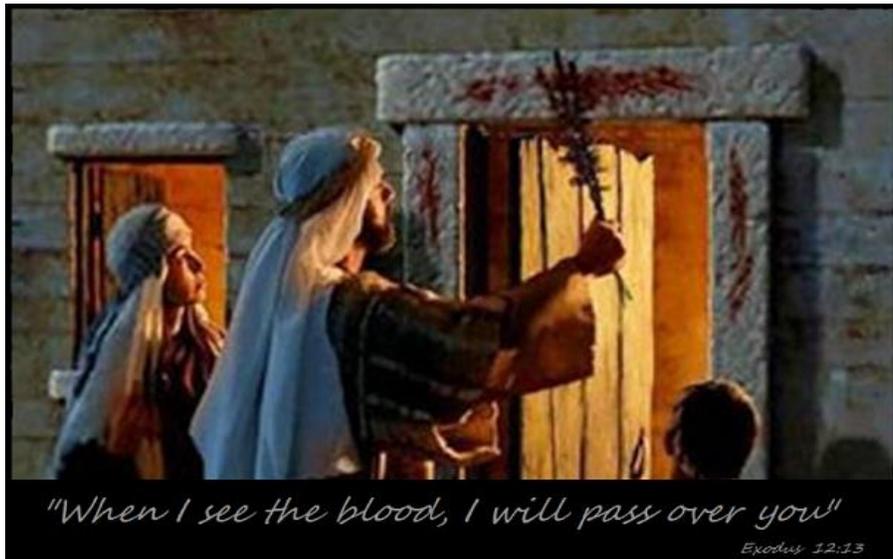


First Baptist Church of Fitchburg

1400 John Fitch Highway Fitchburg, MA 01420 Phone# 978-345-5622

March 29, 2020, Palm Sunday, Passion Sunday, Communion Sunday

Pastor: Rev. Meredith H. Christian Song Leader: May Goff



Welcome and Announcements:

Good morning congregation, on this lovely Palm Sunday. I am grateful for your presence within our community as we come into covenant with each other in the presence of Almighty God.

I ask that each of you find some juice, water or tea and a piece of bread, cracker or whatever bit with which the Lord has blessed you, and join me in ministering Holy Communion today in remembrance of our Savior's sacrifice for each of us.

Thank you, all whom have shared of their time, talents, and resources in order to assure that as the world grows quiet, the Bride of Christ carries on in preparation for His one day return, in our efforts to be His hands and feet to this fallen world and to uphold the will of God in our homes and communities, as best we are able.

I thank each of you who have taken the time to spend 5 minutes in prayer for each other and for all those infected or in some way affected by this virus, and for those who are fighting on the front lines of this pandemic for each and every life affected. May the Lord bring healing to our region, nation and world.

Please share concerns and celebrations with myself and your deacons, who will forward them to myself directly. My email is meredithhchristian@gmail.com and phone is (774) 276-0505.

Let us come into the presence of God, worship Him together, and enter into fellowship with one another, as we unite in our Call to Worship.

***Call to Worship** (in unison)

Holy and Gracious God, You know that our finest intentions have evaporated like the morning mist, and our boldest promises have withered like a tender plant under the heat of the sun. Forgive us, Father, for our brash assertions. May Your Spirit strengthen our resolve to serve You enthusiastically, consistently, and lovingly, we ask in the name of Your Son Jesus, our Savior. Amen.

Invocation:

We have come into Your presence to raise our hearts and voices in thanks, to share our joys and sorrows, to sing Your praises, to break bread together, and to be healed in body and soul, not just for ourselves but that we may better serve our broken world. We ask for wisdom and knowledge, by Your Holy Spirit, to discern the times and know the best way to support our families, friends and neighbors during this trying time, and that we be reminded that You, oh Lord, are always in control. Amen.

Gloria Patri:

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost

as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be

world without end. Amen, Amen.

Hymn: “*Hosanna, Loud Hosanna*” (Hold down Ctrl key and Click on link->) <https://youtu.be/MytToaAVLio>

First Reading: *Psalm 31:7-17 (HCSB)*

“I will rejoice and be glad in Your faithful love because You have seen my affliction. You have known the troubles of my life and have not handed me over to the enemy. You have set my feet in a spacious place.

Be gracious to me, LORD, because I am in distress; my eyes are worn out from angry sorrow—my whole being as well. Indeed, my life is consumed with grief and my years with groaning; my strength has failed because of my sinfulness, and my bones waste away. I am ridiculed by all my adversaries and even by my neighbors. I am dreaded by my acquaintances; those who see me in the street run from me. I am forgotten: gone from memory like a dead person—like broken pottery, I have heard the gossip of many; terror is on every side. When they conspired against me, they plotted to take my life.

But I trust in You, LORD; I say, “You are my God.” The course of my life is in Your power; deliver me from the power of my enemies and from my persecutors. Show Your favor to Your servant; save me by Your faithful love. LORD, do not let me be disgraced when I call on You. Let the wicked be disgraced; let them be silent in Sheol.”

Celebrations and Concerns:

I am praying for each of you and your families. I ask for pray for my family as we celebrate the lives of my Uncle Stephen Veinot, and His Sister, my Aunt Susan Venoit-Parker, as they have both recently gone home to be with the Father, each having succumbed to stage 4 cancer.

Prayers for healing for Phil and May Goff’s son-in-law, who broke his ankle in two places on Sunday and their daughter Becky, who has done something to her wrist and is in a brace, as well as for Bette Adam’s son and daughter in law, as they continue to struggle with Karen’s many health concerns.

For all those who have passed away this week, and for each of us as we endure this difficult time, let us pray in agreement together for peace, healing and resolution in each other’s situations.

Prayers for the sick, our Grotonwood and Oceanwood camp staff, ABC and TABCOM leaders, world leaders, missionaries, first responders, delivery people, service workers and all those who must go out. Prayers for those who are quarantined, in hospitals and people in war torn regions around the world. We pray for patience with one another while we are so closely joined with some and so distant from others.

Silent Prayer: Let us take a moment to lift up our hearts in a moment of silence.

Pastoral Prayer:

Help us, Lord and Savior, to devote our energies to living rightly and victoriously, even now in our current state. Give us the power to fulfill the destiny for which we were created. We pray for patience to deal with delays and frustrations, for the strength to forgive those who have wronged us, and the might to be gentle and kind.

We pray for humility that gives credit and thanks to You and to others, and for a spirit of confidence and positive thinking through renewing our minds in Your Word, that we may encourage both ourselves and others.

We pray for a keen sense of right and wrong and for self-discipline to live accordingly, for the endurance to accept the consequences of maintaining what we believe to be right, and for the ability to trust and set aside our

doubts and fears, entrusting the future to Your gracious care, as we pray in obedience, the words that Jesus taught us to pray,

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for Thine is the kingdom, and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

Children's Message: (Offered by Debi Cross)

The Pain of Separation

Palm Sunday

Scripture Reference: Mark 11:1-11

What do you suppose would happen if a little baby was snuggled in close to her mommy, having some nice warm milk, and suddenly someone took that baby away from her mother? How would the baby react? (*Let children respond.*) The baby would cry, wouldn't she? And the mommy would probably be upset, too. Babies need their mommies and daddies to love and protect them, to feed them, and keep them clean and dry. Being away from loving parents can make a baby very sad, especially if the baby is hungry. And when you hear a baby crying for its mommy or daddy, it's a sad thing.

Jesus had to do something very sad, too. Today is Palm Sunday. It's the day we remember the story of Jesus riding a donkey into Jerusalem while the crowds cheered and laid palm branches in his path. But the joy of Palm Sunday has a dark shadow following it. Palm Sunday is the beginning of Holy Week, when we remember Jesus' suffering and death. If we go right from the joy of Palm Sunday to the celebration of Easter, we've missed something very important.

As Jesus rode into Jerusalem, he knew that he was going to die on the cross, be buried in a tomb, and after three days, come back to life again. For a short time, Jesus was going to be separated from his friends and family on earth. Do you think that made Jesus sad? How do you think it made his close friends feel?

Before Jesus came back to life, he would be separated from people he loved very much—people who loved him and needed him to be with them. And that kind of separation is a sad thing.

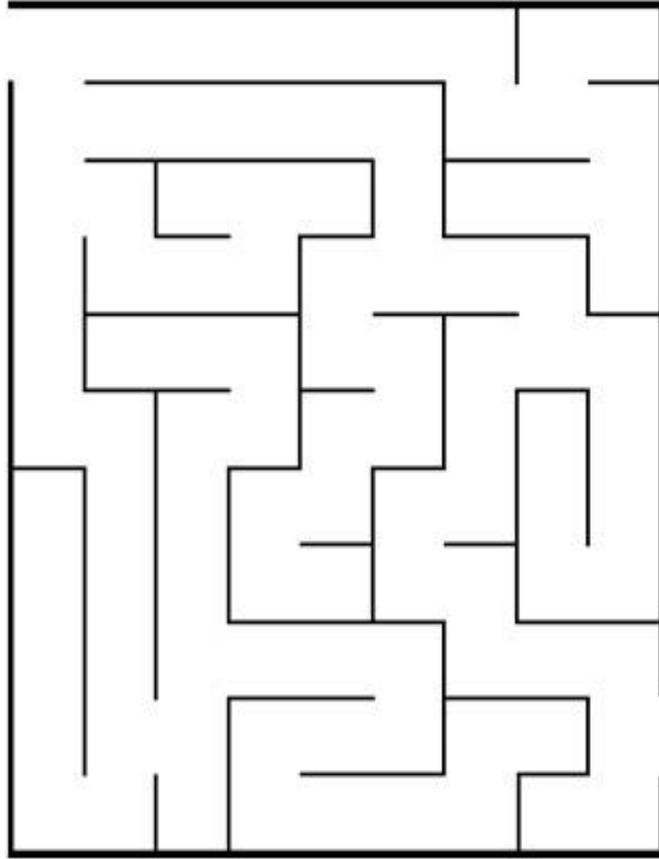
We need Jesus, and Jesus wants to be near us in the same way that babies and parents need and want each other. But Jesus was not gone from them for long. After three days, he came back to be with them again—and to be with them forever and ever. Because Jesus died and came back to life, he made sure that all of us would never ever have to be separated from him. We know that even when we die, Jesus will be with us and give us a new and better life—just like the new life he has.

We never need to feel like we're away from Jesus and our heavenly Father. The next time you're snuggled up in the arms of someone you love, remember that God is always near, and he will always be near. He's as close as your heart.

Prayer: Hold us close, Lord. We want to be near you always. Thank you for going to Jerusalem to face death on the cross so that we could be close to God forever.

Palm Sunday Maze

Join Jesus on His Triumphant Entry into Jerusalem



When he came near the place where the road goes down the Mount of Olives, the whole crowd of disciples began joyfully to praise God in loud voices for all the miracles they had seen.

"Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!"

"Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!"

Luke 19:37-38 (NIV)

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Youth Message: (Offered by Catherine Robertson)

WALKING THE PASSION OF CHRIST....

PALM SUNDAY: Today, Pastor Meredith has lifted up the events of this day 2,000+ years ago. For the rest of the week, we all have the opportunity to give some of our time to reading the passages leading up to the death of our Savior, Jesus Christ. Holy Week is the Passion of Christ. These passages show the reason for the Christmas season. Never should we celebrate Christmas without the remembrance of Holy Week in our hearts and minds. Let us humble ourselves, and be holy (I Peter 1:16; Leviticus 19:2), and understand that our daily bread is spiritual too. Read the below chapters in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Become immersed in Holy Week. Feel what you are reading. Invite the Holy Spirit to give you a great hunger and thirst for the Word of God.

MONDAY: Mark, Chapter 14. Remember, Mark is considered to be the first Gospel written. It is the shortest Gospel. Jesus said that He would return soon. Soooo as time passed and eye-witnesses grew old and died, Mark decided to record the life of Jesus, with accuracy.

****Notice Verse 51-52 – it is believed that the ‘young man’ is Mark himself!****

TUESDAY: Matthew, Chapter 26. Matthew wrote to the Jewish people.

****Notice verses 52-54....**Jesus had the ***power*** to ***STOP*** everything! But Jesus came to die for the sins of the world and nothing was going to stop Him from doing that. ***Nothing.***

WEDNESDAY: Luke, Chapter 22. Luke wrote to the gentiles...that's us!

****Notice verses 31-32...**This is true for YOU. The Satan has asked to sift ***you!*** To fully feel the impact of that passage, put your name in that scripture. Then listen to Jesus speak those words of encouragement to you -- He has prayed for you...and you are to strengthen others.

Reflect: how does that make you feel?

THURSDAY: John, Chapter 18. John, the youngest apostle, wrote his Gospel to help people see/understand the 'why' of what Jesus did. He chose 7 signs as his reference points.

****Notice verse 6!** Jesus' words were so powerful that the soldiers ***fell down!!!***

****Notice verse 10-11-** Jesus is showing that He came to die for the sins of the world.

The power of Jesus is demonstrated **again.**

Jesus humbled Himself, looked ahead to the Cross and died for us.

FRIDAY: "It is finished."

Please prayerfully read:

Mark, Chapter 15...

Matthew, Chapter 27...

Luke, Chapter 23...

John, Chapter 19...

'HOLY SATURDAY': This day is also called a day of waiting. But it was the Sabbath. Remember, the last day of the week is the Sabbath for the Jewish people. We celebrate the Sabbath on the first day of the week....in remembrance of Jesus' resurrection. Today there are two thoughts for you to contemplate.

#1 = Re-read a few verses in Luke: Chapter 23:39-43. Hear the words of the two criminals. Imagine the scene. Three men are being executed, each hanging from a wooden cross. One speaks to Jesus, taunting Him, in a last gasp to be saved from death. ***He didn't get it.*** The other criminal understood something profound – he rebuked the first criminal saying that they deserved death but that Jesus did nothing wrong. Then he turns to Jesus and asks to be remembered when Jesus comes into His Kingdom. Hear what Jesus says: "Truly I tell you, **today** you will be with me in Paradise."

We know this scene. We see it as Jesus saving the man from an eternal death. But here's the ***WAIT? WHAT?*** moment. Remember the laborers and landowner from last week's lesson? Remember how the landowner paid them all the same, despite the hours that they had worked. The landlord was honest. The pay was the usual day's pay. The first workers may have worked longer and harder than the last, but the promise of pay to the first was fulfilled and to the others, there was generosity. That parable is for us, today. That parable brings us to the Cross. To the scene with the two criminals....and the onlookers who heard Jesus' words.

How do you feel about a death row prisoner who repents and 'gets saved' during incarceration?

How do you feel about the person whose whole life was a style of party-hearty, but when they got old, unable to live as they once did, they repent, are saved, and die two years later?

How do you feel about the person who didn't really do anything...just lived a life of semi-sloth, not helpful, rather dismissive of others, but hears a message on their deathbed and repents and accepts Jesus as their Lord and Savior?

That's what that landowner parable is all about! It's the Cross.
The promise is the same for all.
We all sin. We all need to repent. We all need the grace and mercy of salvation.

Can you sincerely choose to pray for the latecomers this Easter?

There is an old story my grandmother often told. A man lived his life the way he wanted. Took what wasn't his - trashed what belonged to others. He knew the Gospel. But he figured on the day of his death, he would say he was 'sorry' ...and enter into eternity as the thief on the cross. So the day came. He was hit by a bus. He was unable to speak. He furtively kept moving his mouth but nothing came out. He died in a frantic state of panic. Now we all know that you don't have to speak aloud for prayer. But when we live a life trying to 'trick' the Lord God Almighty, we steep ourselves in deception, we cannot fool Christ Jesus. Jesus knows our heart.
[Based on Rev. 3:3.]

#2 – Read John, Chapter 17. This is the real Lord's Prayer! The one we say together in Church has come to be called The Lord's Prayer....but really, it isn't. It would be more appropriately referred to as the Apostle's Prayer. Jesus gave that prayer to His disciples because they asked Jesus to teach them to pray. When we read John, Chapter 17 we read words that Jesus actually spoke to the Father. Jesus' prayer to His Father in Heaven. Be awed.

****Notice vs 20-23 – Jesus was praying for US!** Just before he went to the Cross.

We have always been on Christ's Mind!

Remember that.

Jesus knew us when He died, while we were still sinners, (Romans 5:8).

Time of Offering: Let us present our morning offering with hearts that are overflowing with joy, thanksgiving, and appreciation for all that the Lord has done in our lives.

Blessing of the Tithes and Offerings: Heavenly Father, we pray that You will accept our gifts as an expression of our gratitude for our many blessings, for You have blessed us materially, personally, socially and spiritually. Amen.

(Tithes, offerings and gifts are not "dues" to the church. They are greatly appreciated as a means to continue to care for our facilities, the needs of each other, and our local and worldwide community. God gives freely and asks that we support one another. We thank you for your patience and pledges at this time and ask that you Please Pray over your gifts and mail them to our treasurer, [Linda Gosselin 10 Washington Street, Fitchburg MA 01420](mailto:Linda.Gosselin@fitchburgma.org))

Doxology:

*Praise God from whom all blessings flow
Praise Him all creatures here below
Praise Him above ye heavenly hosts
Praise Father Son and Holy Ghost.*

Hymn: "*O Sacred Head Now Wounded*" (Hold down Ctrl key and Click on link) <https://youtu.be/wRvMx8uWaX4>

Sermon Text: *Matthew 27:15-26 & 38-44 (HCSB)*

"At the festival the governor's custom was to release to the crowd a prisoner they wanted. At that time they had a notorious prisoner called Barabbas. So when they had gathered together, Pilate said to them, "Who is it you want me to release for you—Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Messiah?" For he knew they had handed Him over because of envy.

While he was sitting on the judge's bench, his wife sent word to him, "Have nothing to do with that righteous man, for today I've suffered terribly in a dream because of Him!"

The chief priests and the elders, however, persuaded the crowds to ask for Barabbas and to execute Jesus. The governor asked them, "Which of the two do you want me to release for you?"

"Barabbas!" they answered.

Pilate asked them, "What should I do then with Jesus, who is called Messiah?"

They all answered, "Crucify Him!"

Then he said, "Why? What has He done wrong?"

But they kept shouting, "Crucify Him!" all the more.

When Pilate saw that he was getting nowhere, but that a riot was starting instead, he took some water, washed his hands in front of the crowd, and said, "I am innocent of this man's blood. See to it yourselves!"

All the people answered, "His blood be on us and on our children!" Then he released Barabbas to them. But after having Jesus flogged, he handed Him over to be crucified...

"Then two criminals were crucified with Him, one on the right and one on the left. Those who passed by were yelling insults at Him, shaking their heads and saying, "The One who would demolish the sanctuary and rebuild it in three days, save Yourself! If You are the Son of God, come down from the cross!" In the same way the chief priests, with the scribes and elders, mocked Him and said, "He saved others, but He cannot save Himself! He is the King of Israel! Let Him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in Him. He has put His trust in God; let God rescue Him now—if He wants Him! For He said, 'I am God's Son.'" In the same way even the criminals who were crucified with Him kept taunting Him"

"What Did You Call Me?"

This is a week when Christians around the world will cry out "Hosanna" which means Save! Please. A week when the people of Jerusalem once cried out "Hosanna in the Highest", to the One they had called the, "Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (*John 1:29*). They would see their prayer answered, for they would be saved, in the highest and most complete way, through the shed blood of Jesus, our sacrificial Lamb, whose eternal blood, when applied to the doorpost of one's heart and home, causes eternal death to Pass Over, and whose blood brings forth eternal life to all those who apply it to their daily lives.

Today's scripture reading begins instead with Barabbas who, "was in prison with the insurrectionists who had committed murder in the uprising" (*Mark 15:7*). Barabbas was himself a bandit whose name means "son of the father". This criminal was put before a crowd alongside my friend Jesus, whose name means "Yahweh saves" or "Yahweh is salvation", and it just so happens that in a well-established and supported variant of this text, "Barabbas is called 'Jesus Barabbas.'...If this is so, Matthew's text reads more dramatically with two holders of the same name: Which do you want- Jesus son of Abba, or Jesus the self-styled Messiah?" (*Wilkins, 874*), Jesus, the One who saves, the Anointed One who is salvation made manifest, or the one whose name means that God saves His children?

Clearly God had His hand in this situation in ways that even now I am sure we fail to fully understand. This seems like such an unjust account. Every year Christians and the lost alike reflect on the unfairness of this trial, held so long ago, for whether one is a believer or not, most agree that what happened to Jesus on that day just didn't seem fair, and this, "narrative of an innocent Man condemned to death and the guilty Barabbas set free may cause us to wonder at the injustice that the world so often displays, but when we are filled...with the unerring truth of His light...we can only fall on our faces in thanksgiving, for He has also paid the penalty for our sin and set us free to live in the light of His immeasurable grace" (*PCF, 604*).

It was grace and divine intervention that caused the admittedly sinful and wicked Pilate to recognize Jesus as a righteous Man, as he asked the crowd so determined to see Jesus brought to death, "Why, what evil has He done?" (v.29), and then to wash his hands with water amidst that angry mob and declare himself innocent of His blood before all, symbolically transferring guilt to those who cried out for His life (v.25).

Those who were in the courtyard that day were so driven to see Jesus destroyed that they took the credit for themselves and their descendants (v. 26), when, "In a remarkable statement, they accepted the responsibility for

putting Jesus to death, literally pronouncing a curse on themselves and on their children” (*PCF*, 607), which would be made manifest from that point on until the time of the utter destruction of the city of Jerusalem in 70_{AD}. This is not to say that they had the right to take full credit for the death of Jesus.

I remind you that none had the right or ability to take the life of Jesus, for we know that He gave it willingly (*John 10:18, Matthew 27:50*), and we have already read that Pilate renounced any credit for Jesus’ death, so who then was responsible for this horrible scene?

“The Gospels ultimately state that the sovereign Lord of all creation appointed the death of His only Son. It was the Father who loved the world so much that He ordained that His Son should come into the world for the express purpose of providing the only acceptable sacrifice for the sins of all people, which had separated them from their Creator. Accordingly, we are all responsible for His death, the only means by which the Father determined that people could be restored to fellowship with Him” (*PCF*, 608-609).

It was for our sake, your sake, that this whole event transpired, therefore I weep for all the injustices enacted by overly righteous Christians who have at times been cruel to the Jewish people for what they deemed was the Jewish role in the death of Jesus, for we are all responsible for God’s decision to provide a means of moving humanity back into right relationship with Him, that we may one day be restored to the Garden, and paradise, and fellowship with God from whence we came.

There are a few more nuggets of truth to behold here in this morning’s text. I turn my focus to the two thieves who were crucified with Jesus, as a punishment for their own sins. It is said that Pilate had named those two criminals as Gestas and Dismas in an ancient Jewish text entitled *the Acts of Pontius Pilate*. In this Apocryphal book, Pilate was credited with having supported the apostolic Scriptures in the account of the manor of Jesus’ trial and death, saying that the two were crucified in like manor as Jesus with:

“Dimas on his right hand and Gestas on his left. But one of the two thieves who were crucified with Jesus, whose name was Gestas, said to Jesus, ‘If thou art the Christ, deliver thyself and us’. But the thief who was crucified on his right hand, whose name was Dimas, answering, rebuked him, and said, ‘Dost not thou fear God, who art condemned to this punishment? We indeed receive rightly and justly the demerit of our actions; but this Jesus, what evil hath he done?’ After this groaning, he said to Jesus, ‘Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.’ Jesus answering, said to him, ‘Verily I say unto thee, that this day thou shalt be with me in Paradise’” (*Home*, 72-73).

Here the two bandits approach Jesus with the same choice we all have. One continued to mock Jesus, “hurling abuse at Him, saying, ‘Are You not the Christ? Save Yourself and us!’” (*Luke 23:39*). Gestas failed to recognize Jesus and rejected God’s provision for his redemption, thereby heaping the full measure of the sins of his life upon himself. That bandit succumbed to the weight of the justice that he deserved, while the other bandit, like Pilate, recognized the One before Him as both innocent and underserving of the punishment heaped upon Him, but also as God (*Luke 23:40-41*).

Dismas, having acknowledged his own sins and that Jesus was able to save him, asked Him to remember him, much the same way every sinner who ever bent a knee after him has asked Jesus to forgive them, and be their Lord and Savior. That sinner, though he would not be freed bodily in this life, would receive a full pardon of his crimes in eternity and be set free of his burdens in Paradise (*Luke 23:43*).

Perhaps for some it matters little what the thieves names were, if indeed these were not just titles given to the men, yet I find it interesting that Dismas, *δυσμᾶς* in the Greek, refers to sunset, which is also used as the direction of west, and Gestas, or Gesta, is defined as ones deeds or acts. One might rightfully say that the names of these insurrectionists are a reminder that the sinner who relied on his own deeds and efforts could not recognize Jesus as the Savior needed for his redemption, and so he died in his sin, whereas the sinner on the right, who acknowledged Christ as Sovereign and able to forgive him, by receiving Him, and trusting that Jesus shed blood was enough to cover his sins, had them cast as far from him as the east is from the west. Jesus did remember him, and invite Him to join Him in paradise, as He fulfilled the role of the Passover Lamb.

The Passover is first mentioned in *Exodus 12:1-14*, as the Hebrew people were locked inside their homes as plagues ravaged the land of Egypt. Moses and Aaron were instructed by God that at this time they were to have

each man of Israel take a lamb for his family, according to their household. The lamb was to be a year old male without defect and slaughter it at twilight. Afterwards, they were to put some of the blood of the lamb on the sides and tops of the doorframes of their house and then eat of the lamb, along with bitter herbs, and eat it in haste, for that same night the firstborn of Egypt would be stricken down, but those who obeyed the Lord, would be spared. The blood would be a sign for the Lord to pass over the wrath and judgement due to that household, and so no destruction would befall them that night, while the others of the land were dealt the full penalty of the judgement of God. They were then promised that they were to remember this day and commemorate it as a festival and lasting ordinance (*Exodus 12:1-14*).

Since that time, it has been the custom of the Jewish people, in covenant with God, that each family would take one newborn lamb into their home to live with them for the year. The Lamb would have to be judged as perfect by the temple priests, without any spots, defects or blemishes. This lamb would grow as a beloved of the family, cared for and loved by all until the time of the Passover, when that perfect lamb was to be sacrificed, prepared and had its blood spread over the doorpost and lintels of the family home.

The lamb's body would be broken for the feast, and its blood would be shed in remembrance of the time when the obedient children of Israel took Hyssop branches and spread the blood of the lamb so that the death angel would pass over their home. One lamb for each house would insure their lives. This was to be done every year in remembrance of God's mercy in sparing the Hebrew people.

Those who follow Jesus do not observe that feast. We have, however, remembered Him through the Communion meal ever since that fateful night each time we, having laid down our burdens of guilt and forgiven our neighbor's sins just as Jesus has forgiven ours, join together to partake of the bread and cup in remembrance of Jesus broken body and precious blood poured out for us.

In the act of Communion we are comforted to know that He who grew up among us as a tender shoot (*Isaiah 53:2*), He who was without sin or blemish (*Ephesians 5:27*), our Messiah, the "Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed" (*1 Corinthians 5:7b*), once for all mankind. The blood of Jesus was shed on the doorpost and lintels of a cross, a word that translates to Pesach, a word that means Easter in English, and to cross in Greek. That judgement can and will pass over our own wickedness. This is something some of you heard me mention last year, but it bears repeating because it helps explain why we do what we do.

Jesus was judged a righteous man without sin or blemish by the priesthood, governing bodies, and the people during the time of the Passover. The sins of a sinful man, so judged by all, were given mercy and Jesus took upon Himself the full penalty for the crimes of humanity. "He opened not His mouth" (*Isaiah 53:7*), to defend Himself or ask for any quarter, and having waved the right He owned in exchange for the sinner to be set free of any penalties for the crimes which 'the son of the Father' was so clearly guilty of, established Jesus as a perfect Sacrificial Lamb.

We celebrate Passover this Maundy Thursday. The same night when, so long ago, Jesus and His disciples went into an upper room to observe the traditional meal. The same night when Jesus took bread as symbolic of His body, that would be broken for all people, and then took the cup and asked the Lord to bless it, saying that it symbolized His blood shed for us, and then He asked us as followers, us Christians, to do this in remembrance of Him, and to remember that night (*1 Corinthians 11:23-26*), and God's sacrificial love for you and I.

People of God you need to apply the blood of Jesus to your doorposts. You need to apply His redeeming blood to your families, to your bodies, to your finances, to your jobs, and to every area of your lives, and apply it daily, that the schemes of the enemy, and the curses of this life may pass over you and your household.

Only under the shadow of the cross will you find the protection and provision of God, and the blessings of the promises of God. You will be able to call the Lord your refuge, see Him save you from the fowler's snare, from deadly pestilence, and be covered and shielded. At the foot of the cross terror and darkness flee, and you will see the enemies that would attack you fall at your side because the Lord will be your refuge when you choose to make Him your dwelling place, and He will rescue you in this life from unknown dangers, and see you delivered into the next, where your salvation awaits (*Psalms 91*), courtesy of your friend Jesus, who has purchased you a ticket that is nontransferable and nonrefundable, and that does not expire.

That ticket is for all who acknowledge Jesus as their personal Lord and Savior. It is for those who recognize that Jesus is able and willing to forgive their sins, come into their hearts and be their Provider and Protector. For all who submit to Jesus, He has promised that they will one day be with Him in paradise (*Luke 23:43*), in God's good time.

He has not promised that you would not have difficulties, or face turmoil, or suffer persecution, but you can take heart that He has already overtaken the enemy, and overcome the world (*John 16:33*). Jesus already holds the keys to death and the grave (*Revelation 1:18*), and has the authority to make and keep that promise that we can and will again have friendship with God (*John 15:14-15*), and have abundant life (*John 10:10*), for when His own, who are called by His name cry out, He hears and delivers them and saves those who are being crushed (*Psalms 34:17-18*).

Beloved, are you being crushed? Are you feeling persecuted and oppressed? For the love of the One who loves you, cry out. Call upon your Heavenly Father. He is listening, and He knows your struggle. He is already working for your benefit and knows the path out of your situation, though the solution He has in store may not have been one you would have chosen, after all, in the end, both thieves died that day, Pilate died some time after, and within 65 years or so, all who bore witness to Jesus' crucifixion on Calvary left their earthly bodies, but hear is the Good News; Jesus is alive! He is alive and well and seated at the right hand of the Father (*Acts 7:55, Ephesians 1:20*), and we that are in Christ are awaiting His return, and He will return. I pray you will be part of that Passover.

So what are you waiting for? As the world searches for a cure for this dreadful virus, have you thought of applying the cure that is tried and true for the salvation of your eternal life? Apply the blood of the Lamb this Passover, and as needed beyond that. Apply it liberally, and reapply often. Call on the blood of Jesus in your guilt, in your sorrows, in your struggles, and in your times of need. It really is a cure for all sin. That is what it was designed to be, and there is nothing like it. As we remember Jesus' blood spilt for each of us in the partaking of Communion, let us praise God for His sacrifice and receive Him with Joy and gladness.

Let us pray: Heavenly Father, we thank you for the life, service and sacrifice of Jesus Christ, our Messiah and King. We lay down our burdens now at His nail scarred feet and freely forgive all who have hurt, oppressed or taken from us, just as You freely have forgiven us for having disregarded, disobeyed and given away to others or ourselves the Glory and honor that You rightly deserve. We apologize for our sins, receive forgiveness through the blood of Jesus, and plead His blood over our homes, our families, and every situation in our lives. We ask that Your hand be over us, and submit to Your authority, in Jesus' name, Amen.

Hymn: "Take My Life" (Hold down Ctrl key and Click on link. Skip ad.->) <https://youtu.be/B4wDeivjCHU>

The Church Covenant May those of us who are members proclaim our church covenant.

"Having been led, as we believe, by the Holy Spirit, to accept Jesus Christ as our Savior and Lord, and upon profession of our faith, having been baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, we now enter into Covenant with one another, as one body in Christ.

We promise, as the Lord shall enable us, to strive daily to love according to the spirit and teachings of Christ, and to do all in our power to create a spiritual atmosphere within the Church, which will lead others to come into fellowship with God and into saving relationship with Jesus Christ.

As a fellowship of Christians, we promise by the help of God to nurture Christian growth in our homes, and to minister to the spiritual and material needs of one another. We further promise to strive for the advancement of our church in worship, in Christian Education, in service, and in fellowship; to observe its ordinances; to attend its services as faithfully as possible; to contribute regularly to its local and missionary enterprises; to unite with some other church when living away; and by personal and group example, to commend the Christian way of life to all.

May the blessing of God our Father, Jesus Christ our Savior and Lord, and the Holy Spirit our Helper and Guide ever rest upon us."

Communion Service:

In the Baptist tradition this is a covenant meal, which we partake of in remembrance for what Jesus has done on the cross for each of us. It is our understanding that all those who profess Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Savior are welcome to share in this meal, which we partake of together, in the presence of the Lord. With this in mind, let us pray.

Communion Prayer:

Gracious God, we all have sinned and fallen short of Your glory, however we remember in this moment that we are now justified by Your grace as a gift, through the redemption of Your Son Jesus, the Christ, whom You have put forward as a sacrifice of atonement by His shed blood, once for all.

We come before You, asking that You bless this bread and cup, having freely forgiven all who have wounded us, as You Yourself have freely forgiven us, and ask that we be healed, renewed and made hungry for Christ's coming in our hearts and homes. Fill us with His Spirit of service and self-forgetting love, that through us, He may come near to those who do not know You. We ask this in the name of You Son Jesus. Amen.

The Bread: On the night Jesus was betrayed He, *“took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, “This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me” (Luke 22:19).*

Take, Eat.

The Cup: *“In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you” (Luke 22:20).*

Take, Drink.

And so we proclaim Jesus, until His return!

After the meal, Jesus and His disciples went out to the mount of olives and sang hymns. Please join me in heart and spirit in singing 4 verses this week of our traditional closing hymn,

Hymn:

“Blest Be The Tie”

*1. Blessed be the tie that binds
Our hearts in Christian love;
The fellowship of kindred minds
Is like that to that above.*

*2. Before our Father's throne
We pour our ardent prayers;
Our fears, our hopes, our aims are one
Our comforts and our cares.*

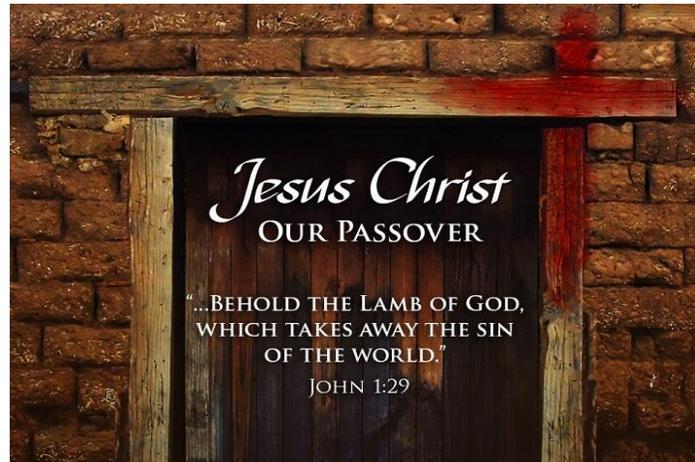
*3. We share each other's woes,
Our mutual burdens bear;
And often for each other flows
The sympathizing tear.*

*4. When we asunder part,
It gives us inward pain;
But we shall still be joined in heart,
And hope to meet again.*

Benediction:

And now, I urge that you would, “keep the commandment without spot of blame until the manifestation of our Lord Jesus Christ...He who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords” (2 Timothy 6:14-15), and remember to love the Lord your God, and to show love to others as He leads you, in Christ’s name, Amen.

May the Lord bless and keep you all.



Courtesy of Caleb b.

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