

**Peace Lutheran Church**

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**Rev. Dennis Wenholz**

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**GOOD FRIDAY**

**APRIL 10, 2020**

**AT THE CROSSROADS  
A SERIES OF SERVICES FOR LENT  
GOOD FRIDAY: DEATH**

**OPENING RESPONSE**

P In the name of the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

**C Amen.**

P Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me;

**C Your rod and your staff, they comfort me.**

P For you have delivered my soul from death, my feet from falling,

**C That I may walk before God in the light of life.**

P For Christ also suffered for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, in order to bring you to God. He was put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit.

**C Therefore we give glory to God who raised him up and gave us the promise of salvation. Amen.**

**CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION**

P Jesus said, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

**C Lord, we come to you confessing that we find ourselves**

**too often at the crossroads of life and death and find ourselves choosing death. We wander into the darkness that beckons. We go the way of our own imitations of life and find ourselves in the face of death. We enter tombs of our own making that we cannot seem to escape. We stand in terror of death and cannot break its grasp. Resurrecting Lord, forgive us our deadly choices and give us your strength to choose life, to go into the light that you have bought for us. Make us who celebrate the gift of life seek to share it with all those who walk with us. Fill us with the Spirit so that we might overflow with the giving that proclaims your very presence with us.**

P Upon this your confession, I, by virtue of my office, as a called and ordained servant of the Word, announce the grace of God unto all of you, and in the stead and by the command of my Lord Jesus Christ I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the † Son and of the Holy Spirit.

**C Amen.**

**OLD TESTAMENT READING ... ISAIAH 53:10-12**

<sup>10</sup> Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him;  
he has put him to grief;

when his soul makes an offering for guilt,

he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days;  
the will of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.

<sup>11</sup> Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied;

by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant,  
make many to be accounted righteous,

and he shall bear their iniquities.

<sup>12</sup> Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many,  
and he shall divide the spoil with the strong,  
because he poured out his soul to death  
and was numbered with the transgressors;  
yet he bore the sin of many,  
and makes intercession for the transgressors.

A This is the Word of the Lord.

**C Thanks be to God.**

### **EPISTLE READING ... PHILIPPIANS 1:18-26**

<sup>18</sup> What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed, and in that I rejoice.

Yes, and I will rejoice, <sup>19</sup> for I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ this will turn out for my deliverance, <sup>20</sup> as it is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage now as always Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death. <sup>21</sup> For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. <sup>22</sup> If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. <sup>23</sup> I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better. <sup>24</sup> But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account. <sup>25</sup> Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all, for your progress and joy in the faith, <sup>26</sup> so that in me you may have ample cause to glory in Christ Jesus, because of my coming to you again.

A This is the Word of the Lord.

**C Thanks be to God.**

### **GOSPEL READING ... JOHN 19:17-30**

<sup>17</sup> and he went out, bearing his own cross, to the place called The Place of a Skull, which in Aramaic is called Golgotha.

<sup>18</sup> There they crucified him, and with him two others, one on either side, and Jesus between them. <sup>19</sup> Pilate also wrote an inscription and put it on the cross. It read, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." <sup>20</sup> Many of the Jews read this inscription, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city, and it was written in Aramaic, in Latin, and in Greek. <sup>21</sup> So the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate, "Do not write, 'The King of the Jews,' but rather, 'This man said, I am King of the Jews.'" <sup>22</sup> Pilate answered, "What I have written I have written."

<sup>23</sup> When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they took his garments and divided them into four parts, one part for each soldier; also his tunic. But the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom, <sup>24</sup> so they said to one another, "Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it to see whose it shall be." This was to fulfill the Scripture which says,

"They divided my garments among them,  
and for my clothing they cast lots."

So the soldiers did these things, <sup>25</sup> but standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. <sup>26</sup> When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, "Woman, behold, your son!" <sup>27</sup> Then he said to the disciple, "Behold, your mother!" And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home.

<sup>28</sup> After this, Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said

(to fulfill the Scripture), “I thirst.”<sup>29</sup> A jar full of sour wine stood there, so they put a sponge full of the sour wine on a hyssop branch and held it to his mouth.<sup>30</sup> When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, “It is finished,” and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

P This is the Gospel of the Lord.

**C Praise to You, O Lord.**

### **SHORT MESSAGE FROM THE PASTOR**

**SERMON DIALOG WITH MARY, MOTHER OF JESUS** (*pages 5-7*)  
(*Emylee Her as Mary*)

### **A TIME OF SILENCE FOR REFLECTION**

#### **PRAYERS**

P Let us bring our prayers and petitions to God who hears and answers the pleas of our hearts. We pray for the nations and peoples of the world and own nation. Send your powerful Spirit into our nation and into this broken world. We ask that you come and comfort those who live in places of violence and persecution, especially those who suffer for your name. Give aid to the oppressed, the persecuted, those trapped in wars and all who cry to you for help. Guide our nation’s leaders to be about the task of service to all, especially the needy and vulnerable. Make us agents of healing in this hurting world. In your mercy,

**C Hear us, Lord.**

P We pray for your church in the world. Give faithful leaders who will shepherd your people in your way.

Inspire the people of this congregation and all of the church in the world to be doers of love and service.

In your mercy,

**C Hear us, Lord.**

P Because of your dying love and living hope, Savior, give your Spirit of life and light and hope to us, so that we might truly be the “light of the world” as you have named us. In the face of death give us the light of your promise; in the face of spiritual decay give us your word of cleansing; in the face of suffering give us your word of hope. Make us agents of your good grace among the dying of the world and make us able to bless them with your promise of life now and eternally. In your mercy,

**C Hear us, Lord.**

P We pray for the sick, the suffering, the grieving, the dying, the lonely, especially those we name in our hearts. We commit them to your loving care. Heal, help and comfort them according to your will. In your mercy,

**C Hear us, Lord.**

P These and all other petitions and requests we bring before you in the name of Jesus. Amen.

### **LORD’S PRAYER**

#### **CLOSING READING ... JOHN 19:38-42**

<sup>38</sup> After these things Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus, and Pilate gave him permission. So he came and took away his body.

<sup>39</sup> Nicodemus also, who earlier had come to Jesus by night,

came bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy-five pounds in weight. <sup>40</sup> So they took the body of Jesus and bound it in linen cloths with the spices, as is the burial custom of the Jews. <sup>41</sup> Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb in which no one had yet been laid. <sup>42</sup> So because of the Jewish day of Preparation, since the tomb was close at hand, they laid Jesus there.

## **BENEDICTION**

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**At the Crossroads**  
**A Series of Services for Holy Week**

**Good Friday: Death**  
**Sermon Dialog with Mary, Mother of Jesus**

The **Sermon Dialog with Mary, Mother of Jesus** is delivered by the pastor (P) and another reader (R) in the role of Mary:

P Crossroads. They are there for all of us. We may move along from day to day easily, walking in the sunshine, enjoying the view, feeling at peace. And then it comes. A crossroad. A choice point. There we stand, frozen to the spot. Which way now? Right? Left? Straight? What waits down each of those choices? Which way does our heart call us to go? Which makes sense? Which is God's way?

The answers aren't easy. A crossroad can bring daunting spiritual pain. And it can bring us to our knees. It can even bring us to destruction.

Tonight we look at the reality of the death of Jesus. The story may be familiar to us, but it is not pleasant. The story may, in some sense be horrifying and add to our own fear of death. But in the story there is also a remarkable and astonishing hope.

Tonight we have with us an expert on the life and death of Jesus, called Jesus of Nazareth. Tonight we will hear from Mary, mother of Jesus.

*(Mary enters. She is dressed well or in biblical costume. She enters smiling, seemingly joyful.)*

P Welcome, Mary. We know you well. Scripture speaks often of your life and your experiences.

R *Thank you. I am happy to be with you. I guess I never thought I would be well known, even up to this day. But God had other plans for me.*

P We often read about your life when the angel announced the birth of Jesus to you and the stories of the birth in Bethlehem and the flight to Egypt. But tonight we want to focus on the end of Jesus' life instead of the beginning. We know you were also involved in that event.

R *Yes, I was there. At the cross. It is not a time I like to dwell on.*

P Can you tell us about it?

R *Like all deaths, Jesus' death was a time of fear and great sorrow. His death was a terrible pain for me. My very heart was broken. But I know now that it was also a time of irony.*

P Irony?

R *Think about it. Think about the amazing contrasts in that death. Here he was, bringing life by dying on a cross. Here was the gifter of light dying in darkness.*

P Were you able to see those contrasts when you were there at the cross?

*R No. It was simply a time of great sorrow. Even though Jesus had told us often that he would be put to death at the hands of the Romans and religious leaders, we never really believed it. Certainly, I didn't believe it. I had become so used to the miraculous life that Jesus lived, the marvelous things he was able to accomplish. I was so used to the pride I had in him as he went about his ministry of teaching and healing, I just could not imagine that it would end like that. I guess, there at the cross, mostly I was feeling helpless sorrow, almost despair. Here was my lovely child, the light of my life, my very heartbeat, dying in shame.*

*P I think we can feel that with you. In fact, we all experience something like that at the death of a loved one. Many of us have been brought to our knees by the death of someone close to us. We know the heart pain that must have been yours. We know the helpless despair that comes with that kind of loss.*

*R The pain is so deep, it almost cannot be put into words.*

*P And yet you can stand here among us and smile.*

*R Of course, because we know that the curtain of death is not the end of the story. It is only the end of the first act in the miracle of life that Jesus bought for us on that cross.*

*P The words we all cherish are those that Jesus spoke to Nicodemus: "God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16). With you,*

*we understand that his death was for us a gift of life.*

*R Later in life, when I would encounter people who knew Jesus and knew my story, they would ask, "How can you be so joyful when you were there at the death of your son?" And the answer was easy. I was also there when he rose, when he overcame death, when he claimed victory over death and gave us life.*

*P That's not easy to remember when we confront the crossroad of death—the death of a loved one or even our own death.*

*R No, death is never easy. I sometimes think of my own death. Oh, it is not well known like Jesus' death. My death was quiet, in my old age. And yet it was also filled with contrast. In a way my death came with a great sense of loss. I felt I was losing my connection to the many I had shared my life with, including John who had become my son. But it was also a time of great joy, because I knew I was moving into the arms of my Son, my Savior in a better, brighter life.*

*P I know that St. Paul said, "For me to live is Christ and to die is gain." I guess that is true for all of us.*

*R Not that we don't grieve. Death remains the great robber, the one seemingly taking from us all that we hold dear, including our life. But that's not the end of the story. We know that death is in reality a new beginning, Jesus has opened the tomb, the stone is rolled away. Death cannot hold us and we can smile.*

P Someone once said that the Christian faith is teaching people how to die. Do you agree?

R *No. Definitely not. Jesus did not come just to bring a way to choose life at the crossroad of death but a way to continually choose the abundant life at all life's crossroads. Faith in Christ teaches how to live. We live that abundant life, we are filled with the peace and joy that Jesus offers, we live outside ourselves as Jesus call us to do and, in his time, we are ready to die.*

P When we live the life Jesus calls us to, we can see even death as gain.

R *That's it. And we don't have to run around frantically seeking that abundant life. It is right around us. When we act in love to those who fill our lives, we act in love toward Jesus. Remember he said, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me' (Matthew 25:40).*

P I hope we can all live the life that Jesus leads us to and die the death prepared for us.

R *That's it. Death is not just a mystery for us. It is an ending and a beginning that has been prepared, made holy by Jesus.*

P And it is a time of joy. St. Paul said: "Death is swallowed up in victory.' 'O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?' The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore,

my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain" (1 Corinthians 15:54-58).

R *With me, may you have a joy-filled Good Friday. May you celebrate the victory.*

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