

# Morrison Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church

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April 14, 2006  
Good Friday: Cross of Christ  
Pastor Randy Ott

Lesson: Isaiah 52:13-53:12  
John 18:1-19:42

## Cross of Christ

If you look in the back of the Luther's Catechism that our children use in school, you will find a glossary of terms. If you look in those terms under the word "faith", you will find faith described as "trust"—total and absolute trust in the Lord and what he has said to us. How has your trust been doing lately? Do you find at times your trust is shaken by health concerns, marital problems, and the threat of the loss of income? We live in a sinful world, and in a sinful world there are going to be things that at times are going to try to shake our trust. If we are honest with ourselves, we will see that our trust is not a straight and steady line. It is pretty much up and down throughout our lives. That is what makes the seventh word from the cross, the one we are looking at today, so incredibly amazing. Here is Jesus on the cross speaking a word of absolute trust in his heavenly Father. It is a perfect trust in his heavenly Father, and it is a perfect trust that is now ours by faith.

Think about trust—that little child that is in their father's arms, the one or two-year-old child—and the child is being thrown up in the air and the dad keeps catching the child. That is a bit of trust on the child's part, right? The child is laughing, giggling as their stomach goes up and down, right? The father is laughing as they do it. But that laughter would stop pretty quickly if that child was dropped once, right? The trust would be gone also. The next time that dad said they should play that game, I think the child would probably run to mom, right?

When you think about what had been happening on the cross as Jesus was on the cross, can't you say the Father had dropped Jesus? For three hours, darkness was over the land because God's presence had been withdrawn from God. God had forsaken God. For the first time in all eternity, the Son was isolated and alone, separated from the love of God as all of God's anger and wrath and fury over sin was being poured out on him.

Just a little bit before he had said, *"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"* (Matthew 27:46). Jesus knew the bitter taste of the fury of God against sin. He had been separated from the perfect love that is God, and we know from what Jesus has told us what that felt like. It was hell in every sense of the word. Jesus was enduring hell for us because it had to be that way. It absolutely had to be that way for us. That is the cross. On the cross, on Jesus' shoulder, was the sin that our human race pumps out like raw sewage. *For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander.* (Matthew 15:19). Jesus said that. And all of that was now piled upon him. It had to be because the cross is where God's mercy and his justice meet. His justice demanded punishment so Jesus was there on that day.

And another sin that was on his shoulders that day was our lack of trust. All the times that we have put our trust, not in God, but in other things. If you look on our currency, what does it say on there?—IN GOD WE TRUST. But have you ever noticed how much easier it is for us sinful human beings to trust in God when our wallet is full of those little green things that say IN GOD WE TRUST? Have you ever noticed how it is easier for us to trust God in the future when our retirement accounts are full or when our checking account has a large balance? Then it is a little bit easier for us at times to trust God when we have a lot of those pieces of paper that say IN GOD WE TRUST. But when cobwebs replace greenbacks in our wallets, when energy spikes a little bit more of our retirement savings or our savings, when company scandals erode our retirement savings, then IN GOD WE TRUST becomes a little more difficult for us because we are sinners. One of our sins is that we have an imperfect trust in God.

That is why Jesus had to go to the cross. And there he was sacrificed once for all time for all sins. As he hung on the cross, our sins forced the Father to turn away from Jesus. Your sins and mine caused Jesus to suffer the pain of hell on the cross. But when Jesus cries out, *"Father, into your hands I commit my spirit."* (Luke 23:46), the work was done. He had already said, *"It is finished."* (John 19:30). One last enemy needed to be destroyed, and that enemy was death. And so with that perfect child-like trust, a perfect trust that has never been seen before on earth and will never be seen again—that perfect of a trust—the trust of Jesus our Savior—he said, *"Father, into your hands I commit my spirit."* (Luke 23:46). Even though he had been forsaken by the Father because of us, he still trusted in his Father. He still willingly walked the road to the cross because he knew this is how God's mercy would be displayed. God would punish God instead of punishing us. God would become the atoning sacrifice for our sins so that we might be forgiven. Jesus had perfect trust in the Father's promises—promises made all the way back in the time of King David. *...nor will you let your Holy One see decay.* (Psalm 16:10). He had perfect trust in the Father and the Son and the Spirit's plan.

That is why we call this day "Good". This is good news for us that Jesus perfectly trusted the Father. Once during his ministry Jesus said, *"Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them."* (Matthew 5:17). Even with his dying breath, Jesus was fulfilling the Law in our place. God said to love him and trust him above all things. You and I don't do it, so to the very bitter end Jesus trusted in God above everything else for us, in our place, as our substitute. He lived and died without committing so much as a single sin so that *through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous.* (Romans 5:19).

So now when our God looks at us, we who have faith that Jesus is our substitute that was given to us by the Holy Spirit, he doesn't see our doubts, our wavering, he doesn't see our lack of trust, our misplaced trust—he sees the perfect trust of Jesus. As we rejoice in knowing that our sins have been taken away where justice and mercy meet at the cross, we are strengthened by the Spirit so we hold more tightly to God's precious promises so that as we are faced with economic uncertainty, we put our trust in God's promise that was spoken through King David. *I was young and now I am old, yet I have*

*never seen the righteous forsaken* (Psalm 37:25). God always keeps his promises. When life's problems pile up like mountains and hem us on every side, we put our trust in the promise that Paul spoke. *No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.* (1 Corinthians 10:13).

Now when the trust starts to waiver because the whole world seems to be against us, we cling to God's precious promises strengthened in the knowledge that our sins are forgiven. We flee to promises such as, *"In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."* (John 16:33). That is what our Savior told us. As we struggle with our weakness in trust and our misplaced trust, we can always go back to that incredible promise that God made to us in Romans. *He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?* (Romans 8:32). God has given us the Son. The Son has given us life and through it, heaven. Now we can know for certain that God will never drop us before we get there.

One of the places where I see the Spirit work this kind of trust and have this kind of trust show through in the lives of his people is as a pastor; I am often blessed to see it at people's death beds. People that are facing terminal illnesses that are Christians, and I hear them say with this child-like confidence, "Pastor, I am ready. I know that God is going to take me to his side. I know where I am going and if God wants to take me now, so be it." That kind of trust doesn't come from within us. That kind of trust comes from Jesus. That kind of trust comes from the Spirit. That kind of trust comes from the Father.

So what a wonderful blessing it is for one Christian to pray with another who is at death's door, "Father, into your hand I commit my Spirit." And by the grace of God, you and I who know who Jesus is and what he has done for us and we will be able to place our trust in the Father perfectly because God keeps his promises. He kept his promise and took away our sins at the place where justice and mercy meet—at the cross.