

**St. Luke Ev. Lutheran Church
Devotions delivered by
Pastor Anthony E. Schultz
Good Friday, April 18, 2014**



First Word--Luke 23:26-34 As they led him away, they seized Simon from Cyrene, who was on his way in from the country, and put the cross on him and made him carry it behind Jesus. A large number of people followed him, including women who mourned and wailed for him. Jesus turned and said to them, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me; weep for yourselves and for your children. For the time will come when you will say, 'blessed are the barren women, the wombs that never bore and the breasts that never nursed!' Then "they will say to the mountains, "Fall on us!" And to the hills, "Cover us!" 'For if men do these things when the tree is green, what will happen when it is dry?" Two other men, both criminals, were also led out with him to be executed. When they came to the place called the Skull, there they crucified him, along with the criminals – one on his right, the other on his left. Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." And they divided up his clothes by casting lots.

This is fundamental – Jesus died so that all our sins are forgiven. I was watching TV the other night – and the conservative host was talking about killing Jesus – about his death on the cross. His guest was saying Jesus died for our sins – and through faith we are forgiven" – the host said, "But you still have to keep a strict moral code!" "No you don't," said the guest. "Fruits of faith come from faith. We do things that are kind and thoughtful and helpful and good – because we are forgiven. You don't get forgiven because you do good works." "Oh," said the host, "but there will be a day of reckoning. There has to be. Tell me – there is a day of reckoning – when people will be held accountable!" Again – we miss the point if we believe you have to be good to go to Heaven and that people who do bad things all

go to hell! Everyone sins – believers and unbelievers! Everyone does terrible things. We don't think – I only make little mistakes. My sins are only small potatoes. I should be more patient – more thoughtful – more considerate. But I am not like some people I know – guilty of the most horrible and hurtful sins – done over and over again and again. My sins are not like the people I read about in the paper or see on the news. I am not like some of my relatives – and some of my in-laws and some people I work with. They do terrible inexcusable things – while my mistakes are only brief and practically harmless short-comings! I heard just the other day about a former politician – a man who is exceedingly rich – so rich he is giving \$50 million – to try and stop violence and murder. This man is quoted as saying *"I am telling you if there is a God, when I get to heaven I'm not stopping to be interviewed. I am heading straight in. I have earned my place in heaven. It's not even close," he told the newspaper.* This is a painful misunderstanding. Jesus died on the cross – to wash away all my sins. That forgiveness is ours by grace through faith. Even as he was dying on the cross Jesus prayed, **“Father, forgive them for they know not what they do!”**

Second Word--Luke 23:38-43 There was a written notice above him, which read: **"THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS"**. One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: **"Aren't you the Christ? Save yourself and us!"** But the other criminal rebuked him. **"Don't you fear God,"** he said, **"since you are under the same sentence? We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong."** Then he said, **"Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom."** Jesus answered him, **"I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise."**

Ed lives in Ohio. Ed is my age. Ed is – my dad would say – “old enough to know better!” Ed pleaded no contest to charges that he bullied his neighbor – a whole family of people with special needs. The judge ordered Ed to sit on a very busy street corner holding a sign that said, “I am a bully!” People honked at Ed – yelled at him – took his picture! Ed is not a nice person. Oh, he wore a hat and a big pair of sunglasses and tried to cover his face with his hands – but I know what he looks like. Ed’s shame is on the Internet. Reporters from England showed video of Ed all over Europe. Ed is embarrassed and angry. That’s not the same as repentant. Ed is kind of like one of the thieves crucified beside Jesus. One of the criminals that hurled insults at Jesus saying, **"Aren't you the Christ? Save yourself and us!"** Both criminals started out mocking Jesus. But then the Holy Spirit worked a powerful change in the ♥ of one. **He said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom."** Jesus answered him, **"I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise."** And he was – not *some* day – but that day. And one day we will be too!

Third Word--John 19:25-27 Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciples whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, "Dear woman, here is your son," and to the disciples, "Here is your mother." From that time on, this disciple took her into his home.

The little Lord Jesus was just 8 days old when his mom and I kind of like to say – *foster* father/*adopted* father Joseph took the Christ-child to the Temple. There were a couple of people looking for Jesus. One was a little old lady named Anna – the daughter of Phanuel of the tribe of Asher. There was also a little grandpa named Simeon. He said to Mary, Jesus' mother: **"This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too."** Luke 2:34b,35 Thirty years later – when Jesus' public ministry began those words were fulfilled again and again – falling and rising – people believing and people rejecting Jesus. John chapter 6:66 says, **"From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him. 'You do not want to leave too, do you?' Jesus asked the Twelve. Simon Peter answered him, 'Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We believe and know that you are the Holy One of God.' Then Jesus replied, 'Have I not chosen you, the twelve? Yet one of you is a devil!' (He meant Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, who, though one of the Twelve, was later to betray him.)"** 33 years after Jesus was born – Simeon's words came true – as she stood at the foot of the cross and watched Jesus die! A sword pierced her ♥ . There are in life few things more painful than to watch your child suffer. Even as he was dying – Jesus looked out for his mom. John – the disciple Jesus loved would watch out for Mary – and Mary would treat John like her son. Again Jesus' concern was not for himself but for those he loved. Jesus is always looking out for us!

Fourth Word--Matthew 27:45-49 From the sixth hour until the ninth hour darkness came over all the land. About the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi lama sabachthani?" – which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" When some of those standing there heard this, they said, "He's calling Elijah." Immediately one of them ran and got a sponge. He filled it with wine vinegar, put it on a stick and offered it to Jesus to drink. The rest said, "Now leave him alone. Let's see if Elijah comes to save him."

When you think of terrible sins – what do you think of? Do you think of 10 crazy people in China who take knives and slash 33 people to death and wound another 140? Do you think of people like that Castro guy in Ohio who held people in chains in his basement for years? Do you think of people who do unspeakable things to children – abuse and neglect? From time to time you hear of people who are sentenced to great amounts of time – because their crimes were so terrible. A man named Bobbie Joe – a serial killer in Florida was sentenced to 28 life sentences plus 99 years and 1 death sentence – for horrible crimes against more than 50 victims – then killing more than half of them. A man named Dudley was sentenced to 10,000 years in prison. Then for killing his mother-in-law and a college student more years were added to the 10,000 years. Longer still a 20 year old man named Palma was given 384,912 for having failed to deliver the mail. His crime of not delivering over 4,000 letters resulted in a long punishment by multiplying the number of letters by a number of years for each. The fact is – **the wages of sin is death!** Romans 6:23 For all our sins and mistakes we deserve to die eternally. Jesus was utterly and completely abandoned – when he claimed responsibility for my sins and yours. Jesus cried out in unbearable pain – enduring the hurt of hell itself so that we might know the peace and joy of heaven forever!

Fifth Word--John 19:28,29 Later, knowing that all was now completed, and so that the Scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said, **"I am thirsty."** A jar of wine vinegar was there, so they soaked a sponge in it, put the sponge on a stalk of the hyssop plant, and lifted it to Jesus' lips.

Thirst – extreme – painful thirst is a terrible thing. I have visited more than one person in the hospital – their lips cracked and bleeding – little pieces of skin like tiny little tiles on their lips. So thirsty yet so incapable of swallowing – people take little white paper lollipop sticks with a little green crinkle cut sponge on the end. They take this little sponge and dip it in water – and touch it to their lips. Here at least is the smallest relief. Sometimes after an operation – people suck on the smallest little chip of ice. Again – the smallest relief. When Jesus had completed all that needed to be done to save us – yet one specific thing remained. So that the Scriptures would be fulfilled, Jesus said, **"I am thirsty."** What Scriptures? Do you know? Psalm 69:21 says, ²¹ **They put gall in my food and gave me vinegar for my thirst."** And again, Psalm 22:15 says, ¹⁵ **My mouth is dried up like a potsherd (a broken dried out scrap of pottery) , and my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth; you lay me in the dust of death.** Imagine – 1,000 years before the fact – God's Word says what Jesus will do on a Friday afternoon – as the Lamb of God – sacrificed to redeem us. The point is not being ever so thirsty. The point is the anguish Jesus endured of body and mind to pay for our sins and mistakes. Jesus suffered to wash away all our sins. Jesus fulfilled everything – literally hundreds of prophecies – to save us. The fact that they gave Jesus vinegar to drink – was just one more powerful proof that Jesus is exactly who he claimed to be – the Word made flesh to save us. Jesus fulfilled every promise his Father made to save us!

Sixth Word--John 19:30 When he had received the drink, Jesus said, "It is finished." With that he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

I read about a young woman named Kristina. She died in a car accident that didn't need to happen when she was only 21 years old. When she died – her family went through her things and found her *bucket list* – the things she wanted to do before she kicked the bucket. Her family is trying between them – to do as many things on her list as they are able. She wanted to go sky diving – so somebody did that – carrying her picture. She wanted to ride a hot air balloon – to ride a camel. She wanted to learn how to fly – so somebody is taking flying lessons. She wanted to run through a poppy field. Is that what Dorothy did in the Wizard of Oz – run through a poppy field? One other thing she wanted to do was save someone's life. Now you might think that's just not something you can do – but she did – by being an organ donor! Think about it. She donated her liver – part to a little 9 month infant and most of it – the rest of it to a man 55 years old. She gave a kidney to a family friend – a kidney and her pancreas to someone unknown – and her heart – very likely – to a woman 64 years old – who got a heart – just about the same time Kristina died! That's something – and so – to save 5 lives? Then think what Jesus did. Jesus died to save the world!

Seventh Word--Luke 23:33-46 When they came to the place called the Skull, there they crucified him, along with the criminals – one on his right, the other on his left. Jesus said, “Father forgive them for they do not know what they are doing.” And they divided up his clothes by casting lots. The people stood watching, and the rulers even sneered at him. They said, “He saved others; let him save himself if he is the Christ of God, the Chosen One.” The soldiers also came up and mocked him. They offered him wine vinegar and said, “If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself.” There was a written notice above him, which read: **THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.** One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: “Aren’t you the Christ? Save yourself and us!” But the other criminal rebuked him, “Don’t you fear God,” he said, “since you are under the same sentence? We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong.” Then he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.” Jesus answered him, “I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise.” It was now about the sixth hour, and darkness came over the whole land until the ninth hour, for the sun stopped shining. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two. Jesus called out with a loud voice, “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.” When he had said this, he **breathed his last.**

More often than not – people don’t see death coming. There were all those people who were caught up in the mudslide. They are still finding bodies in mud some places 25 feet deep. That’s like mud from the floor – all the way to the peak of the church roof! There was that crash between the bus and the Fed-Ex truck – and suddenly there were inescapable flames! There was the Ferry by South Korea – and suddenly the ship is on its side – and over two hundred people – again – many of them teenagers – are missing – and presumed drowned. It happens again and again – without warning something goes painfully horribly wrong – and very breakable people die! We say again and again, “Nobody saw that coming!” Jesus knew when he was going to die. Jesus wasn’t killed. In fact Jesus gave up

his life. Jesus called out with a loud voice – right at the end. For the longest time I thought to actually see someone die – would be terrible beyond years. It was in May of 1978 – High School graduation day – when I was the Vicar – that I sat at the foot of the hospital bed of one of our members. He breathed slower and slower – more and more shallow – more and more time between breaths – and then it stopped. It wasn't scary at all! I thought – if that ever happens again – I will never forget seeing someone die. The fact is – I have seen so many people die – I can't remember them all. I tried to make a list – and it's somewhere around 25 or 30 times – not to count all the times I got to a home or barn before the Campbellsport EMS could come the 6 miles+ from SW to Dundee. People grow weaker and weaker – their ♥ stops and they open their eyes to see Jesus! Jesus died for you and for me. Jesus gave up his life for you and for me. Because Jesus loves you more than life itself! Jesus loves you and died a most tortured death to save you. Good Friday is over. Easter is coming. Amen!