

I.N.I.

Lenten VI: **JUSTICE**

April 1, 2012

John 19:19-20; Colossians 2:13-14

In Christ Jesus, who had God's JUSTICE placed on Him so that we would not have to face His wrath and condemnation, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

REPITITIO EST MATER STUDIORUM=**repetition is the mother of learning!** That little Latin phrase was drilled into us in our seminary days and I in turn have told my confirmation students the same thing over and over. The way to learn is to repeat and repeat and repeat. So I figured as we come to this Palm Sunday service it would be good to review these Object Lessons from Christ's Passion that we have studied these past six weeks.

1. Water and Towel: story of Jesus washing the disciples' feet.

LESSON: **WE NEED CLEANSING FOR OUR SINS. JESUS' BLOOD HAS CLEANSED US.**

2. Rooster and Tears: story of Peter's denial of the Lord Jesus and his repentance.

LESSON: **THE GOOD NEWS OF OUR SALVATION THROUGH JESUS (HIS WORD) WILL STRENGTHEN US TO REMAIN STEADFAST IN CHRIST AGAINST THE TEMPTATIONS OF SATAN.**

3. Thorns and the Whip: story of Jesus enduring the hostility and punishment of evil men.

LESSON: **CHRIST GIVES US THE STRENGTH TO ENDURE IN OUR MARATHON RACE FOR LIFE.**

4. Coins and the Dice: story of Judas' betrayal of Jesus and the soldiers gambling for Jesus' clothes.

LESSON: **CHRIST AND HIS SALVATION GIVES US TRUE CONTENTMENT SO THAT WE DO NOT COVET THE THINGS OF THIS LIFE**

5. Sponge and the Spear: story of Jesus' real painful suffering and thirst, of His receiving the sour wine on a sponge and being stabbed with the spear to show that He was really dead.

LESSON: **MAY OUR REPENTANCE, FAITH AND LOVE FOR JESUS AND EACH OTHER BE GENUINE, FROM THE HEART, MOTIVATED BY JESUS' GENUINE LOVE FOR US.**

This morning we look at another Object:

The Pen and the Ink.

We have made a miniature scroll with the message that Pilate placed upon the cross. The words on the scroll read: **JESUS OF NAZARETH: KING OF THE JEWS.** This message for Pilate was a sign of JUSTICE, but to the unbelieving Jews it was a sign of blasphemy.

Let us read our first sermon text: John 19:19-22. **NOW PILATE WROTE A TITLE AND PUT IT ON THE CROSS. AND THE WRITING WAS: JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS. THEN MANY OF THE JEWS READ THIS TITLE, FOR THE PLACE WHERE JESUS WAS CRUCIFIED WAS NEAR THE CITY; AND IT WAS WRITTEN IN HEBREW, GREEK, AND LATIN. THEN THE CHIEF PRIESTS OF THE JEWS SAID TO PILATE, DO NOT WRITE, THE KING OF THE JEWS, BUT, HE SAID, I AM THE KING OF THE JEWS. PILATE ANSWERED, WHAT I HAVE WRITTEN, I HAVE WRITTEN.**

It was common practice in the Roman world to place above the head of the condemned criminal the reason he was being executed. The sign above him would read MURDERER! THIEF! REVOLUTIONARY! TRAITOR! That way as people passed by this very public execution they could see what would happen to them if committed these crimes. It was a very vivid way to teach a lesson on punishment for breaking the law.

Remember that Pilate had said over and over again that Jesus was not guilty of any crime, yet in his cowardice, in his fear of the people he condemned Jesus to death. What would he put over Jesus'

head on the cross as the reason for His crucifixion? What crime had Jesus committed to deserve such a punishment? No doubt Pilate tried to salve his guilty conscience for condemning an innocent man, by proclaiming Jesus' innocence in putting on the cross the charge the Jews made against Jesus: **JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS.**

That is why this man is hanging on the cross, because the people rejected Him as their King. Another possible reason for this title was Pilate's way to get back at these Jews who had made life so miserable for him. The Scriptures tell us **HE KNEW IT WAS BECAUSE OF ENVY THAT THEY HAD HANDED JESUS OVER TO HIM.** Besides gaining a bit of revenge on his tormentors, by that title, Pilate indicted the Jews before the whole world of rejecting and being disloyal to their own King.

That is why they so vehemently rejected that title and wanted it changed. They came to Pilate and demanded that he change it to **"HE SAID, (HE CLAIMED TO BE), THE KING OF THE JEWS."**

See the big difference. They were stung by Pilate's insult to them. It was wrecking their hour of glory and triumph. "He is not our King, He is an imposter who claimed to be our King" is what they charged. But in this case Pilate showed some firmness. The title will stand! Nothing will be changed! There was nothing they could do about it. In this way Pilate felt at least some **JUSTICE** was being done. Pilate even had the title written in the language of the Jews: HEBREW, in the language of the everyday people: GREEK and in the language of the law and the Roman Empire: LATIN. Doing it that way would give this title the greatest exposure. Everyone walking by could read these words. This man was crucified for being the **KING OF THE JEWS.**

But in all reality that title was far too restrictive. Was Jesus only the King of the Jews? Not at all! He was and is the King of the whole world. He is the King and Lord of every believer from whatever race or nationality. Believing that Jesus is your King separates you and me from all of the unbelievers of our day. The Jews looked upon that title as the sign of blasphemy. Pilate looked upon that title as a sign of mockery to the Jews and some **JUSTICE** that salved his conscience. We, believers in Jesus, look upon that title as the sign of our **KING!**

He did not look like a King hanging there helplessly in pain and suffering. Yet that is exactly the kind of King we needed. One who would take our place for us. There is a legend of a Persian King who was a wise and loving ruler. One day his own mother had broken one of the laws and the punishment was 20 lashes with a whip. The king could not make an exception simply because it was his mother, but in love he did not want to punish his mother either. So, instead, he went before the court, took off his royal robes, bared his back and took the 20 lashes for his mother. Justice was satisfied, while the king's love for his mother was fully displayed.

That is what our King has done for us. Rather than have us suffer the eternal punishment for our sins, Jesus satisfied God's eternal justice by taking that punishment upon Himself. Our King substituted Himself for us. His back--not ours--bore the strokes of the whip. His hands--not ours--were pierced with nails to the cross. His head--not ours--was punctured with a crown of thorns. His blood--not ours--was shed on the cross as punishment for our sins. His soul--not ours--was forsaken by God and endured the torments of hell on the cross. Isaiah writes: **HE WAS WOUNDED FOR OUR TRANSGRESSIONS, HE WAS BRUISED FOR OUR INIQUITIES; THE CHASTISEMENT FOR OUR PEACE WAS UPON HIM, AND BY HIS STRIPES WE ARE HEALED.**

That leads us to our second sermon text for this morning from Colossians 2:13-14. **AND YOU, BEING DEAD IN YOUR TRESPASSES AND THE UNCIRCUMCISION OF YOUR FLESH, HE HAS MADE ALIVE TOGETHER WITH HIM, HAVING FORGIVEN YOU ALL TRESPASSES, HAVING WIPED OUT THE HANDWRITING OF REQUIREMENTS THAT**

WAS AGAINST US, WHICH WAS CONTRARY TO US. AND HE HAS TAKEN IT OUT OF THE WAY, HAVING NAILED IT TO THE CROSS.

There is a title that Pilate, the soldiers and the Jews did not see on that cross. The title which declared that all of the requirements of the Law were canceled. This **HANDWRITING OF REQUIREMENTS** is the written law of God, the divine decrees with their uncompromising **YOU SHALL** and **YOU SHALL NOT**. God wiped out the Ceremonial Laws that required this sacrifice and that ceremony. These were against us because they demanded perfect, loving obedience which we could never achieve. It set forth a way of salvation that was impossible for any human being ever to accomplish. God's Law stood as our accuser, showing us our **SINS**.

But in Christ's death, God has canceled that written code of requirements. He took away the curse of the Law because of sin and nailed it to the cross. When Christ died, the Law as man's accuser also died. The historical purpose of the Mosaic Law also was now fulfilled. It pointed to Christ and now Christ had come and kept it perfectly. They were no longer needed. On the cross, Christ paid the punishment that we sinners deserved because of our breaking the **HANDWRITING OF REQUIREMENTS, GOD'S LAW**. He took upon Himself the curse of everlasting damnation.

A LESSON ON JUSTICE.

JUSTICE was served on the cross—God's **JUSTICE!** Even though Jesus was not guilty of any crime and therefore **UNJUSTLY** accused and convicted, **UNJUSTLY** condemned and crucified, yet in God's court **JUSTICE** was served. For God had placed every single sin upon His Son. Jesus bore the sins of the whole world. The totality of God's wrath and condemnation was upon Jesus. The Law in all of its force was placed upon Christ. Christ was declared to be **GUILTY OF ALL SINS IN THOUGHT, WORD AND DEED**. Therefore His death satisfied God's Just demand of a victim, of punishment: **THE WAGES OF SIN IS DEATH**. Jesus' death paid for all of our sins. The Law as our accuser is dead and gone. Our debt of sin and guilt has been canceled. At the foot of the cross we find complete deliverance and freedom from sin and its curse.

This does not mean that God's unchangeable moral law has lost all significance for believers or that we now as believers can live any way we want and forget about loving God and our neighbor. No, the moral law still serves as a perfect mirror, daily showing each of us our sins and our great need for this Savior.

But the law of God, for the believer in Christ, is no longer that fearful pronouncement of death to the sinner, but a guide that shows how God wants us to live for Him. Paul writes in Romans 8 **THERE IS THEREFORE NOW NO CONDEMNATION TO THOSE WHO ARE IN CHRIST JESUS, WHO DO NOT WALK ACCORDING TO THE FLESH, BUT ACCORDING TO THE SPIRIT.**

And that's the key. If we are in Christ, we will not walk in the flesh, but walk in Christ, empowered by His great loving sacrifice for us. The law is the guide, the Gospel is the power that gives us the ability to want to and to be able to keep those requirements as fruits of faith, as works of the Spirit, as loving acts of service to our Savior and each other.

That's God's amazing **JUSTICE** which has been pronounced upon us by His amazing **GRACE** in Christ Jesus. We sinners are **NOT GUILTY**, while Christ the Sinless One is **GUILTY!**
Praise God.

Amen.