



## Morrison Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church

[www.mzluth.org](http://www.mzluth.org)

**April 6, 2007**

**Good Friday Tenebrae**

John 19:31-37

**Pastor Randy Ott**

**Readings:** Psalm 2, Psalm 22:1-21,

Psalm 27, Psalm 51, Isaiah 55:6-11,

Lamentations 1:1-5 and 10-14

**Gospel:** John 19:17-37

### **It Is Hidden in the Savior's Promises**

The journey we began 40 days ago on Ash Wednesday ends this evening as it started. When Jesus began his Lenten pilgrimage and said to his disciples, "Let's go up to Jerusalem," he declared he was going up to Jerusalem to be mocked and to be spit upon. He was going up to be handed over to the Gentiles. He was going up to be beaten and crucified. He was going up to die and after three days to rise from the dead. He said on more than one occasion that all of this was going to be done to fulfill the Scriptures.

As we gather together on this holy day, this solemn day, this day full of sadness, we still remind ourselves it is a good day. We see the glory of Christ's cross is hidden in the promises that the cross fulfills. As you think about how often Jesus talked about fulfilling Scriptures and all the things that had to be done, how often the Holy Spirit inspired the gospel writers' pens to say this happened so that Scripture might be fulfilled, you have to remember also that these promises that are fulfilled that we are considering this evening are promises that broke the heart of God.

You and I gather together on Good Friday and we see what our sins have done, and we brush a tear away from our eyes. We feel a sadness in the pit of our stomachs because we know what we have done to Christ. There are no rationalizations when you stand at the foot of the cross. There is no excuse making. There is no finger pointing that someone else is worse. There is only "Lord have mercy on me, a sinner."

But God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, from before creation began, knew what all of these promises would end up being. Think of those words that we just read from Scripture and go back and look at Psalm 2. The nations are lined up against the Lord's Messiah. Look at Psalm 22. "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? My tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth. People mock me. They laugh at me. My strength is sapped as in the heat of summer." Read through Isaiah 53 again about the punishment that brings us peace that was upon him. Look at the Laments that the Holy Spirit had Jeremiah write over Jerusalem and see that they also pictured in that last reading we had from Jeremiah how all of those things would be poured out on Christ. You have to realize that from before time began this day was in God's plan. These promises were made that would break God's heart because God would forsake God. God would take all of his wrath and pour it on himself.

But on this day, we mark the glorious truth that God kept his promises. As Jesus hung on the cross beaten and bloodied, as the blood trickled down, as the spear was thrust

into his side, as all of these various things happened, the greatest pain is one that thankfully you and I will never have to imagine. The greatest pain is God forsaking God. The greatest pain is Jesus enduring the eternity that our sins deserve in the agony of hell condensed and forced upon him who was sinless.

But he made the promises. He kept the promises. Promises that broke his heart, he kept. And the only reason he kept them was because he loves you and he loves me and he loves every person in this world. As sinners, you and I have the audacity at times to think, "God, why have you let this into my life? Why don't you love me?" We have reminders of the cross all around us—on our walls at home and around our necks. Everywhere we look you can see a cross. Yet, because of the nature of sin, at times you and I might think God has stopped loving us. Look at the promises kept in the cross. If God keeps the promise to forsake himself, to take hell upon his shoulders and drink the cup of God's wrath to the last bitter drop, now something is going to happen in your life or my life that means God has stopped loving us?

It's a foolish thought, isn't it? We know that if God is faithful in this, God is faithful in every one of the promises he has ever made. Whether they are big promises or little promises, how you or I might look upon them, he will keep every one. Even down to "I thirst." So when he says to us that even though we deserve to be forsaken, he will never forsake us. When he says to us in the waters of our baptism that we were clothed with the perfection that Jesus Christ won for the world, we don't have to doubt that promise just because we can't understand how God does this work. When he promises that he will be with you always to the very end of the age, don't rely on your senses to think that he has left you. Hang on to those promises. When he promises you that all things will work together for the good of those who love God, and as you are facing heartache that you cannot imagine, don't focus on your broken heart or your aching heart or the hurt or the pain that you feel, focus on the power that is in the promise and focus on the certainty that is the fulfillment of that promise that you see when you look at the cross of Christ.

Here is the glorious truth—God's promises in Christ didn't stop at the cross. They continue through our life. They continue through the world ends, but they even continue after the world ends because all of God's promises are designed to keep us close to him so that when the Last Day comes, we don't face eternal death. We go right with him to those eternal mansions that he has prepared for us. We are prepared by the body and blood of our Savior. We are prepared by him keeping every last promise he has made.

So on this day that we having growing darkness in our sanctuary, as our church is draped in blackness and emptiness, focus on what remains. God keeps his promises in Christ Jesus. Remember that his promise was, "destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it again. And because I live, you also will live." Then rejoice that God has given the strength of faith to call this day "Good" Friday.