

Good Friday A (4/22/11 – *Our Savior’s Bloody Baptism by Fire on the Cross*)

In the Name of JESUS. [Amen]

The text for our meditation this ***Good Friday*** is the Passion account from the Gospel of St. John – as seen in the light of an earlier Word of our Lord found in Gospel of St. Luke: ***I came to cast fire on the earth, and would that it were already kindled! I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how great is My distress until it is accomplished!*** [LK 12.49-50]

Throughout our ***Lenten*** midweek services, we have considered the 4th Chief Part of our Christian faith – Holy Baptism. We have seen how we may understand Baptism as *New Creation, Flood, Exodus, Rebirth, and Death & Resurrection*. Last night – as we celebrated our Lord’s institution of the Blessed Sacrament of His Body and Blood – we meditated on the connection between ***Holy Baptism and Holy Communion***. Tonight, as we ponder our Savior’s holy Passion, we do so under the title ***Our Savior’s Bloody Baptism by Fire on the Cross***.

We have heard how, after our Lord Jesus Christ was betrayed by Judas – with that kiss of death – those who sought ***Jesus of Nazareth ... drew back and fell to the ground*** [JN 18.6]. This happened because our Lord spoke the simple words, ***I am He*** – or, as it might also be translated ... simply ***I AM***. Just as ***the sea looked and fled*** and the ***Jordan turned back*** [PSA 114.3] when the LORD God brought Israel out of Egypt by a mighty hand, so those who would now defy the LORD of Hosts come in human flesh must turn back and fall to the earth. Though veiled in the weakness of our mortal flesh, this is still none other than the Son of God. When He speaks His Name – ***I AM*** – the earth itself must ***tremble ... at the presence of the Lord*** [PSA 114.6]. So also those created from the dust of the earth.

We have likewise heard our Savior’s response to Pilate, when that man marveled at Jesus’ silence, saying: ***You will not speak to me? Do you not know that I have authority to release You and authority to crucify You?*** [JN 19.10] Our Lord’s calm response was: ***You would have no authority***

over Me at all unless it had been given you from above. [JN 19.11]

The point is this. Jesus is Himself the Lord of heaven and earth – together with the Father and the Holy Spirit. All authority on earth has been given **by Him** – together with the Father and the Holy Spirit. Our Savior is not at the whims of a misguided betrayer, jealous Jewish leaders, or secular authorities intoxicated with their seeming power over life. As we hear our Lord say on *Good Shepherd Sunday* (some years): ***For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it up again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of My own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again.*** [JN 10.17-18] The Savior **wills** to suffer His Passion – as we recall it so vividly this evening. It is not thrust upon Him, against His power and will.

The fire Jesus came to cast and the baptism with which He is to be baptized all focus on Him – by His design. And the reason our Lord willingly allows Himself to be betrayed, arrested, falsely accused, badly treated, sentenced to death, and cruelly crucified is so that He might receive in His Own Body the fiery wrath of the Father against **your sins** and **mine**. Indeed, Jesus willingly receives the Father's ire against the sins of the whole world. In that way, He makes each of us certain that God's wrath need not be poured out on us. No **one** is excluded ... not even a single one of our sins.

Our Savior **wills** to take upon Himself the destroying fire of God's wrath, so that the Father's discipline might be for us only a purifying fire – one that purges our sin and cleanses us from all unrighteousness. And thus purged and cleansed, we now stand before God as holy and righteous in His sight.

Our Lord is in great distress until He has accomplished all of this. So earnestly does He desire your salvation! So great is His love for you! And although it is by the hand of evil men that it is accomplished, absolutely **nothing** happens apart from His divine and merciful will. Man has no power but what God has given ... and allows. That goes for us as well – both in our worldly and in our spiritual lives.

Our Lord wishes to be the Rock that is turned into a pool of water for the washing away of sins. He has set His face like flint, that He might become a spring of living, life-giving Water. [PSA 114.8; ISA 50.7; LK 9.51; JN 4.10]

Christ is your Paschal Lamb Who sets you free from your bondage to sin, death, devil, and hell. Because of ***Our Savior's Bloody Baptism by Fire on the Cross***, the angel of eternal death sheaths its sword and passes over you. You have been baptized into His death. The Blood of Jesus – the Passover ***Lamb of God Who takes away the sin of the world*** [JN 1.29] – marks the doorposts and lintel of your heart and soul. You have received *the sign of the holy cross both upon your forehead and upon your heart to mark you as one redeemed by Christ the crucified* [HOLY BAPTISM RITE; LSB p.268].

The Savior drinks the cup of God's wrath against sin so that **you** may ***take the cup of salvation and call upon the Name of the LORD*** [PSA 116.13] – confident that He hears you and blesses you for Jesus' sake. Jesus offers to the Father His ***sacrifice of thanksgiving*** ... paying His vow of self-sacrifice ***to the LORD in the presence of all His people*** [PSA 116.17-18]. Consequently, **you** may give thanks to the Lord for all His benefits, knowing that because of the Son's willing and obedient death on that ***Good Friday, His steadfast love endures forever*** [PSA 118.1-4] ... also toward **you**.

Our Savior's Bloody Baptism by Fire on the Cross – that is the atoning sacrifice for sins – yours and mine. But that is not the end of the story – as you well know. The soldier pierced Jesus' side – from which ***came out blood and water*** [JN 19.34]. Joseph of Arimathea asked for Jesus' lifeless body, Nicodemus brought burial spices, they bound Jesus' body in linen cloths with the spices, and they placed Him in a new tomb. [JN 19.38-42] But the third day Christ rises from the tomb.

By Jesus' Baptism by Fire we are saved from the Father's wrath. By Jesus' Blood we have forgiveness of sins. By Jesus' Cross we are spared eternal suffering. And by Jesus' death we have life. Glory be to Jesus!

In the Name of the FATHER and of the ✠ SON and of the HOLY SPIRIT. [Amen]