

Good Friday, April 15, 2022, St. Peter Lutheran Church, Doss, TX

You have heard the Passion History and now my text from St. Mark's Gospel 15:21-25 *"And they compelled a passerby, Simon of Cyrene, who was coming from the country, the Father of Alexander and Rufus, to carry his cross. And they brought him to the place called Golgotha, which means place of a skull. And they offered him wine mingled with myrrh; but he did not take it. And they crucified him."* Let's listen to one version of Simon's story as he approached Jerusalem that Friday.

1) Walking on the road to Jerusalem, the time had come to sacrifice again, my two small sons, they walk beside me on the road, The reason that they came was to watch the lamb. Daddy, daddy, what will see there; there's so much that we don't understand, So I told them of Moses and father Abraham, Then I said dear children watch the lamb; there will be so many in Jerusalem today, we must be sure the lamb doesn't run away, And I told them of Moses and father Abraham, Then I said dear children watch the lamb.

2) When we reached the city, I knew something must be wrong. There were no joyful worshipers, no joyful worship songs, I stood there with my children in the midst of angry men, Then I heard the crowd cry out, "Crucify Him." We tried to leave the city but we could not get away, forced to play in this drama a part I did not wish to play. Why upon this day were men condemned to die? Why were we standing here where soon they would pass by?

3) I looked and said, even now they come. The first one cried for mercy; The people gave him none. The second one was violent; He was arrogant and loud, I still hear his angry voice screaming at the crowd, then someone said, "There's Jesus." I scarcely believed my eyes: A man so badly beaten, He barely looked alive. Blood poured from His body, from the thorns upon His brow, running down the cross, Falling to the ground.

4) I watched Him as He struggled, I watched Him as He fell. The cross came down upon His back; The crowd began to yell. In that moment I felt such agony; In that moment I felt such loss, till a Roman soldier grabbed my arm and screamed, "You, carry His cross." At first, I tried to resist him, then his hand reached for his sword. So, I knelt and took the cross from the Lord. I placed it on my shoulder and started down the street; the blood that he'd been shedding was running down my cheek.

5) They led us to Golgotha; they drove nails deep in His feet and hands. Yet upon the cross I heard Him pray, "Father, forgive them." Oh, never have I seen such love in any other

eyes. "Into thy hands I commit my spirit," He prayed and then He died. I stood for what seemed like years; I'd lost all sense of time until I felt two tiny hands holding tight to mine. The children stood there weeping; I heard the oldest say, "Father please forgive us, the lamb ran away. Daddy, daddy, what have we seen here? There's so much that we don't understand." So, I took them in my arms and we turned and faced the cross. Then I said, "Dear children, watch the Lamb. "

We sing in our liturgy, *O Lamb of God Who takes away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us.* When I served as a chaplain at Midland Memorial Hospital, I was called to the emergency room by my pastoral volunteers. A teenager had huffed some drug on a bet and had died. I learned his mother was an Episcopalian by faith. She was leaning against the wall like a board, face turned toward the wall. I walked up, introduced myself and offered condolences. Then I asked if I could remember her in prayer. She said 'yes' and I was moved to pray the Agnus Dei, "O Lamb of God Who takes away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us. O Lamb of God Who takes away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us. O Lamb of God Who takes away the sins of the world, grant us Your peace." When I started praying that, she joined in and prayed with me. What can you say but to cry out to God to have mercy, have mercy in your pain, shock and deep sadness?

God in Christ experienced pain, rejection, torture and insult on our behalf on this day so many years ago. When we hurt, He hurts with us. When we are rejected, He accepts us. When we are in pain, He puts His arms around us. To be with Him in heaven would be such a blessing as the John in Revelation 21 pictures from his vision. *3 I heard a loud shout from the throne, saying, "Look, God's home is now among his people! He will live with them, and they will be his people. God himself will be with them. 4 He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. All these things are gone forever." 5 And the one sitting on the throne said, "Look, I am making everything new!" And then he said to me, "Write this down, for what I tell you is trustworthy and true." 6 And he also said, "It is finished! I am the Alpha and the Omega—the Beginning and the End. To all who are thirsty I will give freely from the springs of the water of life. 7 All who are victorious will inherit all these blessings, and I will be their God, and they will be my children.*

God loves each of us dearly and today's giving us His Son to die for us underlines that in a powerful way. Let us give thanks and grow in our love for Him. Amen