

With our Lord having instituted His Supper for His people, now Good Friday. This is what Christianity is all about -the Cross, Passion of our Lord, the incarnate God, lays down His life to atone for sin and wrath, His innocent suffering and death, shedding of His holy, precious Blood for your salvation.

This also what defines, shapes your Christian faith and life. With St. Paul, the true Christian Church knows nothing but Christ and Him Crucified. Repentance lives, receiving His gifts, His Word, life according to it.

This is what Christianity is all about, so many talk of 'being Christian' with selective reading of Scripture, popular reduce it to "being nice, accepting everything out of love." It is sad.

Scripture is filled with sad words. Jesus says, **not everyone who says unto me, Lord, Lord, will enter my kingdom. Depart from me, I never knew you,** haunting words, damning.

Jesus said **it would have been better for this man Judas not to have been born.** Sad words.

Of the saddest words, spoken by men entrusted with the holy things of God—priests, called to offer sacrifices for sins, to teach people of God's Word.

Yet when a conscience-stricken Judas confessed, **I've sinned by betraying innocent blood.** They replied with saddest of words ever spoken to a sinner, **What is that to us? See to it yourself.** His sin, his responsibility.

Judas saw to it himself, ending his life. How could someone placed there by God, not offer God's desire of absolution. How could they who knew the story of David, who betrayed, shed innocent blood, not repeat to Judas what Nathan had said to the king, **The Lord has taken away your sin?** (That window there) How could they respond to guilt with "see to it yourself," to regret, sorrow with "take care of it yourself,"?

Judas exemplifies those who've sinned, are sorry, but not repentant - they don't want God or believe they don't need God to forgive them. The priests, directed Judas back to himself instead to a gracious God, exemplify all who weigh heartbroken sinners down with more law when they are crying out for the Gospel. Exemplifies those who speak of Jesus without a cross, Jesus without repentance, Jesus with only select reading of His Word.

Yet of the greatest of words are those spoken from your Lord tonight. *First, He speaks forgiveness.* Your greatest need in life; mercy to us who have lost our way, failed Him, to us who have rebelled; forgiveness to remove the millstone of sin from around our necks. **Father, forgive them.** His prayer for you. And a prayer for you, upon your lips, spoken to those who hurt you.

*Second, He speaks promise.* It seems a man condemned, hours from death, would have nothing to give! But His kingdom is not of this world. In Him, death is now but your gate to His kingdom, paradise, **Today, you will be with Me in Paradise.**

*Third, He speaks compassion. **Woman, behold your son.*** Why does He do this? Mary, symbol of the Church, His hands pinned to the cross by nails, Jesus reaches out, divine compassion and care, that nothing can stop. Jesus provides, instructs John to provide pastoral care. So it was for Mary, so it is for you.

*Fourth, He speaks mercy.* He's forsaken in your place. Abandon. Tasting God's wrath, that should be yours. **My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?** Mercifully takes your place, that you are never abandoned.

*Fifth, He speaks love. **I thirst.*** He thirsts for you, for your salvation, for your forgiveness, for your life.

*Sixth, He speaks victory. **It is finished.*** *The strife is over, the battle won.* He bows His head in death, sin is atoned for, your forgiveness complete, wrath answered for, creation restored in Him. The ransom paid for your life.

*Seventh, He speaks a prayer of faith. **Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit.*** The sacrifice accepted by the Father for your life. Also your prayer. A prayer of trust. Through Christ alone, you have a loving Father, there's no better place to be than in His hands.

How can these words not cause you to repent? How can these words not bring you joy.

As we remember Jesus' death, it isn't just that Jesus dies, *it is that you too die*, joined to Him in holy baptism. In baptismal waters, sins are washed away, you're given faith, enlightened with gift of the Holy Spirit, baptism working in you now, yes, but also, you are joined to Jesus in His death. He takes you into Himself, that you die, rise with Him. His Good Friday becomes your Good Friday. His glory, your glory. That you be changed, reconciled, atoned for, forgiven, justified, live a new life in Him, according to His word.

He loves you to the end. It is finished. Death and the devil are defeated. Man is reconciled to the Father. The Victory is won. So, in darkness, all but one candle, think on these things. The Light of the world. The Light which leaves in death, returns in resurrection victory. by grace, your victory. You are forever connected to Him who hangs there in glory for you. By His wounds, you are healed, now, for eternity. His words for you, eternal word, living words, no greater words for you.