

Rev. Matthew Versemann  
Trinity Lutheran Church  
Decatur, Illinois  
Good Friday Sermon  
April 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2021

### **“Did God Have To Punish Our Sins?”**

Isaiah 53:6, “The punishment that brought us peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed.”

DEAR FRIENDS IN CHRIST,

Did God have to punish our sins? Yes! Think about how you would react if someone had murdered a child that you knew, and the criminal was found guilty, but for the sentence, the judge lets the criminal go free – no punishment at all. The judge lets the criminal go free, unpunished. Isn't that what we want God to do? Would you say that this judge is loving? Not at all. Would you think that that judge is just? No way! We would be crying out, ‘You have to punish him, or that child's life means nothing’. In the same way, if our God is not just to injustice then He becomes an unjust and unloving God. It would be like saying God doesn't care if our crimes hurt others and their crimes hurt us. And are you sure you want to live with an unjust God forever?

Did God have to punish our sins? Yes! But don't think of it in the sense that we boxed God into a corner by our sin, and He has no option but to lash out, or throw lightning bolts at us. The best way to look at God's judgment is this - God's very nature is that He is righteous and holy - and to place sin in front of Him, is like exposing gasoline to fire. It's just the nature of gas to explode in the presence of fire. Likewise, it is the nature of holiness that it must explode against sin. Why? Love doesn't just sit still when people are hurting themselves, hurting others, or blowing off the God of life. Psalm 5:4 says, “*sinner cannot dwell in God's presence*”; that is, until their sin is forgiven. We would instantly drop dead, like standing a foot away from the sun. At times people will say ‘If God were truly loving He would let everyone into His heaven.’ The fact is, if God were to let us into heaven with our sins, we'd be toast. We'd be vaporized in an instant. Page 1

Think of it like this. God is life. To sin is to disconnect yourself from God. Isaiah 59, ***“Your sins will separate you from your Lord.”*** Now pull the two together: when you sin you disconnect yourself from the God of life, which is death. God’s punishment is not God looking for any opportunity to smash us to pieces. No! God’s punishment is when God, with tears in His eyes, gives us what we want – life without Him, and when He says to the sinner: ‘your will be done’, you will die, and that’s the hell of it.

Do you see the dilemma that our sins caused God? Every day, in countless ways, we try to live life unbuckled from God. There’s just one problem. Deuteronomy 30:20 says, ***“The Lord is your life.”*** So when we try to live life unbuckled from God, don’t be surprised when Proverbs 11 says, ***“The wicked will not go unpunished.”*** or Romans 6 says, ***“The wages of sin is death.”*** You see, God’s not bluffing. He may be a softy with His grace, but He’s not a pushover. He is loving and long-suffering. He doesn’t ‘fly off the handle’. But He can get mad; boy can He get mad at sin. So here’s the dilemma: the Lord has to mete out death for sin, but He can’t bear to lose the ones He loves – and that’s us. Therefore, God came up with a plan in which He could both punish our sins, and yet not lose us. He chose, out of His unimaginable, inextinguishable, and unfathomable love to punish our sins on a substitute. You might be tempted to say, *“God, You can’t do that. You can’t forgive our sins that easily.”* Don’t ever use the word “CAN’T” with God. He’ll prove you wrong every time. God dealt the world a ***‘winning hand’*** when He punished our sins on Jesus. And now we can play Jesus’ winning hand – His forgiveness - against the Law, against our sin, against death, and against the devil; no matter what life throws at us.

John Chrysostom, an early church Father, praised Christ’s death for us with these words: *“He gave Himself as a ransom....and what does ‘ransom’ mean? God was about to punish them, but in their stead He gave His own Son....So inexpressibly great are the benefits that God has bestowed on us. He sacrificed Himself for His enemies, who hated and despised Him. What no one would do for friends, for brothers, or for children, THAT the Lord has done for His servants... God for men, for men not deserving. For had they been deserving, had they done His pleasure, it would have been less wonderful. But that He died for such ungrateful, obstinate creatures as us, this is what strikes every mind with amazement. For what men would never do for their fellowman, that has God done for us!”* **Page 2**

Joni Ericksen Tada once explained Christ's salvation with these words: *"the face that Moses begged to see – but was forbidden, lest he die – is slapped bloody, and beaten into disfigurement. (Matthew 26:67, **"They kept on striking His face with their fists, and slapping Him."**) The thorns that God sent to curse man's rebellion, now twisted around His own brow...Matthew 27:29, **"They twisted together a crown of thorns and pushed it onto His head."** 'On your back!' the soldier demands. He raises the mallet to sink in the spike. (But have you considered this?) the soldier's heart must continue pumping as He readies the prisoner's wrist. Someone must sustain the soldier's life minute by minute, for no man has this power on His own. Who supplies breath to the soldier's lungs? Who gives energy to his cells? Who holds all of his molecules together? Colossians 1:17, **"Christ holds all things together."** It is the crucified Jesus Who wills that the soldier live on – so that he can end Christ's life.*

*As the man swings, the Son recalls how He and the Father first designed the medial nerve in the human forearm – the sensations it would be capable of. The design proves flawless – the nerves are wrenching perfectly – as Jesus contorts His body to try to find relief. There is none! "Up you go!" They lift up the cross. Jesus is naked and can scarcely breathe. But these pains are but a mere warm-up to His other and growing dread. He begins to feel a foreign sensation...an unearthly foul odor begins to waft, not around His nose; but all over Him. He feels dirty. Every wickedness starts to crawl upon His spotless being – the living excrement from our lives. The apple of His Father's eye turns brown with rot. He must face His Father like this!*

*From heaven (the God Who must punish sin) arouses Himself like a lion disturbed, shakes His mane, and roars against the shriveling remnant hanging on the cross. (Never has the Father seen His spotless Son filthy.) Never has the Son seen His Father look at Him so, never felt even the least of His hot breath. But the roar shakes the unseen world, and darkens the visible sky. The Son does not recognize these eyes.*

Dionysias – a non-believer – saw the darkness of that Friday we call 'Good', where He was in Egypt, and he wrote these words, which we have discovered, *"Either God Himself is suffering, or He mourns over the sad condition of some great sufferer."*

(The lion roars.) *'Son of man! Why have you behaved so? You have cheated, lusted, stolen, gossiped, murdered, envied, hated and lied. You have cursed, cussed, robbed, overspent, overeaten, disobeyed, embezzled, and blasphemed. Look at the duties you have shirked, the children you abandoned, and the wife whom you left. Who has ever ignored the poor, so played the coward, and so belittled my name as You? Why is the Father talking like this? Isaiah 53, "The Lord laid on Him the iniquities of us all."*

*Have you ever held your razor tongue? What a self-righteous drunk – YOU, who molest children, peddle drugs, travel in cliques, and mock your parents. Who gave you the boldness to rig elections, lie under oath, start revolutions, accept bribes and buy politicians? Does the list never end? You split families, rape women, torture animals, and worship demons? You act smugly, filming and watching pornography, fornicating with both sexes. You have burned down buildings, perfected terrorist tactics, beheaded my bride and caused war. You have founded false religions, used faithless pastors – relishing each morsel and bragging about it. I loathe these things in you! Disgust for everything about you consumes Me! Can you not feel my wrath?"*

*Why does the Father speak so? 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 5, "God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that we may be made the righteousness of God in Him."*

*Of course the Son IS innocent of committing any crimes Himself. He is blameless. The Father knows this. But the divine pair made an eternal agreement, and the unthinkable must now take place. Jesus will be treated as if He is personally responsible for every sin ever committed by anyone who has ever lived. The ugliness you lived, and the sins you committed, are no longer yours'. God has laid them on Christ. He owns them now. They are no longer yours, unless you own them again.*

*And now the Father turns His head, as His heart's treasure, the mirror image of Himself, the One in Whom He delighted, sinks down into Hell. Yahweh's stored up rage, against man's sin from every century explodes in a single direction. (The cross becomes a lightning rod!) "My God, My God, why Have You Forsaken Me?" the victim cries. But heaven stops its ears. The angels stand down. The Son stares up at the One Who cannot, and will not reach down to help or reply. (The silence of God is literally killing His Son, breaking His Fatherly heart, but saving you!) The Trinity planned it. The Son endured it. The spirit enabled it. And you received it. **Page 4***

On this day, the unbroken Trinity, broke, so you could call God daddy. At last, came the cry: **'It is finished!'** Christ wasn't finished. He rose again in 3 days. And because Christ isn't finished, you're not finished. John 14:19, **'Because I live, you will live also.'** But what was finished is the payment for our sins. Jesus may be bloodied and battered, but He has NOT lost, because this was a war in which "shed blood wins".

The storm has passed. The war is won, Jesus has His daddy back. So now Jesus says His bedtime prayer: **"Father, into Your hands, I commend my Spirit"**, and the little Lord Jesus laid down His sweet head, and fell asleep on the bloody beams of the cross. His soul is safely tucked into His Father's arms, while His body waits to blow the lid off the tomb. The rescue is done. The blood has been spent. The debt is paid. The father's wrath is totally quieted. God is no longer mad at you.

You are free! Isaiah 53, ***"By His stripes we are healed."*** Let your mind be at peace. Colossians 1, ***"God has reconciled the world to Himself by making peace through Christ's blood, shed on the cross."*** You are free. John 8, ***"If the Son sets you free, you are free indeed!"*** Let your conscience be comforted. 1<sup>st</sup> John 1, ***"The blood of Jesus, God's Son, cleanses us from all unrighteousness."*** You are free, tonight. Let your heart be at rest. Romans 8, ***"There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."***

Beginning tonight, use this cross of Christ against your enemies. Hold the cross in the devil's face, and tell him: ***"Devil, you have tempted me, and I have sinned again. And I am ashamed of it. But it does not mean a thing. 'What do you mean 'it doesn't mean a thing'?" the devil howls. It doesn't mean a thing because you tried to get Christ to sin, and you could never get Him to sin, not even once; and God says that I am covered with Christ's righteousness. So unless, and until, you can bring charges against Christ, you cannot bring charges against me either. The Lord rebuke you!"***

Everything in your life changes tonight! Psalm 103, ***"If you, O Lord, kept a record of sins; O Lord, Who could stand? But with You there is forgiveness!"*** Amen!

And now may the peace of God, which passes all human understanding, keep our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus, unto life everlasting. Amen.