



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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April 18, 2014

Pastor Randy Ott

Good Friday: Cross of Christ

Lesson: [Isaiah 52:13-53:12](#)

History of Our Lord's Suffering and Death: [John 18:1-19:42](#)

Sermon Text: [John 19:1-16](#)

Jesus Died Willingly!

In Christ Jesus, dear fellow redeemed:

This year in Lent during our Midweek Lenten services, we looked at Jesus' cross and focused on it by looking at some of the surprising words that take place throughout the Passion. Today we don't so much focus upon a surprising word that Jesus spoke. It's a surprising action of Jesus. Jesus died willingly.

Of all the people that ever stood before Pilate and had their life hanging in the balance, I wonder how many of them never begged for mercy or pled their case on why this was a miscarriage of justice? I have to believe that even the guilty that knew they were guilty begged and pleaded to avoid something as awful as crucifixion was. Yet you see Jesus stand before Pilate silent, which takes Pilate aback. He doesn't know what to think of this. Then, when he goes back out and tells him again, "I haven't found any reason to kill this man," they said "We have the law and by it he must die because he claimed to be the Son of God."

So now you take this unusual action of Jesus, you take the fact that Pilate's wife had sent him a note that said "Don't have anything to do with this innocent man. I suffered greatly today in a dream because of him." And you begin to understand where it says that Pilate was even more afraid. It's as though it was unsettling because Jesus wasn't like every other criminal that came through and this idea that he might be a Son of God... Pilate was no believer in the God of the Scriptures, but he was, as a Roman, a believer that there were many gods and was very superstitious about the gods, and I wonder if Pilate didn't think that maybe this is one of the gods appearing in front of him, not understanding who the true God is. That's why I think he would be very afraid.

So again he goes to him and says, "Why aren't you answering me? Don't you know I have the power to set you free or the power to kill you?" Now Jesus answers and says "You have no power except that which was given you." In Pilate's ears, he's probably thinking Caesar, right? But Jesus tells him he's not thinking about Caesar. He says "The one who handed me over to you is guilty of a greater sin." He's talking about the divine. God had given him his authority as governor of the province of Judea and that the one who handed him over to him, the Jewish leaders, Caiaphas, those who were entrusted with teaching the Scriptures to God's people knew the prophecies of

Scripture. The prophecies of Scripture were fulfilled in their sight. They chose to ignore it for their own reasons or their spiritual blindness. They handed over the One who was their Savior to die. In that sense, Pilate was acting in ignorance. They should have known better. That's why Jesus speaks of it this way.

Jesus willingly goes to the cross. He willingly endures a death that is horrific and agonizing and fulfills what we read in the beginning of our service in Isaiah. He was disfigured beyond recognizing as a man. Everything we read that happened to Jesus, you have to believe that was the case, what Isaiah said 700 years earlier came true. Jesus willingly went to it.

He had the power to walk away from it. He had raised the dead. He had healed the sick. He had given sight to the blind. He made that mob that came with those weapons, torches and all that stuff drop to the ground when he said "I am he." He wasn't what he appeared to be. He appeared to be just another prisoner who was bound, who was mocked, who was beaten and who was bloodied but had no power to fight back.

Jesus had the power. He has all power. Yet he willingly went. Why? Was he just some crazy guy who liked pain? No. He willingly went to the cross because that's what should have happened to you. You should have been separated from God because of your sin. You should spend an eternity separated from God because of your sin. But Jesus willingly walked the path that went to the cross, stumbling and falling as he went down that path, because he wanted yours sins to be paid for. He was going to take all the punishment that your sins deserved. He put them on his back. And he willingly did all of this so that you might be forgiven.

Don't ever, ever become apathetic to that statement. It's the most glorious truth you'll ever hear. Your God, the God who created the world, loves you this much that he died for you. You might go through life and it feels like at times no one loves you. That's a lie. Your God loves you. The cross is the evidence of it. You might go through life at times with all kinds of difficulties and all kinds of struggles and all kinds of pains and hurts and feel as though you are facing them alone, but you're not. The God who loved you enough to do that loves you enough to be with you. I don't care how you feel. This is a truth that God has accomplished and he has spoken. And his truths are always certain. We might not always feel it, but that's an us problem. That's not a God problem. So don't rely on feelings. Rely on the objective truth of who God is and what he has done for you.

Pilate was hesitant. You can see it as you read this. He didn't want to hand Jesus over to be crucified, but he became worried about protecting his own place before Caesar. And when they started squawking about "if you let this man go, you're no friend of Caesar," he finally caved in and said "take him and crucify him. Do what you want." He was hesitant.

You don't see Jesus being hesitant. You don't see him trying to stop this miscarriage of justice. You don't see him dragging his feet on the way to the cross. He willingly died for you. That love has opened heaven for you. That love has sent the Spirit so that you believe that what Jesus did for the world he did for you personally so that all the blessings that he won are now yours. The empty tomb that we'll celebrate on Sunday assures us that this payment was accepted by God and our sins are washed completely away and eternal life is ours.

This day, this cross, this willingness of Jesus makes all the difference in your life. Just see how willing your Savior is to do this for you and then rejoice that someone loves you that much. Amen.