

His Blood be upon Us

Sunday of the Passion, Year A - Matthew 26:36 – 27:66

preached by the Rector at St. Paul's, Henderson, April 13, 2014

Lord, take my eyes and see through them. Take my lips and speak through them. Take my soul and set it on fire with love for thee. Amen.

To those that have thought the Gospel reading for the last few weeks rather long, I point out that I think the framers of the Lectionary were trying to prepare us, to “inoculate” us for this *morning's* Passion Gospel. Let me assure you that the preacher will not add too many words, or too many minutes, to the liturgy this morning – I like lunch as well as any of you.

For the last couple of years, [at the 10:00 service] we have split the Gospel reading into parts, having people read the part of the various personalities in the story of Our Lord's Passion. Some scholars object to this, pointing out that the Prayer Book calls for the “proclamation” of the Gospel rather than it's dramatization. I guess they're right, technically, though, assuming we stop short of producing a miniature Passion Play, a little more drama every now and then might not be such a bad thing. Others argue that by casting the congregation in the role of the crowd shouting, “Crucify him! Crucify him!” we set people up to be very uncomfortable. I don't have to guess to know *that's* right, though I think feeling a bit uncomfortable, feeling a bit put-off, squirming a little in our pews hearing the Gospel, *especially* when reading *this* story, isn't such a bad thing, either.

It's that next part that the congregation-slash-crowd is often asked to repeat, it's that next part that really makes scholars and liturgists and pastors a little nervous, it's that next part shouted by those that demanded Jesus's death, “His blood be on us and on our children!” It's *curse*. The crowd, angered by the disappointment of a failed deliverer, the crowd, betrayed by an apparently false Messiah, the crowd, stirred to a blood-lust curse, the crowd meant every word of that curse. It is a curse that *I* have a hard time reading without recoiling in disgust. It is a curse that has been used by Christians over the centuries to justify abominable treatment of the Jews. It is a curse that I don't want to have *anything* to do with – not for myself, and most assuredly, not for my children.

But though we would not, though we *could* not bring ourselves to utter such a curse with our own modern, civilized lips, the blood of Christ *is* upon us, and upon our children, and upon children's children. Because it is *our* prides, and it is *our* prejudices, and it is *our* hatreds, and it is *our* deceptions – it is *our* sins that drove the nails into those precious hands and feet, it is *our* sins that pressed that thorny crown into his brow, it is *your* sins and *mine* that mocked the King of Glory, that beat and bloodied the Saviour of the human race, that spit in the face of the incarnate Son of God. That crowd that shouted “Hosanna!” in one breath and “Crucify!” in the next, that crowd meant every word of that curse, “Let his blood be upon us!” And that crowd is *us*.

The blood of Christ *is* upon us, dear friends – and thanks be to God that it *is*. Because, for we who call ourselves by the name of Christ, the blood of Christ is no curse at all. It is a blessing. The blood of Christ which is upon us is the very fount of *all* blessings. The precious blood that flowed from the hands and feet, from the brow and the pierced side of Our Lord, is not the blood of guilt, not the blood of curse, but the redeeming blood that buys your pardon and mine, the cleansing blood that washes clean our offenses, the precious blood that covers our sins with the righteousness of God.

As we continue our own road to the cross this week of remembrances, this *Holy Week*, we want to remember the horrible price of our sinfulness. We want to remember the ultimate cost of our redemption from sinful slavery into the freedom of love unbound, and *unbounded*. We want to remember the immense value of the blood that is upon us, and our children, and our children's children – the blood that makes us pure and clean and *forgiven* in the eyes of our Creator and Redeemer. Thanks be to God. Amen.

