Suffering and Death. *God had to Suffer and Die in order to bequeath to us all these blessings, both now and in glory, that we enjoy*. The Lutheran Church confesses regarding the cornucopia of Blessing of the Gospel:

For here [in the Sacrament of Holy Communion] He offers to us the entire treasure which He has brought for us from heaven, and to which He invites us also in other places with the greatest kindness, as when He says in St. Matthew 11, 28: *Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest*. Now it is surely a sin and a shame that He so cordially and faithfully summons and exhorts us to our highest and greatest good, and we act so distantly with regard to it, and permit so long a time to pass [without partaking of the Sacrament] that we grow quite cold and hardened, so that we have no inclination or love for it. We must never regard the Sacrament as something injurious from which we had better flee, but as a pure, wholesome, comforting remedy imparting salvation and comfort, which will cure you and give you life both in soul and body. For where the soul has recovered, the body also is relieved. Why, then, is it that we act as if it were a poison, the eating of which would bring death?1[[16]](#footnote-16)6

**Conclusion.**

 *God does not forgive men’s sins but rather forgives men’s sins by bequeathing to men the Forgiveness of sins for Christ’s Sake through His Last Will and Testament, the Gospel*. God Forgives men’s sins by bequeathing to men His Forgiveness for Christ’s Sake in His Last Will and Testament, the Gospel.

 In God’s Last Will and Testament God bequeaths to men the Forgiveness of sin and all the Blessings of everlasting life with God in His Glorious Kingdom.

  **Amen.**

1. 1“For where a testament *is*, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament *is* of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth. Whereupon neither the first *testament* was dedicated without blood. For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book, and all the people, Saying, This *is* the blood of the testament which God hath enjoined unto you.” **Hebrews 9:16-20**. St. Paul uses the word “testament”[In Greek, “diatheke”, pronounced “dee-a-thay-kay”. ]. St. Paul uses the word “testament” when Moses writes, “blood of the covenant”. Why does St. Paul write “testament” when Moses writes “blood of the covenant”? St. Paul writes “testament” because “blood of the covenant” means testament.

 For what does a covenant, i.e. an agreement, sprinkled with blood mean? The shedding of blood over an agreement is remarkable. That ought to grab anyone’s attention; this agreement or relationship or covenant is serious. Blood is involved in this agreement or relationship God makes with the people of Israel. What does that mean? It’s obvious. It means this agreement or covenant is held together by the shedding of someone’s blood. That’s serious business. The shedding of blood means someone must die. Hence, someone must die for the agreement to be in effect. Christ’s Testament, the Shedding of His Blood for the sins of Israel, then, underpinned the relationship between God and the people of Israel.

 For this reason, one of the expressions for making a covenant in the Old Testament is “carath [to cut] berith [a covenant]” because in the cutting of flesh blood was shed. For example,

when God promised Abraham the land for his people to him, Moses writes, “In the same day the LORD [cut] Abraham [a covenant]”. Once again, this covenant or relationship, was underpinned by the Blood of Jesus Christ, by His Testament.

 **Genesis 15:18**. The gravity of the Blood of the Messiah underpinning this covenant is borne out by the previous verses. “And he said unto him, Take me an heifer of three years old, and a she goat of three years old, and a ram of three years old, and a turtledove, and a young pigeon. And he took unto him all these, and divided them in the midst, and laid each piece on against another: But the birds divided he not. And when the fowls came down upon the carcases, Abram drove them away. And when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and, lo, an horror of great darkness fell upon him. And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land *that* *is* not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years; And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance. And thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age. But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorites *is* not yet full. And it came to pass, that, when the sun went down, and it was dark, behold a smoking furnace, and a burning lamp that passed between those pieces.” **Genesis 15:9-17**. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. 2“*We Christians must know that if God is not also in the balance, and gives the weight, we sink to the bottom with our scale. By this I mean: If it were not to be said [if these things were not true], God has died for us, but only a man, we would be lost. But if ‘God’s death’ and ‘God died’ lie in the scale of the balance, then He sinks down, and we rise up as a light, empty scale. But indeed He can also rise again or leap out of the scale; yet He could not sit in the scale unless He became a man like us, so that it could be said: ‘God died,’ ‘God’s passion,’ ‘God’s blood,’ ‘God’s death.’ For in His nature God cannot die; but now that God and man are united in one person, it is correctly called God’s death, when the man dies who is one thing or one person with God.*” The Formula of Concord, **Thorough Declaration**, **Article VIII. Of the Person of Christ.**44, underscore added. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. 3“You see, therefore, that what we call the mass is a promise of the forgiveness of sins made to us by God, and such a promise as has been confirmed by the death of the Son of God. For the only differences between a promise and a testament is that the testament involves the death of the one who makes it. A testator is a promiser who is about to die, while a promiser (if I may put it thus) is a testator who is not about to die. This testament of Christ is foreshadowed in all the promises of God from the beginning of the world; indeed, whatever value those ancient promises possessed was altogether derived from this new promise that was to come in Christ. Hence the words ‘compact,’ ‘covenant,’ and ‘testament of the Lord’ occur so frequently in the Scriptures. These words signified that God would one day die. ‘For where there is a testament, the death of the testator must of necessity occur’ (Heb. 9[:16]). Now God made a testament, therefore, it was necessary that he should die. But God could not die unless he became man. Thus the incarnation and the death of Christ are both comprehended most concisely in this one word, ‘testament.’” *Luther’s Works,* Vol. 36: 38, underscore added. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. 4“This is the greatest power and the proof of the Gospel, that it has the witness of the old Law and the Prophets that it would be so in the future. For the Gospel proclaims only what prophecy has said it would proclaim, so that we may say that it has been ordained by God's previous decision to be so before it should happen, and thus God alone should receive the glory for this doctrine and not our own merits and endeavors, obviously because this Gospel was ordained before we existed, as itself says (Prov. 8:23) ‘Ages ago I was set up, at the first,’ that is, in the form of the Law, ‘before the beginning of the earth,’ that is, the church, which was of course created by it [wisdom]. For the Gospel, which is the wisdom and the power of God (1 Cor. 1:24), has established the church and does everything that wisdom in that passage says about itself or its own glory and praise.” Lectures on Romans, Glosses and Scholia in *Luther's Works*, American Edition, ed. Hilton C. Oswald, tr. Walter G. Tillmanns, (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1972) Vol. 25, pp. 144, 145. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. 5**Jeremiah 31:31**, **33-34**. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. 6**I Corinthians 15:3**, **4**. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. 7*An Explanation of the History of the Suffering and Death of our Lord Jesus Christ according to the four evangelists, presented so that we may be awakened in the knowledge of the love of Christ and may blessedly grow according to the inner man*, tr. Elmer M. Hohle, ed. David O. Berger, Malone, TX: Repristination Press, pp. 243, 244, underscore added. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. 8The Formula of Concord, **Thorough Declaration**, **Article VIII. Of the Person of Christ.**44, underscore added. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. 9The Mass is the Gospel, i.e. God’s Word and 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 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. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. 10These covenants (arrangements, relationships) between God and men were called testaments because all relationships throughout history are underpinned by the Last Will and Testament of the Son of God. Hence, Moses forged the covenant with Israel with Blood. “And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled *it* on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant, which the LORD hath made with you concerning all these words.” **Exodus 24:8**. “With one half of the blood he sprinkled the altar, and with the other half he sprinkled the people, signifying the blood of sacrifice would unite God with Israel, calling it the blood of the covenant. ... As the Old Covenant was sanctified through blood, so especially was the New Testament. The blood of sacrifice of the Old Covenant prophesied of the covenant blood of the New Testament, and it had the power to atone for sin. Through the blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, there was established a complete atonement and redemption, and an eternal covenant of peace between God and the sinners.” The Rev. Dr. George Stoeckhardt, *Wisdom for Today*, Vol. I, tr. the Rev. Arthur E. Beck, Ft. Wayne: Concordia Theological Seminary Press, p. 96, underscore added.

 Without the Last Will and Testament of the Son of God, not even the covenant of allowing the sun to rise and set and the world to turn would remain. “The world owes its continued existence to the unfinished task of the church in spreading that Word (Matt. 24:14).” The Rev. Dr. Eugene F. A. Klug, *Church and Ministry*, St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1999, p. 135. That “Word”, of course, is the Last Will and Testament of the Son of God, the Gospel. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. 11“*We Christians must know that if God is not also in the balance, and gives the weight, we sink to the bottom with our scale. By this I mean: If it were not to be said [if these things were not true], God has died for us, but only a man, we would be lost. But if ‘God’s death’ and ‘God died’ lie in the scale of the balance, then He sinks down, and we rise up as a light, empty scale. But indeed He can also rise again or leap out of the scale; yet He could not sit in the scale unless He became a man like us, so that it could be said: ‘God died,’ ‘God’s passion,’ ‘God’s blood,’ ‘God’s death.’ For in His nature God cannot die; but now that God and man are united in one person, it is correctly called God’s death, when the man dies who is one thing or one person with God.*” The Formula of Concord, **Thorough Declaration**, **Article VIII. Of the Person of Christ.**44, underscore added. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. 12*Luther’s Works,* Vol. 36: 38, underscore added. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. 13**St. Mark 14:24.** [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. 14Martin Chemnitz, *The Lord’s Supper*, tr. J. A. O. Preus, St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, pp. 27, 28. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. 15**Psalm 12:3**. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. 16The Large Catechism, **[Part Fifth]** **Of The Sacrament of the Altar**.67-68, *Triglotta*, p. 769, underscore added. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)