

**ST. JACOBI CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH**  
**A Lenten Series on By His Wounds We are Healed**  
**Thursday – March 19, 2020**  
*“The Wounds of Murder”*

CANDLE LIGHTING

WELCOME

CALL TO WORSHIP

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

**Amen.**

They made Christ’s grave with the wicked

**and his tomb with the rich;**

although he had done no violence,

**and there was no deceit in his mouth.**

Christ was wounded for our transgressions,

**crushed for our iniquities;**

upon him was the punishment that made us whole,

**and by his wounds we are healed.**

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

Let us confess our sin in the presence of God and of one another.

**Most merciful God, we confess to you that we have broken your commandments by our own thoughts, words, and deeds. We are weak before you in the truth of our anger, our hostility, and the death and destruction we have caused. We have not loved our brothers and sisters as we ought, and we have not cared for your creation. For the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy on us, and give us the healing power of your love that we may walk again in your ways and live to the glory of your holy name. Amen.**

God is gracious and merciful, and he desires that we be made free of the burden of our sins. Through Jesus Christ, who bore the cross for our sake and for the sake of the whole world, there is healing, hope, and life. Your sins are forgiven in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

GATHERING HYMN: Glory be to Jesus (*see insert*)

SCRIPTURE READINGS:

OLD TESTAMENT READING: Exodus 20:13

EPISTLE READING: 1 Peter 2:13-17

GOSPEL READING: John 11:47-53

SERMON

## RESPONSIVE CONGREGATIONAL PRAYER

Let us pray for the Church, for all in need, and for the whole of God's creation. That throughout these forty days of Lent, you may give your people hope that it is Jesus, our Lord, who leads the way and takes into his body on the cross the sins of the whole world.

**Heal us, O God.**

That we might put away anger, judgment, and violence in our hearts, and instead embrace your promise of love and mercy.

**Heal us, O God.**

That all who are injured by anger, hostility, or cruelty be granted wholeness, love, and restoration.

**Heal us, O God.**

That we may seek and work for justice for all who are victims of hatred or violence in our world.

**Heal us, O God.**

For all the saints and martyrs, many of whom suffered violence in their own wounding unto death, that they may be the shining examples of the victory of the crucified and risen Lamb and the wounds of love that he bears for us still.

**Heal us, O God.**

Into your healing, wounded hands for our sake, we commend all for whom we pray.

**By Christ's wounds, we are healed. Amen.**

## LORD'S PRAYER

We pray the prayer that our wounded healer, Jesus the Christ, has taught us to pray: "**Our Father . . .**" (Debts/Debtors)

SENDING HYMN: #330, Rock of Ages

## BENEDICTION

May the healing presence of almighty God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, be with you now and always.

**We go in peace to love and serve the Lord in the name of Christ. Amen.**

## EXTINGUISHING CANDLES

*Offerings may be placed in the basket by the church entrance.*

**Old Testament Reading**, Exodus 20:13

You shall not murder.

**Epistle Reading**, 1 Peter 2:13-17

For the Lord's sake accept the authority of every human institution, whether of the emperor as supreme, or of governors, as sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to praise those who do right. For it is God's will that by doing right you should silence the ignorance of the foolish.

As servants of God, live as free people, yet do not use your freedom as a pretext for evil. Honor everyone. Love the family of believers. Fear God. Honor the emperor.

**Gospel Reading**, John 11:47-53

So the chief priests and the Pharisees called a meeting of the council, and said, "What are we to do? This man is performing many signs. If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and the Romans will come and destroy both our holy place and our nation." But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, "You know nothing at all! You do not understand that it is better for you to have one man die for the people than to have the whole nation destroyed."

He did not say this on his own, but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus was about to die for the nation, and not for the nation only, but to gather into one the dispersed children of God. So from that day on they planned to put him to death.

## Sermon

Jesus did not murder, but he was killed. Jesus did not engage in violence, but violence was perpetrated against him. Jesus did get angry, but he never encouraged others to use anger as a means or rationale for harming anyone, even those who despised him. Indeed, in his final act upon the cross, he called for his Father in heaven to forgive them. His disciples once wondered whether Jesus should call down fire from heaven against those who would not receive Jesus, but Jesus rebuked his disciples for thinking and speaking along those lines.

Jesus did, however, broaden the commandment against murder. In his Sermon on the Mount, he spoke of how anger against a brother or sister makes us liable for judgment; insulting a brother or sister makes us liable to the council; and saying, “You fool” makes us liable for the hell of fire. All of that Jesus spoke in the context of encouraging us to reconcile with those who hold us in judgment.

Jesus was on a mission of love. Those who became his followers, including we ourselves, recognize this and trust him as the Lord of love. How deeply we need that love because we *do* get angry and insulting and speak mean-spirited words about our brothers and sisters. And if you think otherwise, consider this the next time someone cuts you off on the highway.

All of humanity is, by virtue of the Creator’s creation, brother and sister. That Creator’s creation also includes the very environment of our planet. And there are also the brothers and sisters we have by faith

who are part of the community called Church. We have a lot of work to do toward reconciling in love with all of these.

Indeed, the task is one that overwhelms us all. How can we reconcile? Caiaphas had a plan. Just let one die so that peace can prevail. It sounds so logical a utilitarian principle, like Spock's famous line in *Star Trek*, "the needs of the many outweigh the needs of the one." It was a political peace that Caiaphas had in mind, and make no mistake, political peace would be a major accomplishment. But the way of Jesus is to accept being that One and to bring a peace that would go far beyond anything Caiaphas had in mind. It would be a peace that would reconcile us to God and to one another in a way that we could never do on our own.

The plans of evil are ever active, ever stirring in the hearts of so many. Jesus called the devil a murderer, but the murder begins with a lie: a lie about who we are, and most importantly, *whose* we are. While his critics could not see the love of God at work in Jesus, it did not mean that Jesus gave up on them. He did not give up on anyone. He does not give up on any of us. We are not consigned to the judgment of being abandoned, even though he was abandoned on the cross.

The wounds of Jesus, the wounds of his death, are born so that murder and death do not receive the last word. Love, reconciliation, everlasting peace: these are the last words of the cross. We see the world and all of humanity cross-eyed through the lens of the cross. That is how we hear the challenge of discipleship when it comes to our brothers and sisters.

The ministry of reconciliation, love and peace is entrusted to us;

our trespasses, our sins, are not counted against us because of the wounds of Christ. Yes, we are like “clay pots” carrying out this mission, and our own foibles and failings are going to show. But it was and is never really about us. It is about the One who gave his life for the sake of the people, for the sake of the whole world. We come to our brothers and sisters with this gift in the clay pots of our lives, even if it wounds us; even when it kills us; but love, yes, love will be heard over all the terrors of this world. And the wounds of Christ will be all the more visible for all to behold.

To the Glory of God.