

## **Good Friday, Tenebrae Vespers, A ✕ D 2009**

### **John 18-19**

*In the name of the Father and of the ✕ Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

1 Good Friday is rife with irony. The angry mob came bringing lanterns and torches and weapons to arrest Him who is the Light of the World, the Light no darkness can overcome. Judas received thirty pieces of silver, the price you owed a man if your ox killed his slave, to betray the One who was sent to purchase all people from their slavery to sin. Moreover, Judas made the sign of his betrayal a kiss. Peter, who boldly confessed that he would rather die with Jesus than deny Him, and who confessed earlier to Jesus, “Lord to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life” denied even knowing Jesus three times. The crowds and the chief priests who accused Jesus of blasphemy for calling Himself the Son of God were in fact the blasphemers for failing to worship Jesus. The crowd showed its hatred by calling for the death of the One whose death was to demonstrate His love for them. And when Pilate presented two options to them to choose one man to go free, the crowd called for the release of Barabbas, a murderer and a robber, over the Prince of Life.

2 The irony is that it was not just the will of the chief priests or the malleable mob that Barabbas, the law-breaker should go free and live; this was the will of the Heavenly Father. That’s the reason for calling this day “good.” The death of Jesus meant the release from punishment for Barabbas. But this was not a one-to-one exchange. The high priest Caiaphas himself declared it was fitting that one Man should die in the place of the people.

3 Does that seem fair? The murderer, the insurrectionist, the robber goes free while Jesus goes to be mocked, spat upon, whipped, beaten, crowned with thorns, and nailed to a cross to hang and die? How is Barabbas any different from you? Well, I, for one, have never murdered anyone. But wasn’t it the same Jesus who took Barabbas’ place who said, “Whoever is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment.” And doubtless you’ve committed murder with your angry, hateful thoughts. You, like the crowd, have put yourself in the place of God, deciding for

yourself what is right and wrong. You, like the chief priests, have blasphemed, using God's holy name as a swear word instead of a prayer word. You've lusted, you've coveted, you've gossiped, you've lied, you've sought after your own safety and comfort more than the safety and comfort of those around you. The list could go on forever. But it doesn't.

4 The list of your sins stops at the death of Jesus on the cross. Barabbas went free, and so do you. Jesus was completely human so that He could redeem fallen humanity. And He was fully divine so that His death would pay the full price for all of humanity's sinfulness. Those who trust in Jesus to deliver them from sin and damnation have no list of sins. St. Paul tells the Colossians, "you who were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with Him, having forgiven all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This He set aside, nailing it to the Cross" (Col 2:13-14). That's how God dealt with your sin. He gave it to Jesus, who drank the cup of the wrath of God. Jesus was the biggest sinner that ever lived. Not that He had any sins of His own, but that he took all of your sin as His own.

5 The greatest irony of the account of Good Friday is that, when Pilate refused to have his hands stained with the blood of Jesus, the crowd shouted, "Let His blood be upon us and upon our children." They meant to tell Pilate that they would be guilty of the death of Jesus. But the blood of Jesus doesn't make anyone guilty. Quite the opposite: the blood of Jesus cleanses you from all sin and all guilt (1 Jn 1:7). The crowd hardly knew for what they asked. It's exactly what they needed—to be covered with the blood of Jesus.

6 And it's exactly what you need. Lord, let Your blood be upon us and upon our children. Let Your blood be our daily dress, having been clothed with your righteousness through the waters of Holy Baptism, you are they who have washed your robes in the Lamb's blood and made them white. Let Your blood be upon our lips and upon the lips of our children, as you give us Your precious blood to drink for the forgiveness of our sins. Let Your blood be upon us in

Your Holy Absolution, as you deliver the benefits of the death of Jesus through the mouths of His ministers. Indeed, let His blood be upon you and upon your children.

*In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

*Soli Deo Gloria*  
Pastor Jeff Hemmer  
Hope, Jerseyville