

St. John Evangelical Lutheran Church
A Family Connecting in Christ



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THE HANDS OF THE PASSION
HANDS OF BRUTALITY (SOILDERS)

IN OUR WORLD TODAY...we protest violence and then cheer a hard tackle, a hard check into the boards, and a bloody, brutal cage match. Which is the real us?

IN OUR WORSHIP TODAY...we see the violence of this world packaged against the Prince of Peace. What are we to think?

OPENING HYMN

"Come to Calvary's Holy Mountain"

Hymn 106

Come to Calv'ry's holy mountain, Sinners, ruined by the fall;
Here a pure and healing fountain Flows to you, to me, to all,
In a full, perpetual tide, Opened when our Savior died.

Come in poverty and meanness, Come defiled, without, within;
From infection and uncleanness, From the leprosy of sin,
Wash your robes and make them white; You shall walk with God in light.

Come in sorrow and contrition, Wounded, paralyzed, and blind;
Here the guilty, free remission, Here the troubled, peace may find.
Health this fountain will restore; He that drinks shall thirst no more.

He that drinks shall live forever; 'Tis a soul-renewing flood.
God is faithful; God will never Break his covenant of blood,
Signed when our Redeemer died, Sealed when he was glorified.

M: In the name of the Father and of the Son † and of the Holy Spirit.

C: **Amen.**

M: This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you:

C: **God is light; in him there is no darkness at all.**

M: If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness,

C: **We lie and do not live by the truth.**

M: If we claim to be without sin,

C: **We deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.**

C: **Father, I have sinned against you and am no longer worthy to be called your child. Yet in mercy you sacrificed your only Son to purge away my guilt. For his sake, O God, be merciful to me, a sinner, and in the joy of the Holy Spirit let me serve you all my days.**

Silence for private confession.

M: If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. Upon this, your confession, I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son † and of the Holy Spirit.

C: **Thanks be to God. Amen.**

PRAYER

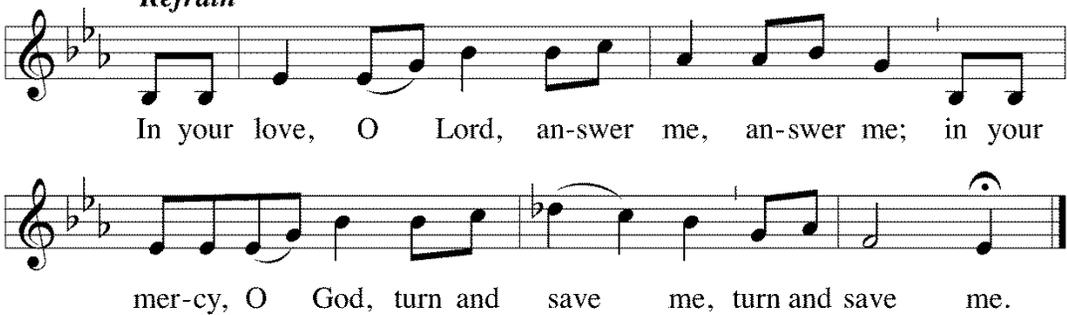
M: Lord God, we thank you for this new day of grace. Stay with us and warm our hearts with your forgiving love in Christ. May your Word keep our faith burning brightly that we may walk in the light of your presence through the darkness of this world.

Come and bless us as we worship you: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

C: **Amen.**

PSALM 69 (CWS)

Refrain



In your love, O Lord, an-swer me, an-swer me; in your
mer-cy, O God, turn and save me, turn and save me.

Psalm Tone



Save me, O God,

For the waters have come up to my neck.

Those who hate me without reason outnumber the hairs of my head;

Many are my enemies without cause, those who seek to destroy me.

May those who hope in you not be disgraced because of me, O Lord Almighty;

May those who seek you not be put to shame because of me, O God of Israel.

For zeal for your house consumes me,

And the insults of those who insult you fall on me.

Answer me, O Lord, out of the goodness of your love;

In your great mercy turn to me. *Refrain.*

They put gall in my food

And gave me vinegar for my thirst.

The Lord hears the needy

And does not despise his captive people.

Let heaven and earth praise him,

The seas and all that move in them,

For God will save Zion

And rebuild the cities of Judah.

I will praise God's name in song
And glorify him with Thanksgiving.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son
And to the Holy Spirit,
As it was in the beginning,
Is now, and will be forever. Amen. *Refrain.*

PSALM PRAYER

M: Lord God, our refuge and strength, when the restless powers of this world and the fury of Satan rise up against your holy city, watch over it and keep it safe. Be with us in every time of trouble and bring us to the new Jerusalem where you live and reign, one God, now and forever. Amen.

THE PASSION HISTORY OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST

The Scripture readings that begin today are called the Passion History. Unlike the ordinary meaning of the word *passion*, the meaning of this word as it applies to the series of readings during Lent is based on the ancient original Latin and Greek. *Passio* (Latin) and *pascha* (Greek) speak of suffering as reflected in our contemporary word *compassion* ("suffering with someone"). So we read a history of the suffering and death of our Savior. The readings each week are a composite account taken from all four gospels. They relate the events in their sequential order, providing us with the full story of the suffering and death of our Lord.

LESSON FOUR

Pilate called together the chief priests, the rulers, and the people, and said to them, "You brought this man to me as one who is misleading the people. Look, I have examined him in your presence. I have found in this man no basis for the charges you are bringing against him. Herod did not either, for he sent him back to us. See, he has done nothing worthy of death. So I will have him flogged and release him."^a

At the time of the Festival the governor had a custom to release to the crowd any one prisoner they wanted. At that time they were holding a notorious prisoner named Barabbas, who had been thrown in prison for a rebellion in the

city and for murder. The crowd came up and began to ask Pilate to do for them what he usually did.

So when they were assembled, Pilate said to them, "Do you want me to release the King of the Jews to you? Which one do you want me to release to you? Barabbas—or Jesus, who is called Christ?" For Pilate in fact knew that they had handed Jesus over to him because of envy.

While he was sitting on the judgment seat, Pilate's wife sent him a message. "Have nothing to do with that righteous man," she said, "since I have suffered many things today in a dream because of him." But the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowd to ask for Barabbas and to have Jesus put to death. The governor asked them, "Which of the two do you want me to release to you?"

They all shouted together with one voice: "Take him away! Release Barabbas to us!"

Pilate said to them, "Then what do you want me to do with the man you call the King of the Jews? What should I do with Jesus, who is called Christ?"

They all said to him, "Crucify him!"

But the governor said, "Why? What has he done wrong?"

But they kept shouting even louder: "Crucify him!"

Pilate addressed them again, because he wanted to release Jesus. But they kept shouting, "Crucify! Crucify him!"

He said to them the third time, "Why? What evil has he done? I have found no grounds for sentencing him to death. So I will whip him and release him." But they kept pressuring him with loud voices, demanding that he be crucified. And their voices were overwhelming.^b

Then Pilate took Jesus and had him flogged.^c

The governor's soldiers took Jesus into the Praetorium and gathered the whole cohort^d of soldiers around him. They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him. They twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on his head. They put a staff in his right hand, knelt in front of him, and mocked him by saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" They spit on him, took the staff, and hit him repeatedly on his head. They also kept hitting him in the face.^a

Pilate went outside again and said to them, "Look, I am bringing him out to you to let you know that I find no basis for a charge against him."

So Jesus came out wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Pilate said to them, "Behold the man!"

When the chief priests and guards saw him, they shouted, "Crucify! Crucify!"

Pilate told them, "Take him yourselves and crucify him, for I find no basis for a charge against him."

The Jews answered him, "We have a law, and according to that law he ought to die, because he claimed to be the Son of God."

When Pilate heard this statement, he was even more afraid. He went back inside the palace again and asked Jesus, "Where are you from?"

But Jesus gave him no answer.

So Pilate asked him, "Are you not talking to me? Don't you know that I have the authority to release you or to crucify you?"

Jesus answered, "You would have no authority over me at all if it had not been given to you from above. Therefore the one who handed me over to you has the greater sin."

From then on Pilate tried to release Jesus. But the Jews shouted, "If you let this man go, you are no friend of Caesar! Anyone who claims to be a king opposes Caesar!"

When Pilate heard these words, he brought Jesus outside. He sat down on the judge's seat at a place called the Stone Pavement, or Gabbatha in Aramaic. It was about the sixth hour^b on the Preparation Day for the Passover. Pilate said to the Jews, "Here is your king!"

They shouted, "Away with him! Away with him! Crucify him!"

Pilate said to them, "Should I crucify your king?"

"We have no king but Caesar!" the chief priests answered.^c

When Pilate saw that he was accomplishing nothing and that instead it was turning into a riot, he decided that what they demanded would be done. He took water, washed his hands in front of the crowd, and said, "I am innocent of this righteous man's blood. It is your responsibility."

And all the people answered, "Let his blood be on us and on our children!"

Since he wanted to satisfy the crowd, Pilate released Barabbas to them.

So then Pilate handed Jesus over to them to be crucified.^a

After they had mocked him, the soldiers took off the robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him away to crucify him. Jesus was carrying his own cross.

As they were going out of the city, a certain man, Simon of Cyrene (the father of Alexander and Rufus), was passing by on his way in from the country. They placed the cross on him and made him carry it behind Jesus. A large crowd of the people was following him, including women who were mourning and wailing for him.

Jesus turned to them and said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, stop weeping for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. Be sure of this: The days are coming when they will say, 'Blessed are the childless women, the wombs that never gave birth, and the breasts that never nursed.' Then they will begin to say to the mountains, 'Fall on us!' and to the hills, 'Cover us.'^b For if they do these things to the green wood, what will happen to the dry?"^c

SEASONAL RESPONSE

ALL: All we like sheep have gone astray, and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. By his wounds we are healed.

HYMN

"My Song Is Love Unknown"

Hymn 110

- 1- My song is love unknown, My Savior's love to me,
Love to the loveless shown That they might lovely be.
Oh, who am I That for my sake
My Lord should take Frail flesh and die?

- 2- He came from his blest throne Salvation to bestow,
But such disdain! So few The longed-for Christ would know!
But oh, my friend, My friend indeed,
Who at my need His life did spend!

- 3- *Sometimes they strew his way And his sweet praises sing,
Resounding all the day Hosannas to their King.
Then "Crucify!" Is all their breath,
And for his death They thirst and cry.*
- 4- *Why? What has my Lord done? What makes this rage and spite?
He made the lame to run; He gave the blind their sight.
Sweet injuries! Yet they at these
Themselves displease And 'gainst him rise.*
- 5- *They rise and needs will have My dear Lord made away.
A murderer they save; The Prince of life they slay.
Yet cheerful he To suff'ring goes
That he his foes From death might free.*
- 6- *In life no house, no home My Lord on earth might have;
In death no friendly tomb But what a stranger gave.
What may I say? Heav'n was his home
But mine the tomb Wherein he lay.*
- 7- *Here might I stay and sing; No story so divine,
Never was love, dear King, Never was grief like thine.
This is my friend, In whose sweet praise
I all my days Could gladly spend!*

SERMON

Matthew 27: 27-31

Any hockey fans here? Any Rodney Dangerfield fans? Put hockey and Rodney Dangerfield together and what do you get? That old joke about hockey: "I went to a fight last night, and a hockey game broke out." Back when I lived in Colorado I went to a hockey game in Phoenix. We got some cheap seats, obstructed view, high up. Some gray-haired grandmas got cheaper seats, higher up. Carrying their oxygen tanks, they huffed and puffed their way up to their seats way up high. Didn't hear much of them, until what? A fight broke out.

Then those gray-haired grandmas with their oxygen tanks were hooting and hollering, and demanding. Demanding what? Demanding blood. In some ways it was funny. In some ways, kind of sad.

In a world of evil, we need people willing to put a stop to evil. In a world of evil, we need people willing to exercise power, willing to inflict pain, willing to shed blood - to put a stop to evil. We thank God for people willing to do that for us - when needed - as they remember what they are about - serving and protecting, keeping the peace, with respect. But most violence we see today isn't violence for the sake of a godly good. Most pain we see inflicted today isn't pain inflicted for the sake of godly peace, is it? We live in a world with a cruel streak, a world that finds satisfaction, maybe better - that seeks satisfaction without ever finding it - a world that finds joy in inflicting pain, a world with an insatiable thirst for blood.

In what ways do you see a world that seeks satisfaction and joy in inflicting pain, a world with an insatiable thirst for blood?

In a world of evil, in what ways do we need people willing to exercise power, inflict pain, shed blood?

How do we help those people protect their hearts and souls from becoming calloused?

We see that in our lesson, don't we? Some say they were bored. Some say their hearts were calloused, calloused by years of violence; calloused by years of disrespect, not just disrespect for others, but years of disrespect from others - how many of those soldiers, do you think, felt respected themselves? Some say this was one of the few ways their little hearts could actually feel big, in control, and powerful. And so they flogged Jesus; they scourged Jesus. The Gospel writers don't tell us, but history does. The scourge was a tool of torture designed to cause maximum damage. A whip strung with strands of leather or hide, with sharp shards of bone or wood or metal, ripping flesh, stripping flesh, tearing in and tearing apart muscle, all the way in to the insides. Pontius Pilate ordered the flogging, hoping that blood would satisfy Jesus' enemies. But it didn't satisfy

anybody, not the crowd shouting “Crucify!” and not the soldiers spattered with Jesus’ blood.

How does Scripture describe the pain and physical damage caused by this torture and then the crucifixion? Why?

For those bloodied soldiers, it wasn’t good enough to rip Jesus’ body apart; they needed to rip Jesus’ heart apart. It wasn’t enough to bloody Jesus; they needed to belittle him. So they strip Jesus. Dress him up like a make-believe king. They fashion a crown of thorns and set it on his head. They press a staff into his hand. They kneel and they mock: “Hail, King of the Jews!” But still that wasn’t enough, enough pain, enough blood. So they spit on Jesus, pound on his thorn-crowned head

What would I have done if I were there in the middle of it all? What would you have done if you were one of the soldiers? Most all of us have been there, haven’t we? Maybe not as blood-thirsty or blood-splattered. Maybe not as violent. But most all of us have found ways to be cruel, to demean, to belittle, to mock, if not to tear into someone’s flesh to tear into someone’s heart. Who here hasn’t at some point, in some way, found a way to inflict pain on someone else - bullying, mocking, ridiculing, cutting someone down to size. Not for some noble reason, but simply to get what we want, simply to make ourselves feel good at someone else’s expense. I don’t want to think more about that. Do you?

Do you?

Jesus had to. First from his place in heaven, then living in the midst of it here in this world, Jesus couldn’t just turn away. People he loved from before all time were being hurt. People he loved from before all time were setting their hearts to inflict hurt and harm each other. He couldn’t just turn away and pretend it wasn’t happening; it hurt too much. And now bleeding at the hands of the soldiers, Jesus couldn’t just wish it all away. He couldn’t just wish himself away, step himself away; too much was at stake. You see, Jesus wasn’t just facing the

cold-hearted cruelty and contempt of those soldiers. In every slash, every punch, every cutting word of the soldiers, Jesus was facing the cruelty and contempt of this entire world. And worse, in every slash, every punch, every cutting word, Jesus was facing the cruelty and contempt we deserve for the cold-hearted cruelty and contempt we have shown. So Jesus couldn't just turn away.

You see, as the soldiers worked their brand of injustice, God was working his brand of justice. God was taking what you have coming, what I have coming, what we have coming for the ways we've been cold-hearted and cruel, the ways we've slashed and ripped, the ways we've made ourselves feel big at someone else's expense. God was taking what we have coming and he took it all out on Jesus.

Some would say: "That makes God blood-thirsty and vindictive." How would you answer that charge?

Some would say: "That makes God blood-thirsty and vindictive." The truth is: it shows God's justice and mercy. First, justice - there can be no justice without judgment. Cruelty and evil must be judged and punished or there is no justice. Jesus' blood worked God's justice, and Jesus' blood shows God's mercy. Instead of making us pay a price we could never pay, God sent his Son to pay - his blood instead of our blood, his life instead of our life. Why? Because as God, he could. As God he could pay the price without quitting, without falling short. And as God, he did. At the cruel hands of the soldiers, and then on the cross, he paid for all the hurt this world has ever inflicted - your hurt, my hurt included. Justice and mercy.

Why could Jesus pay what we could never pay?

Now, instead of God seeing you and thinking of you at your worst, God sees you and thinks of you covered with his best. As he sees Jesus stepping into the cruelty of this world for us, he sees you stepping in and stepping up for others. As he sees Jesus holding back from striking back, he sees you holding back. As

he sees Jesus doing what it takes to forgive, God sees you doing what it takes to forgive. Yes, God sees you, not with blood on your hands, but with Jesus' blood covering you holy. God sees you, not stepping on someone's heart, kicking at it; no, God sees you holding the heart of this world in your hands, in your heart. God sees you, not as guilty, but as forgiven, stepping in and stepping up with the heart of Jesus.

Which do you think was the most difficult for Jesus:

- stepping into this cruel world*
- holding back from striking back*
- forgiving those who are so cruel in this world? Why?*

When you stop to think about that, what comes to mind? Maybe this? "Wow! He did that for me?! Even after" Yes, for you. Or maybe, with your "Wow!" you're thinking - "How? How can I ever thank him, be like him, love like him?" Keep thinking it - both the "wow!" And the "how?" Amen.

Describe how God sees you with Jesus.

How is that different from how you (or people in your life) see you?

What do you do with that difference?

HYMN

"Glory Be to Jesus"

Hymn 103

Glory be to Jesus, Who in bitter pains
Poured for me the lifeblood From his sacred veins.

Grace and life eternal In that blood I find;
Blest be his compassion, Infinitely kind.

Blest through endless ages Be the precious stream
Which from endless torments Did the world redeem.

Abel's blood for vengeance Pleaded to the skies,
But the blood of Jesus For our pardon cries.

Oft as earth exulting Lifts its praise on high,
Angel hosts rejoicing Make their glad reply.

Lift we, then, our voices, Swell the mighty flood;
Louder still and louder Praise the precious blood!

PRAYER AND LORD'S PRAYER

M: Heavenly Father, you loved the world and gave your Son to liberate us from sin and death by his obedient death on the cross.

C: **We confess that without your love we are lost.**

M: Lord of the Church, we thank you for the treasure of the gospel. By your Spirit, keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith.

C: **Strengthen our determination to do what please you, no matter what the danger or the cost.**

M: Let us pray for those who carry a cross in the name of Christ and face ridicule and persecution for the sake of the kingdom: missionaries and chaplains, young people who stand up for what is right in the face of pressure to do what is wrong, and all who pay a high price for their faith and their values as Christians.

C: **By your spirit, O Lord, grant them patience and endurance.**

M: Let us pray for those who carry heavy burdens in life: the sick and the chronically ill, the depressed and the lonely, those torn by conflict in personal relationships, those victimized by war and injustice, and all who face the terrors of life with a heavy heart.

C: **Strengthen them in their work, O Lord, and do not let them become weary in doing good.**

Special prayers and intercessions may follow.

M: Hear us, Lord, as we bring you our private petitions.

Silent prayer.

M: Help us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Keep us faithful even to the point of death, that we may receive the crown of life, through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

All: Amen.

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

CLOSING PRAYER

M: O Lord God, our heavenly Father, pour out the Holy Spirit on your faithful people. Keep us strong in your grace and truth, protect and comfort us in all temptation, and bestow on us your saving peace, through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

BLESSING

M: The Lord bless you and keep you.
The Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you.
The Lord look on you with favor and give you peace. Amen.

CLOSING HYMN

“When I Survey the Wondrous Cross”

Hymn 125

When I survey the wondrous cross On which the Prince of glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss And pour contempt on all my pride.

Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast Save in the death of Christ, my God.
All the vain things that charm me most, I sacrifice them to his blood.

See, from his head, his hands, his feet, Sorrow and love flow mingled
down.

Did e'er such love and sorrow meet Or thorns compose so rich a crown?

Were the whole realm of nature mine, That were a tribute far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine, Demands my soul, my life, my all.

OFFERING

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Notes on the Passion Reading

^a Luke 23:13-16

^b Matthew 27:15-23; Mark 15:6-14; Luke 23:17-23; John 18:39-40

^c John 19:1; Matthew 27:26; Mark 15:15

^d A Roman cohort was about six hundred soldiers.

^a Matthew 27:27-30; Mark 15:16-19; Luke 23:17-25; John 19:2-3

^b The word about indicates an approximate time reference. Likely this was in the first part of the day, between 6 AM and 9 AM, using the time system of the Roman civil day, which began at 12 midnight. Mark 15:25 states that Jesus was crucified at 9 AM. John also seems to use Roman civil time to calculate the day in John 20:19 (because the evening is considered part of the first day of the week. Jewish time regarded sunset as the beginning of the next day).

^c John 19:4-15

^a Matthew 27:24-26; Mark 15:15; Luke 23:24; John 19:16

^b Hosea 10:8

^c Matthew 27:31-32; Mark 15:16-19; Luke 23:26-31; John 19:16-17

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