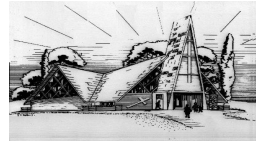




Free Evangelical Lutheran
Synod in South Africa

Sermon- Good Friday

What evil has He done?
He saved others ...



St. John's Lutheran Parish Shelly Beach

• The Word of God for this Sermon is written in Luke 23, 32-49:

- **ESV 32** Two others, who were criminals, were led away to be put to death with him.
- **33** And when they came to the place that is called The Skull, there they crucified him, and the criminals, one on his right and one on his left.
- **34** And Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." And they cast lots to divide his garments.
- **35** And the people stood by, watching, but the rulers scoffed at him, saying, "He saved others; let him save himself, if he is the Christ of God, his Chosen One!"
- **36** The soldiers also mocked him, coming up and offering him sour wine
- **37** and saying, "If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!"
- **38** There was also an inscription over him, "This is the King of the Jews."
- **39** One of the criminals who were hanged railed at him, saying, "Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us!"
- **40** But the other rebuked him, saying, "Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation?"
- **41** And we indeed justly, for we are receiving the due reward of our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong."
- **42** And he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom."
- **43** And he said to him, "Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise."
- **44** It was now about the sixth hour, and there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour,
- **45** while the sun's light failed. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two.
- **46** Then Jesus, calling out with a loud voice, said, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!" And having said this he breathed his last.
- **47** Now when the centurion saw what had taken place, he praised God, saying, "Certainly this man was innocent!"
- **48** And all the crowds that had assembled for this spectacle, when they saw what had taken place, returned home beating their breasts.
- **49** And all his acquaintances and the women who had followed him from Galilee stood at a distance watching these things.
- Let us pray: *Come Holy Spirit, open our ears, and our hearts for Your Law and Gospel, forgive us our sins and give us the mind of Christ, His attitude to follow Him in His Way of the Cross. Amen.*

• **Dear Beloved under the Cross of Christ!**

- Three times Pontius Pilate the governor of the Romans had asked the Sanhedrin, the council leading the Judeans, [22] "*Why, what evil has He done? I have found in Him no guilt deserving death. ...*". What answer did He get? They

demanded with loud cries that Jesus should be crucified!

- Up until today the enemies of the Christ of God haven't answered Him! Instead they did what they tried to accuse Jesus of doing: They started a riot, a chaotic upheaval where sense and reason flew out of the window. They started a rebellion against the Roman Emperor to pressurise him to give them what they demanded. And they succeeded. Christ was handed over to them, whilst Barrabbas got free.
- Hence, the answer to Pilates question is still outstanding! What evil has He done?
- Jesus was crucified between real sinners, criminals who were found guilty! He was numbered beneath the transgressors! What evil has He done?
- Jesus responded to all of this: "*Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.*" Here the whole of humankind is included in His forgiveness! Jesus knew what He was doing. All was going according to plan. On the night when He was betrayed He had given Himself to His disciples. His body and His blood were poured out for the many, then already. And on this day, what we call Good Friday, He was fulfilling what He had installed. The Death necessary to bring into effect the New Testament was going according to God's plan.
- The soldiers thought they were killing some crazy rioter. They didn't know that it was God's own Son, the Lamb of God who took away the sins of the world! Jesus has no resentment against those who crucified Him! What did they know of God's Way of Salvation? The answer is, they didn't have a clue. Neither did the officials have a clue how God's mission of Salvation for all humankind works!
- Luke highlights this when he cites both the rulers and the soldiers saying the following: "*He saved others; let him save himself, if he is the Christ of God, his Chosen One!*" First of all, as so often during the trials of Jesus, they unknowingly give witness of who Jesus truly is, namely, He did save others! This is a statement coming forth from the mouth of Christ's enemies. He did save others! Exactly right! He did!
- But then their wrong idea of what a Saviour should be like surfaced, namely when they carried on saying, "*let Him save Himself, if He is the Christ of God, His Chosen One!*" This is a very modern way of seeing how salvation works. You must first save yourself then you can save others.
- If superman dies the movie is over! A dead hero is no use to anyone. In our everyday lives we hear it constantly: You must first love your self then you can love others! That is the axiom on which almost all therapy runs in our days!
- It makes sense, if someone is getting pulled out by a rip-current, for instance, we are taught not to jump in ourselves, because what does it help if both are in the water being ripped away. No. You make sure that you stay safe and try and get a rope to the person in the rip current! In this way you can save him. That is, if you are the Christ, you will have to climb down from the cross. You will have to get

out of the suffering and death fangs to be the Messiah of the world! You can only conquer by winning yourself first, not by suffering and dying! This is what the ideal saviour of our old Adam looks like. This is what makes sense to us according to the flesh, according to our own ways of helping others!

- What may be good and true for everyday life is not true for God and His salvation! If we apply this norm to God, we make our own idol!

- What is Jesus doing instead? He exposes this ideal god of our mind as an idol! For, He willingly allows Himself to be thrown into the rip current of sin. He is crucified amongst two transgressors. There He will die with both of them. So, for all the miracle hunters, hunting for a miracle from Jesus, along the lines of their idol, there is nothing spectacular for them to see on the day of crucifixion. Three people get crucified and die. Jesus was not climbing down from the cross and giving the Romans a great sprint for their life! He stayed on the cross! Neither did He help those next to Him to get down from the cross.

- One of them even suggested that to Jesus saying, "*Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us!*" Again we hear that idea, save yourself and then us. This Luke calls blasphemy, if one speaks like this, '*save yourself and then us!*' Why is this so wrong to even be named blasphemy? Because the Way of the Cross is denied by it! Who God really is, is denied! That is why you will not see and understand what is happening if you cling to that kind of a saviour who saves with might, who saves himself first and then others! Jesus is not that kind of a saviour! God is not that kind of a god. That is blasphemy! That is the kind of god and idol satan promotes in the world!

- Jesus did not save Himself, first, then us! He first gave up His pure Life for the filthy sins of the world! He gave His pure, innocent, unblemished Body and Blood to save Barrabas, to save the officials, to save Pilate, even to save the one blaspheming Him and to save you and me!

- Luke calls this the Exodus of Christ, which it is! But, Christ's Exodus is for us! Christ's righteousness is for you, Christ's mercy and kindness is for you. Christ's holiness is for you! The extraordinary and weighty significance of this death cannot be seen or believed in unless our hearts are opened so that we realise that the way we normally think a saviour should operate is wrong! Its fatally wrong! It is blasphemy!

- And we see, although he, the man to the left, also asked Jesus to save him, in the end, Jesus did not respond to him. He wanted a saviour without the cross, a salvation without repentance, on his own terms! The other man, to the right of Jesus, rebuked the blasphemer. By doing so he admitted his own sinfulness. They got crucified justly, he said! He repented right there on the cross next to Jesus! Then he spoke about Jesus- another witness- "*this man has done nothing wrong!*"! The witnesses were just piling in answering the question Pilate asked the

officials! But unlike this man they didn't want to get it! Jesus had exposed their evilness and falsehood. They were not prepared to repent and admit that this man has done nothing wrong, but that they were justly condemned by God's Law!

• We do well to follow the example of the man to the right of Jesus. Its us hanging there, I hope, us who know Jesus and that He was innocent. This man also knew Jesus' name. And he called Jesus, saying, "*Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.*" And here we get a good insight into what those words meant. It did not merely mean that Jesus should think of him, as in, oh ja, there was this man next to me. I remember. Nothing but a cognitive exercise. No. If Jesus remembers someone this is what He understands by it: "*Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise.*" That is what happens with you if Jesus remembers you. Where Jesus is, you will be. The fruits of His death, salvation becomes ours, when we call on Him to remember us in repentance! His death counts for us!

• This is exactly what happens to us in Baptism, as Paul states it in Romans 6,6-7: "*We know that our old self was crucified with Him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. For one who has died has been set free from sin. Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with Him.*"

• Jesus is the Christ, the baptised, anointed Son of God sent by God to save the world from its own idols, from its manifold false ideas of a saviour, from its wrong faith in false gods! "I AM the LORD your God. You shall have no other gods!" God spoke in His first commandment.

• This is what Jesus has fulfilled for us, what Jesus has made right for us, on Golgotha! There He crucified our do-it-yourself gods and idols and wrong ideas of God, so that we, you and I, are free to trust in the true God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, whom He revealed to us.

• The true God's way to save us, is so perfect and so certain that we don't need another god or idol. They are rubbish, worthless, stupid, deceptive ways which lead us to death rather than to Life.

• Jesus, as the second Adam, trusted in the true God, in His Father in Heaven, until the end. It was to Him that He gave up His Spirit. Everything He had kept and given up for your and my sakes! Thank You dearest Jesus, You are the true Saviour of the world, You are the true King of God's Israel, You are the Chosen One of God, for our eternal benefit! **Amen.**

• "*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.*" **Amen.** *Eph 1,3.*