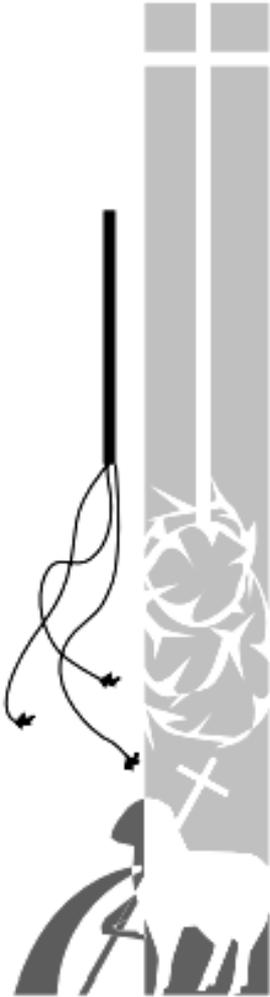


THE PASSION OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST

*As seen in the Prophecies
and Types of the Old
Testament*

A Lenten Devotional



Introduction

The Scripture readings on Good Friday are punctuated with statements that the events of our Lord's Passion fulfill the Scriptures. This is true, not just in the particular details of our Lord's suffering and death, but also in regard to the substance. What our Lord underwent and achieved for us fulfilled prophecies and types.

Prophecies are statements of Scripture concerning what is to come. We can think of many passages we hear at Christmastime that predict the virgin birth, that the Savior would be born in Bethlehem, and so on. We discover many prophecies of the Lord's Passion as well.

We also find many *types* of the Passion throughout the Old Testament. A type is a person, place, event, or thing that foreshadows a future person, place, event, or thing.

This series of devotions will progress chronologically, that is, from the first promise of the Savior in Genesis 3:15 to the prophecies of Zechariah in the late 500s BC, with all that comes in between in the order in which they were given. Because of this, the Old Testament predictions of Passion of Our Lord will not appear in the order in which we see them fulfilled.

Instead, you will be able to see how the Passion was foretold over the centuries to God's people, gradually unfolded and expanded from the central point that there is no forgiveness without the shedding of blood, to the painfully particular details of the Lord's suffering. After each brief devotion, a hymn stanza or two that connects to the reading is offered for you to either sing or pray.

My prayer is that you will see the rich significance behind the simple statement "Jesus was the sacrifice for our sins," not just for the sake of your knowledge of Scripture, but for the strengthening of your faith in this Jesus who is indeed, the long-promised Lamb of God who has taken away the sin of the world.

In Christ,
Pastor Gerike

Ash Wednesday

“I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her Offspring; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel” (Genesis 3:15).

The first word of the Gospel comes soon after the Fall into sin. It is a word of judgment directed to the devil. Satan is given his sentence, and we, in turn, are given consolation through the first promise of the incarnation of the Son of God. The Messiah will be born of woman, but will have no human father.

This passage is also the first promise of Christ’s Passion. The devil will suffer total defeat, his head crushed, by the Offspring of the woman. In doing this very thing the Savior will Himself suffer injury. Though real pain will be inflicted on the Lord it is not a permanently mortal wound. And so we also see here the seeds of the further promise of the resurrection. For when the devil is defeated and sin is atoned for, death itself is put to flight.

This word of judgment against the devil is the promise of God which comforted Adam and Eve, and all their descendants. It is the foundation of Old Testament hope, the source of all of the promises and types of the Messiah that were to follow over the centuries. It is what we see fulfilled in birth, ministry, and ultimately, in the suffering, death, and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

*What mercy God showed to our race,
A plan of rescue by His grace:
In sending One from woman’s seed,
The One to fill our greatest need—
For on a tree uplifted high
His only Son for sin would die,
Would drink the cup of scorn and dread
To crush the ancient serpent’s head.*

LSB 561:3

Thursday after Ash Wednesday

“And the LORD God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them” (Genesis 3:21).

Adam and Eve tried to hide from God and covered the shame they felt over their nakedness with leaves. As little as they (or we ourselves,) could hide from the all-knowing God, so also is it impossible to cover the shame that is exposed by the all-holy God with our own paltry attempts and efforts.

But what we cannot do for ourselves, the Lord does for us. He covers up our nakedness and shame for us. The means by which God does this for Adam and Eve is a picture of what is to come. God covers their shame with skins. This requires a death and the shedding of blood. This is the great overarching principle of the entire Bible, Old and New Testaments. This remains true even today. God’s people can only come to Him with their sin covered, taken away. This only happens through a death and the shedding of blood.

For a time, this would be done through the life and blood of an animal, as many of the coming devotions from the Books of Moses will show. But the full and final covering would come in the beautiful and glorious garment of Christ’s own righteousness. In Holy Baptism, the Christian stands washed and cleansed in His blood, clothed in His perfect obedience.

*Jesus, Thy blood and righteousness
My beauty are, my glorious dress;
Midst flaming worlds, in these arrayed,
With joy shall I lift up my head.*

*Bold shall I stand in that great day,
Cleansed and redeemed, no debt to pay;
Fully absolved through these I am
From sin and fear, from guilt and shame.*

LSB 563:1–2

Friday after Ash Wednesday

Abraham said, "God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son" And Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him was a ram, caught in a thicket by his horns. And Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering instead of his son (Genesis 22:8a, 13).

Abraham told Isaac that God Himself would provide the lamb for a burnt offering. It is a ram that is offered in Isaac's place as a sacrifice to God. The life of Abraham's only and beloved son is spared by the ram. But Abraham was not mistaken. He did not misspeak. The ram, caught by his horns in the thicket, is a picture of Seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who, with His sacred head encircled by thorns, would be offered up.

It is He, the Lord Jesus, who is the Lamb, sent and provided by God Himself in love, not just for Isaac, nor for the whole people of Israel, but for all humanity. This sacrifice is offered up in place of all the nations of the earth. The blessings of His blood are given to all those who believe in Him, regardless of nation or ethnicity. This is what God had promised Abraham all those years before, when he had not yet entered the Promised Land of Canaan:

Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed" (Genesis 12:1-3).

*This Lamb is Christ, the soul's great friend,
The Lamb of God, our Savior,
Whom God the Father chose to send
To gain for us His favor.
"Go forth, My Son," the Father said,
"And free My children from their dread
Of guilt and condemnation.
The wrath and stripes are hard to bear,
But by Your passion they will share
The fruit of Your salvation."*

Saturday after Ash Wednesday

“[Joseph’s brothers] saw him from afar, and before he came near to them they conspired against him to kill him. They said to one another, “Here comes this dreamer. Come now, let us kill him and throw him into one of the pits. Then we will say that a fierce animal has devoured him, and we will see what will become of his dreams.” (Genesis 37:18–20).

The ungodly always hate and persecute the righteous. Joseph, the beloved son of his father, Jacob by his dear wife Rachel, only told the truth of the dreams which God had given him. He only spoke the truth of his brother’s bad deeds to their father that they might be brought to repentance. The godliness and innocence of Joseph is rejected by his own brothers and they plot to kill him.

The long-awaited descendant of Jacob came centuries later. He spoke the words His Father had given Him. He called sinners to repentance and faith. But His own flesh and blood do not repent or believe in Him. Instead, in hatred of their own Messiah, *“the chief priests and the elders of the people gathered in the palace of the high priest...and plotted together in order to arrest Jesus by stealth and kill him” (Matt 26:3–4).*

Though the brothers of Joseph and the fellow Israelites of Jesus seem to succeed in their evil plans of putting away the one whom they hate, in both cases God works the greatest good: the salvation of His people. In the case of Joseph, it is temporal deliverance as their bodies are relieved from famine. With our Lord, it is the greatest good – salvation in body and soul.

*He came from His blest throne
Salvation to bestow;
But men made strange, and none
The longed-for Christ would know.
But, oh, my friend,
My friend indeed,
Who at my need
His life did spend!*

*Sometimes they strew His way
And His sweet praises sing;
Resounding all the day
Hosannas to their King.
Then “Crucify!”
Is all their breath,
And for His death
They thirst and cry.*

LSB 430:2–3

The First Sunday in Lent

“[Judah said to Joseph] your servant became a pledge of safety for the boy to my father, saying, ‘If I do not bring him back to you, then I shall bear the blame before my father all my life.’ Now therefore, please let your servant remain instead of the boy as a servant to my lord, and let the boy go back with his brothers. For how can I go back to my father if the boy is not with me? I fear to see the evil that would find my father”
(Genesis 44:32–34).

Judah and his brothers stand for the second time before the servant of pharaoh, who, unbeknownst to them, is their brother Joseph, whom they had sold into slavery years before. Before his brothers departed back to Canaan, Joseph had his servant put his silver cup in the sack of his youngest brother, Benjamin, the only other son of their father Jacob’s beloved Rachel. Benjamin is caught, found to have Joseph’s cup, and faces death.

It is at this point that Judah offers himself in place of Benjamin’s. He had vowed to do so to his father Jacob, before they journeyed back to Egypt (Genesis 43:8–9). Judah puts his own life on the line for the sake of his brother, that the beloved Benjamin might go free and return to his father. Later on, in Israel’s history, the tribes of Judah and Benjamin stood together while the remaining tribes went their own way, and eventually, were taken off into oblivion by the Assyrians.

Many centuries later, Judah’s descendant according to the flesh, our Lord Jesus Christ, would place Himself in the stead of every sinner. He who knew no sin, was made to be sin for us (2 Cor 5:21). United to Him, our King, we are able to return to our Father in heaven.

*Thou, ah! Thou, hast taken on Thee
Bonds and stripes, a cruel rod;
Pain and scorn were heaped upon Thee,
O Thou sinless Son of God!
Thus didst Thou my soul deliver
From the bonds of sin forever.
Thousand, thousand thanks shall be,
Dearest Jesus, unto Thee.*

LSB 420:2

Monday after the First Sunday in Lent

“[The Lord said to Moses] Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male a year old. You may take it from the sheep or from the goats... they shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and the lintel of the houses in which they eat it. They shall eat the flesh that night, roasted on the fire; with unleavened bread and bitter herbs they shall eat it.... For I will pass through the land of Egypt that night, and I will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments: I am the LORD.... And when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague will befall you to destroy you, when I strike the land of Egypt...and you shall not break any of its bones” (Exodus 12:5, 7–8, 12, 13, 46b).

The children of Israel were delivered by the flesh and blood of the Passover lamb, whose blood was drained and painted upon their doors, and its flesh eaten. By the blood of the unblemished lamb, the lives of Israel’s firstborn were spared. The benefit of its death in their place, release from slavery and judgment upon their enemies, was given to all Israel by the eating of its flesh.

Christ is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29). He is proclaimed to be the spotless lamb as Pilate repeatedly states that there is no guilt in Him. He goes on to die as our Passover (1 Cor 5:7). His blood is spilt for us. Though battered, bruised, and pierced, His bones are not broken (John 19:32–36). His body and blood that are given for the life of the world, for where there is the forgiveness of sins, there is also life. This is what continues to be given as often as we eat the bread that is His body and drink the cup which is His blood, proclaiming His death in our stead and for our deliverance until He comes (1 Cor 11:23–26).

*Here our true Paschal Lamb we see,
Whom God so freely gave us;
He died on the accursed tree—
So strong His love—to save us.
See, His blood now marks our door;
Faith points to it; death passes o’er,
And Satan cannot harm us.
Lord, have mercy!*

LSB 458:5 alt.

Tuesday after the First Sunday in Lent

“Moses took the blood and threw it on the people and said, “Behold the blood of the covenant that the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words”” (Exodus 24:8).

God spoke the Ten Commandments directly to the people of Israel as the foundation of His will for them. Moses read the rest of the Book of the Covenant to the people (Ex 20:22–23:33). Upon the people’s pledge of obedience to the Covenant of Sinai, Moses took the blood of the animals offered in sacrifice to God and cast it upon the people. God and His Old Testament people are bonded together by blood.

The rest of the Old Testament, including the later events of the Book of Exodus, shows how well the people of Israel kept up their terms of the Covenant. They failed, falling into idolatry and sin again and again. God’s good will for how His people ought to live before Him and with one another cannot be kept by poor sinners.

On the night He was betrayed, and – according to the Jewish reckoning of time where the day begins at sunset – the same day of His death, Jesus speaks of the cup of the covenant in His blood, which is poured out for many (Matt 26:28).

Once again, God and His people are bonded together by blood. This time, however, it is in the blood of His own Son, poured out as He offers Himself as the sacrifice for our sins, taking the punishment for our disobedience and inability to keep His holy Law. It is that same blood which is sprinkled upon us in the Holy Communion, bonding us to God in the covenant, not of obedience to the Law, but Christ’s own testament – the giving of His life for ours for the forgiveness of our sins.

*He blotted out with His own blood
The judgment that against us stood;
For us He full atonement made,
And all our debt He fully paid.*

*That this forever true shall be
He gives a solemn guarantee:
In this His holy Supper here
We taste His love so sweet, so near.*

LSB 634:2–3

Wednesday after the First Sunday in Lent

“And you shall make a veil of blue and purple and scarlet yarns and fine twined linen. It shall be made with cherubim skillfully worked into it. And you shall hang it on four pillars of acacia overlaid with gold, with hooks of gold, on four bases of silver. And you shall hang the veil from the clasps, and bring the ark of the testimony in there within the veil. And the veil shall separate for you the Holy Place from the Most Holy” (Exodus 26:31–33).

A thick curtain separated the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place in the tabernacle, and later on, the temple. While Israelite men could enter the inner court of the temple, only the priests could enter the Holy Place, and still only the high priest could enter the Most Holy Place but once a year. In a gracious act, God did not remain high up on Sinai or some other mountain where only Moses could climb up to be with Him. In the tabernacle, God came and dwelt in midst of His people, their camp surrounding the place where He came to be present for them. Yet there were limits. Only certain men could enter into the Holy Place, and they had to undergo a stringent process for ritual purification of their bodies.

The Book of Hebrews tells us that at the time of the Lord’s death on the cross, He entered into the true Most Holy Place as the true High Priest (Hebrews 9:24–25). To show the fulfillment of all the temple – the building, its contents, sacrifices, and priesthood – the curtain of the temple, that thick barrier between God and men, and the constant reminder of separation from God, is torn from top to bottom at the moment of Jesus’ death (Mark 15:38). There is total access to God’s graciousness through the true temple; the flesh of His Son, our Great High Priest.

<i>The holy Lamb undaunted came</i>	<i>But death would not the victor be</i>
<i>To God’s own altar lit with flame;</i>	<i>Of Him who hung upon the tree.</i>
<i>While weeping angels hid their eyes,</i>	<i>He leads us to the Holy Place</i>
<i>This Priest became a sacrifice.</i>	<i>Within the veil, before God’s face.</i>

LSB 624:3–4

Thursday after the First Sunday in Lent

“Now this is what you shall offer on the altar: two lambs a year old day by day regularly. One lamb you shall offer in the morning, and the other lamb you shall offer at twilight” (Exodus 29:38–39).

The sacrifice of a lamb marked the morning and evening for every day of ancient Israel’s life. With every shedding of the blood of an animal, God’s people were reminded of the fact that they only stood in a positive relation to Him by the shedding of blood. It was because an animal’s life was given in place of theirs that they could come before God. It was only by God’s provision of the sacrifices that they could be His people, finding favor and acceptance in His sight. This sacrifice on every morning and every evening preached this simple sermon to all of Israel.

Like all the sacrifices of ancient Israel, the twice daily offering pointed forward to Christ’s sacrifice. Luther’s morning and evening prayers make this connection clear. Each morning we pray: ‘keep me this day also from sin and every evil, that all my doings and life may please you.’ In the evening: “I pray that you would forgive me all my sins where I have done wrong, and graciously keep me this night.”

These petitions, all our prayers, are answered only in and for the sake of Christ. We are pleasing to God only because we are in Christ who gave His Father total obedience. We are only forgiven because Christ made perfect satisfaction for us. Because of what He has done for us, we sleep in His gracious keeping.

*Forgive me, Lord, for Thy dear Son,
The ills that I this day have done,
That with the world, myself, and Thee,
I, ere I sleep, at peace may be.*

*Oh, may my soul in Thee repose,
And may sweet sleep mine eyelids close,
Sleep that shall me more vig’rous make
To serve my God when I awake!*

LSB 883:2, 4

Friday after the First Sunday in Lent

“If his offering is a burnt offering ... he shall offer a male without blemish. He shall bring it to the entrance of the tent of meeting, that he may be accepted before the LORD. He shall lay his hand on the head of the burnt offering, and it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him. Then he shall kill [it] before the LORD, and Aaron’s sons the priests shall bring the blood and throw the blood against the sides of the altar that is at the entrance of the tent of meeting.... And the priest shall burn all of it on the altar, as a burnt offering, a food offering with a pleasing aroma to the LORD” (Leviticus 1:3–5, 9b).

The burnt offering was the foundation of all other sacrifices. This is the type of offering made by Noah after exiting the ark (Genesis 8:20). The daily offering of a lamb at morning and evening described in yesterday’s reading from Exodus 29, was a burnt offering (see Numbers 28:1–6). Other sacrifices were, quite literally, based upon the burnt offering. Leviticus 1 describes how individuals could make a burnt offering.

This sacrifice was unique in that the entire animal was consumed by fire. Nothing else was left for either the person offering the sacrifice or the priest. The animal was totally offered to God in order to please Him. The Lord established this sacrifice of the total offering of an animal so that His people would be pleasing in His sight and able to come before Him.

The writer to the Hebrews makes clear for us that the true burnt offering which the Father desired was not the blood of bulls and goats, but the offering of Christ’s own body, which He Himself offered entirely. His perfect sacrifice was accepted by the Father, and so we too are pleasing to the Father (Hebrews 10:1–10; Ephesians 5:2).

*Christ’s altar was the tree,
Where on the world’s behalf
He shed a blood, unlike the blood of goat or calf,
To seal God’s guarantee
Of grace that cannot fail;
With blood He entered for our good
Behind the veil.*

LSB 564:3

Saturday after the First Sunday in Lent

“If his offering is a ...peace offering... he shall offer it without blemish before the LORD. And he shall lay his hand on the head of his offering and kill it at the entrance of the tent of meeting, and Aaron's sons the priests shall throw the blood against the sides of the altar. And ...he shall offer the fat covering the entrails and all the fat that is on the entrails, and the two kidneys with the fat that is on them at the loins, and the long lobe of the liver that he shall remove with the kidneys. Then Aaron's sons shall burn it on the altar ...it is a food offering with a pleasing aroma to the LORD....and the flesh of the sacrifice of his peace offerings ... shall be eaten on the day of his offering” (Leviticus 3:1–5; 7:15).

This sacrifice was offered by individuals or families on three occasions: in thanks for God’s answer to their prayers, in fulfillment of a vow, or as a freewill offering in gratitude for God’s blessings to them (Leviticus 7:12–18).

Ancient pagans offered food for their gods to “eat.” The true God makes clear that He needs no food for nourishment (see Psalm 50:10–13). Instead, He provides a holy meal for His people. As with all sacrifices, the blood was poured out against the altar as the constant reminder that God can only be approached through the shedding of blood. The parts of the animal that were typically used in pagan offerings were incinerated on the altar, while the other parts were given back to the offerer as a gift of holy food for them to eat in the presence of God.

The natural accompaniment to any feast (especially when we remember how rare it was to eat meat in the ancient world), was joy. Jesus, having made perfect reconciliation with God by His blood, appears in midst of the disciples, shows them His wounds, they are glad, and He speaks the word of peace to them (John 20:20–21). This same peace of the forgiveness of sins is given to us as we receive His body and blood, our holy food, and so too our source of joy!

*Give us who share this wondrous food
Your body broken and Your blood,
The grateful peace of sins forgiv’n,
The certain joys of heirs of heav’n.*

*Lord Jesus Christ, we humbly pray:
O keep us steadfast till that day
When each will be Your welcom’d guest
In heaven’s high and holy feast.*

LSB 623:2, 5

The Second Sunday in Lent

“If anyone ... sins unintentionally in doing any one of the things that by the LORD's commandments ought not to be done, and realizes his guilt, or the sin which he has committed is made known to him, he shall bring for his offering a goat...for his sin which he has committed. And he shall lay his hand on the head of the sin offering and kill the sin offering ... the priest shall take some of its blood with his finger and put it on the horns of the altar of burnt offering and pour out all the rest of its blood at the base of the altar. And all its fat he shall remove... and the priest shall burn it on the altar ... And the priest shall make atonement for him, and he shall be forgiven.... The priest who offers it ... shall eat it. In a holy place it shall be eaten, in the court of the tent of meeting” (Leviticus 4:27–31; 6:26).

God's people fall into sin. We are often troubled when we realize that we have done something wrong. We read that at times the whole nation of Israel fell into sin. The sin offering was given to forgive those who had sinned against God in a particular way so that they could come before Him with a clean conscience, knowing that their sin was forgiven.

When offered for all the people or for the high priest, some of the blood was sprinkled upon the veil in the temple and on the altar of incense. The carcass was then burned outside the camp. When for an individual, the blood was sprinkled on the altar of sacrifice, and the meat that wasn't burned was eaten by the priests. With every sin offering, the rest of the blood was poured out at the base of the altar. This was unique, as the blood of the other sacrifices was dashed against the altar.

The New Testament makes clear that Christ is the sin offering for us (Romans 8:3; 2 Corinthians 5:2). He Himself gives us, His royal priests, His flesh to eat, and the very sacrificial blood which was poured out for us to drink, sprinkling our conscience, and making us clean.

*Draw near and take the body of the Lord,
And drink the holy blood for you outpoured;
Offered was He for greatest and for least,
Himself the victim and Himself the priest.*

LSB 637:1

Monday after the Second Sunday in Lent

“If anyone commits a breach of faith and sins unintentionally in any of the holy things of the LORD...If anyone sins and commits a breach of faith against the LORD by deceiving his neighbor...or through robbery, or if he has oppressed his neighbor or has found something lost and lied about it, swearing falsely—in any of all the things that people do and sin thereby—if he has sinned and has realized his guilt...he shall bring to the priest as his compensation to the LORD a ram without blemish out of the flock, or its equivalent, for a guilt offering. And the priest shall make atonement for him before the LORD, and he shall be forgiven for any of the things that one may do and thereby become guilty” (Leviticus 5:14; 6:1–4, 6–7).

We are sometimes troubled by the feeling of having done something wrong, but are maybe not quite sure what exactly that wrong thing was. Or perhaps we are forced to choose one thing or another, and neither option seems good. This is not an issue unique to the people of our time.

The guilt or reparation offering was given to make provision for offenses against the holy things of God (sacrilege). This included not just offenses against the temple but also fellow believers, for they were God’s own possession (Deuteronomy 7:6). This sacrifice was also offered when a leper was declared cleansed, because leprosy corrupted the flesh of one of God’s holy people. Though the offering of the sacrificial ram, the cleansed leper’s status as belonging to God was restored.

Jesus offered Himself as the ransom, the restitution, for all our offenses (Matthew 20:28). When plagued by guilt, or wondering whether we made the right decision, we are directed to the one who made perfect satisfaction for all our sins, known and unknown. We live by grace; God’s merciful taking away of all our guilt through His Son’s sacrifice in our place.

*Not all the blood of beasts
On Jewish altar slain
Could give the guilty conscience peace
Or wash away the stain.*

*My soul looks back to see
The burden Thou didst bear
When hanging on the cursed tree;
I know my guilt was there.*

LSB 431:1, 4

Tuesday after the Second Sunday in Lent

“Aaron shall present the bull as a sin offering for himself, and shall make atonement for himself and for his house....he shall take some of the blood of the bull and sprinkle it with his finger on the front of the mercy seat... seven times. Then he shall kill the goat of the sin offering that is for the people and bring its blood inside the veil and do with its blood as he did with the blood of the bull....and shall take some of the blood of the bull and...of the goat, and put it on the horns of the altar all around. And he shall sprinkle some of the blood on it with his finger seven times... And Aaron shall lay both his hands on the head of the live goat, and confess over it all the iniquities of the people of Israel, and all their transgressions, all their sins. And he shall put them on the head of the goat and send it away into the wilderness....Then Aaron...shall offer his burnt offering and the burnt offering of the people and make atonement for himself and for the people....on this day shall atonement be made for you to cleanse you. You shall be clean before the LORD from all your sins” (Leviticus 16:9, 11, 14–15, 18–21, 23, 25, 30).

The bloody rites of the solemn Day of Atonement stand at the exact center of the Book of Leviticus, and so also of the Five Books of Moses. The day itself is centered on the sprinkling of blood upon the mercy seat, the top of the Ark of the Covenant, where God located Himself in midst of His people. The sanctuary and altar were purified, and all Israel was cleansed of its sin as sacrifices were killed in their place, and the scapegoat was cast into the wilderness bearing all their iniquity away.

What was separate in Israel’s Day of Atonement – the appeasing of wrath by blood and the carrying away of sin – is united in our Lord. He is “our propitiation,” that is, the one who appeases, satisfies, God’s wrath for our sins. He does this “by His blood” (Romans 3:25). The word translated as “propitiation,” is the Greek term for the mercy seat. Jesus is the place where the perfect sacrificial blood, His own, is sprinkled even as He also bears our sins as the Lamb of God (John 1:29).

*Lamb of God, pure and holy, Who on the cross didst suffer,
Ever patient and lowly, Thyself to scorn didst offer.
All sins thou borest for us, Else had despair reigned o’er us:
Have mercy on us, O Jesus!*

LSB 434:1

Wednesday after the Second Sunday in Lent

“If any one of the house of Israel kills an ox or a lamb or a goat in the camp, or kills it outside the camp, and does not bring it to the entrance of the tent of meeting to offer it as a gift to the LORD in front of the tabernacle of the LORD, bloodguilt shall be imputed to that man. He has shed blood, and that man shall be cut off from among his people.... For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it for you on the altar to make atonement for your souls, for it is the blood that makes atonement by the life” (Leviticus 17:3–4, 11).

No animal was to be killed in Israel apart from offering it to the Lord at the temple. No blood was spilt without the service of the priests and the dashing of the blood against the altar of sacrifice. Blood was used by God to substitute for the life of His people, it was given by Him as the means of forgiveness and atonement for them. To underscore the centrality of this, that His people live by the shedding of blood, God forbade any other use of blood apart from the temple worship. It was not even to be consumed. This set Israel apart from the pagans, who often consumed blood in their religious rites to obtain life power, or increased virility.

Jesus is first condemned to death by the religious leaders of Israel in the presence of the high priest. He is marked as the final and perfect sacrifice by Caiaphas who had said earlier, *“it is better for you that one man should die for the people, not that the whole nation should perish”* (John 11:50). Jesus said at the previous Passover that life only comes through His flesh and blood (John 6:53–55), given up for the life of the whole world (John 6:51b). The connection between Jesus’ death as the source of our life is seen in no clearer place than the Holy Communion, where He gives His precious blood to us, to give us life.

*Glory be to Jesus,
Who in bitter pains
Poured for me the lifeblood
From His sacred veins!*

*Grace and life eternal
In that blood I find;
Blest be His compassion,
Infinitely kind!*

*Lift we, then our voices,
Swell the mighty flood;
Louder still and louder
Praise the precious blood!*

LSB 433:1–2, 6

Thursday after the Second Sunday in Lent

“Whoever blasphemes the name of the LORD shall surely be put to death”
(Leviticus 24:16).

When we read the Passion according to St. John, we see Pilate struggle to see why the religious leaders of Israel seek to put Jesus to death. Pilate repeatedly states that he finds no cause for capital punishment. He does not buy their charge that Jesus has been subverting the authority of Caesar and Jesus makes clear that His kingdom is not of this world (John 18:36).

When Pilate again states that he finds no guilt in Jesus under Roman law, the Jews cry out: *“We have a law, and according to that law He ought to die because He has made Himself the Son of God”* (John 19:7). It is this passage from Leviticus that the Jews have in mind. Thus the real reason they seek Jesus’ death comes to light. It is not because Jesus is some revolutionary upsetting the socio-political order. It is because He claims to be the Son of God. To the Jewish leaders, this is blasphemy. It is why Caiaphas tore his robe the previous evening when Jesus answered in the affirmative Caiaphas’ question of if He was *“the Christ, the Son of God?”* (Matthew 26:63–66).

Jesus, as the sinless Son of the Father, can only speak what is true. Sinful men always call the truth a lie, and label godliness as wickedness. And so it is that sinners, seeking to be God, sentence true God to the death of a sinner. He is willingly placed under His own Law (Galatians 4:4), allows Himself to stand under its accusation and condemnation. In so doing He redeems us.

*O dearest Jesus, what law hast Thou broken
That such sharp sentence should on Thee be spoken?
Of what great crime hast Thou to make confession,
What dark transgression?*

*The sinless Son of God must die in sadness;
The sinful child of man may live in gladness;
Man forfeited his life and is acquitted;
God is committed.*

LSB 439:1, 5

Friday after the Second Sunday in Lent

"Tell the people of Israel to bring you a red heifer without defect, in which there is no blemish...it shall be taken outside the camp and slaughtered...the priest shall take some of its blood with his finger, and sprinkle some of its blood toward the front of the tent of meeting seven times. And the heifer shall be burned in his sight. Its skin, its flesh, and its blood, with its dung, shall be burned. And the priest shall take cedarwood and hyssop and scarlet yarn, and throw them into the fire burning the heifer...And a man who is clean shall gather up the ashes of the heifer and deposit them outside the camp in a clean place. And they shall be kept for the water for impurity for the congregation of the people of Israel; it is a sin offering" (Numbers 19:2, 3, 4–6, 9).

Every death is a powerful, inescapable sermon on the reality and consequences of sin. For ancient Israel, contact with the dead rendered one ritually impure, they had been touched by the effects of sin. To restore ritual purity, God instituted the sprinkling of water that was mixed with the ashes of an unblemished red heifer. The heifer was taken from temple to outside of the camp where it was slaughtered, its blood sprinkled upon the front of the tabernacle, and the carcass burned, producing the ashes to be used in the sprinkling of water.

The true deliverance from death, the guarantee of total cleansing from sin through the resurrection of our bodies, is the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus that we receive in Holy Baptism. He was the unblemished sacrifice, led out of the city, consumed by the Father's wrath as He bore our impurity as His own. The writer to the Hebrews says: if *"the sprinkling of defiled persons with the ashes of a heifer [sanctifies] for the purification of the flesh, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God"* (Hebrews 9:13b–14).

*I look to Christ upon the tree,
His body broken there for me;
I lay before Him all my sin,
My darkest secrets from within.*

*Lord, may Your wounded hand impart
Your healing to my broken heart;
Your love alone can form in me
A heart that serves You joyfully.*

LSB 616:2–3

Saturday after the Second Sunday in Lent

“the people spoke against God and against Moses, ‘Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and we loathe this worthless food.’ Then the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people, so that many people of Israel died. And the people came to Moses and said, ‘We have sinned, for we have spoken against the LORD and against you. Pray to the LORD, that He take away the serpents from us.’ So Moses prayed for the people. And the LORD said to Moses, ‘Make a fiery serpent and set it on a pole, and everyone who is bitten, when he sees it, shall live.’ So Moses made a bronze serpent and set it on a pole. And if a serpent bit anyone, he would look at the bronze serpent and live” (Numbers 21:5–9).

Bitten by venomous snakes, many Israelites already lay dead. Still others were bid to gaze at a figure of the very thing that inflicted the burning injury, instructed to lift up their eyes and see the bronze serpent. By so doing they were told they would live. Though it seemed at best like cruel lunacy, this was God’s own promise to His people. Though justly bearing the punishment for their sin against God, He provided the means of deliverance and life.

Our Lord speaks of His own being lifted up on the cross in terms of this event. For in the guise of sinful, damned human flesh, the Son of God was at work to deliver from the venom of sin, drawing it out of us and into Himself, letting all its potent virulence fall upon Him. Just as those Israelites who heard this promise of God looked upon the bronze serpent in faith, trusting in God’s promise that they would live, and received the benefits of that promise, so too all those who look in faith upon the Son lifted up for us will have eternal life (John 3:14–15).

*Jesus, grant that balm and healing
In Your holy wounds I find,
Ev’ry hour that I am feeling
Pains of body and of mind.
Should some evil thought within
Tempt my treach’rous heart to sin,
Show the peril, and from sinning
Keep me from its first beginning.*

*Ev’ry wound that pains or grieves me
By Your wounds, Lord, is made whole
When I’m faint, Your cross revives me,
Granting new life to my soul.
Yes, Your comfort renders sweet
Ev’ry bitter cup I meet;
For Your all atoning passion
Has procured my soul’s salvation.*

LSB 421:1, 4

The Third Sunday in Lent

“And if a man has committed a crime punishable by death and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree, his body shall not remain all night on the tree, but you shall bury him the same day, for a hanged man is cursed by God” (Deuteronomy 21:22–23a).

Societies in ancient and subsequent times often displayed the bodies of those who had been executed for capital crimes as a warning and deterrent against resistance and treason. Ancient Israel was different. Those killed for the worst crimes were cursed by God and were to be put out of the sight of all once they were dead. It is for this reason that the religious leaders petition Pilate to have the bodies of Jesus and the two thieves taken down before sunset, especially since the next day was the Sabbath which fell during the Feast of Unleavened Bread (John 19:31). This did not just show the fulfillment of the Law of Moses, however. St. Paul cites this passage in Deuteronomy when he writes to the Galatians: *“Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree’”* (3:13).

The general statement that all those hanged up in execution are cursed applies particularly to the Lord Jesus. He is not a curse in and of Himself, but, as Paul says so clearly, He is a curse for us. He takes the condemnation that rightly falls upon us even though He Himself did not deserve it. He shows this truth by dying in a cursed way, demonstrating in the clearest way that He has taken the curse that was due to us upon Himself. Like the sacrifices of the Old Testament, this passage points us to the heart of Christ’s death: the vicarious satisfaction. He suffers and dies in our place, bearing the sentence and curse for us. In so doing, He opens heaven’s consolations to us.

*Thou hast borne the smiting only
That my wounds might all be whole;
Thou hast suffered sad and lonely,
Rest to give my weary soul;
Yea, the curse of God enduring,
Blessing unto me securing.
Thousand, thousand thanks shall be,
Dearest Jesus, unto Thee.*

LSB 448:6–7

Monday after the Third Sunday in Lent

“Samson grasped the two middle pillars on which the house rested, and he leaned his weight against them, his right hand on the one and his left hand on the other. And Samson said, “Let me die with the Philistines.” Then he bowed with all his strength, and the house fell upon the lords and upon all the people who were in it. So the dead whom he killed at his death were more than those whom he had killed during his life” (Judges 16:29–30).

Samson, the great judge of Israel, was handed over to his enemies whom he had mocked and defeated so many times before. There he suffered abuse and scorn. Taken into the heart of the Philistine temple to Dagon, his arms were stretched out, resting upon the pillars. Granted his famed strength by the Lord yet one more time, he brought the temple down, gave up his own life in the destruction of more Philistines than he had in all his previous 20 years as judge.

Having suffered the humiliation and shame at the hands of His enemies, Christ, with outstretched arms, destroys sin and death by laying down His own life. The moment which seems to be His greatest weakness and defeat, is, in fact, the Lord’s great victory. Here we see the Stronger Man disarm the strong man, the devil. Here we see the Lion of the Tribe of Judah bring us the sweetest aid and deliverance from our enemies.

*Jesus has come! Now see bonds rent asunder!
Fetters of death now dissolve, disappear.
See Him burst through with a voice as of thunder!
He sets us free from our guilt and our fear,
Lifts us from shame to the place of His honor.
Jesus has come! Hear the roll of God’s thunder!*

*Jesus has come as the mighty Redeemer.
See now the threatening strong one disarmed!
Jesus breaks down all the walls of death’s fortress,
Brings forth the pris’ners triumphant, unharmed.
Satan, you wicked one, own now your master!
Jesus has come! He, the mighty Redeemer!*

LSB 533:2–3

Tuesday after the Third Sunday in Lent

“I will be to Him a father, and He shall be to Me a son. When He commits iniquity, I will discipline Him with the rod of men, with the stripes of the sons of men, but My steadfast love will not depart from Him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away from before you. And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before Me. Your throne shall be established forever” (2 Samuel 7:14–16).

Through the prophet Nathan, God gives David the promise that the Son of his body will reign forever as King. This is not simply of Solomon, for God speaks of the one who *is* His Son. This refers to the only-begotten Son: “begotten of His Father before all worlds.” This passage is where the promise of the Messiah is given to the House of David. It’s why the acclamations of Jesus as the King and Son of David in the Gospels are so significant. To address Jesus as the Son of David is to acknowledge that He is the Messiah, the One promised to David so long ago.

But what of the language about Him committing iniquity, the discipline and punishment of Him by God’s own hand? This is nothing other than the vicarious satisfaction. The Son of God come as true man will bear the sins not just of His kingly forebears, but of all His people. He suffers physical and spiritual torment in their stead. Yet God’s love for His dear Son is not taken away. He will be raised from the dead, vindicated and shown to be the true King who now reigns over His Kingdom, the holy Church!

*Stricken, smitten, and afflicted,
See Him dying on the tree!
‘Tis the Christ, by man rejected;
Yes, my soul, ‘tis He, ‘tis He!
‘Tis the long-expected Prophet,
David’s Son, yet David’s Lord;
Proofs I see sufficient of it:
‘Tis the true and faithful Word.*

LSB 451:1

Wednesday after the Third Sunday in Lent

“David went up the ascent of the Mount of Olives, weeping as he went, barefoot and with his head covered. And all the people who were with him covered their heads, and they went up, weeping as they went. And it was told David, ‘Ahithophel is among the conspirators with Absalom.’ And David said, ‘O LORD, please turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness’” (2 Samuel 15:30–31).

David’s son Absalom plotted and executed an attempt to overthrow David as king (2 Samuel 15:1–12). Almost all of Israel followed Absalom in revolution. To save his life, David fled across the brook Kidron and ascended the Mount of Olives to escape east from Jerusalem. On his way, David was told that his friend and advisor, Ahithophel, had also plotted with Absalom to overthrow David. Here the sorrow of David goes beyond mere tears as he cries out to God to put the counsel of the wicked to naught.

Though the Lord knows the outcome of His Passion, indeed, He has foretold His resurrection on the third day, the sorrows still wash over Him like a wave as He knows not only that one disciple has betrayed Him, but also that the foundation of His new Israel, the disciples, will all fall away in fear, abandoning their Master and King to His enemies.

Like father like son, David’s descendant weeps and shakes in sorrow and fear. But vindication does come. Like treacherous Ahithophel, Judas hangs himself, while He who is hung upon the cross and buried rises again and ascends the throne from which He will never be overthrown.

*David once, with heart afflicted,
Crossed the Kedron's narrow strand
Clouds of gloom and grief about him
When an exile from his land.*

*But, O Jesus, blacker now
Bends the cloud above Thy brow,
Hasting to death's dreary portals
For the shame and sin of mortals.*

*Now, away with earthly pleasure!
Let me see my Jesus dear!
In Gethsemane, my Treasure,
I will gather me a tear
From His bloody sweat of pain
Which my righteousness did gain
Earth now gives me only sadness
Till I enter heaven's gladness.*

*ELH 295:2, 11
(tune LSB 422)*

Thursday after the Third Sunday in Lent

“David spoke to the LORD when he saw the angel who was striking the people, and said, ‘Behold, I have sinned, and I have done wickedly. But these sheep, what have they done? Please let your hand be against me and against my father's house.’ And Gad came that day to David and said to him, ‘Go up, raise an altar to the LORD on the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite’David built there an altar to the LORD and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings. So the LORD responded to the plea for the land, and the plague was averted from Israel” (2 Samuel 24:17–18, 25).

David sought security for his kingdom and reason to boast through military might. This arrogance was punished by a plague upon Israel, with 70,000 dying. Through the prophet Gad, God instructed David to build an altar on the threshing floor of an inhabitant of Jerusalem. It was God who chose the place of worship, and at that place was offered burnt offerings, where the entire animal was consumed, in total devotion to God. It is through fear, love, and trust in Him alone as the gracious Deliverer that God is pleased with us.

David purchased the place where he built the altar, and it was there that the temple would be built by his son Solomon (1 Chronicles 22:1). There the altar of sacrifice for the sins of Israel continually preached the promise of deliverance and salvation through the coming Messiah whose shed blood satisfied God's just wrath for all of our sins.

David mourned not for the sacrificial animal, but over his sins and the hurt he inflicted on others (2 Samuel 24:10). When we behold the suffering of our Lord, we lament our sins which required the Lord's death in our place, and, like David, we are comforted in the deliverance given us through Christ's sacrifice in our place.

<i>I caused Your grief and sighing</i>	<i>Your soul in griefs unbounded,</i>
<i>By evils multiplying</i>	<i>Your head with thorns surrounded,</i>
<i>As countless as the sand.</i>	<i>You died to ransom me.</i>
<i>I caused the woes unnumbered</i>	<i>The cross for me enduring,</i>
<i>With which Your soul is cumbered,</i>	<i>The crown for me securing,</i>
<i>Your sorrows raised by wicked hands.</i>	<i>You healed my wounds and set me free.</i>

LSB 453:4–5

Friday after the Third Sunday in Lent

“Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD and against His Anointed, saying, ‘Let us burst their bonds apart and cast away their cords from us’” (Psalm 2:1–2).

Psalm 2 speaks of the eternal existence of the Son, but it begins with speaking of His rejection. It is as we hear at Christmas: “He came to His own, and His own people did not receive Him” (John 1:11). Peter and John see this rejection of Jesus at the hands of civil and religious rulers as the fulfillment of this Psalm. Immediately after quoting this very passage they pray: “*in this city were gathered together against Your holy servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, to do whatever Your hand and Your plan had predestined to take place*” (Acts 4:27–28)

Herod and Pilate were bitter enemies who became friends in mocking and torturing Jesus (Luke 23:12). The Pharisees and Sadducees had their theological quarrels, yet they conspired together to get rid of Jesus. They all played the part of the wicked servants in the parable who said: “*We do not want this Man to reign over us*” (Luke 19:14). But there is the stark warning that to reject Jesus is to reject His Father. To plot against Jesus is to refuse the Anointed One, the Messiah, whom the Lord has given.

Yet “*He who sits in the heavens laughs; the Lord holds them in derision*” (Psalm 2:4). In rejecting the Christ, they accomplish God’s plan of salvation. Wicked men, even when they are proud kings and rulers, cannot overthrow God’s plan to save us! Christ rises from death, the King is set on the holy hill of Zion, He possesses the ends of the earth, all nations are His heritage.

REFRAIN: *All glory, laud, and honor To You, Redeemer, King,
To whom the lips of children Made sweet hosannas ring.*

*You are the King of Israel
And David’s royal Son,
Now in the Lord’s name coming,
Our King and Blessed One.*

*As You received their praises,
Accept the prayers we bring,
O Source of ev’ry blessing,
Our good and gracious King.*

REFRAIN

REFRAIN

LSB 442:1, 5

Saturday after the Third Sunday in Lent

“My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me? Why are You so far from saving Me, from the words of My groaning? O My God, I cry by day, but You do not answer, and by night, but I find no rest. Yet You are holy, enthroned on the praises of Israel. In You our fathers trusted; they trusted, and You delivered them. To You they cried and were rescued; in You they trusted and were not put to shame” (Psalm 22:1–5).

What does sin do? It hurts ourselves. It hurts others. But above all, it separates us from God. Sin first entered the world when Adam and Eve ate the fruit of the tree of which God told them not to eat. On that day they died just as God had warned they would – they fled His presence. This is the spiritual death of separation from God.

As Jesus cries these words of Psalm 22 from the cross we see Him suffer a punishment no other person has – total abandonment by God (Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34). In these words, we see the Son of God give expression to the spiritual significance of that moment. At times we may feel as though we were forsaken by God, but only One has truly suffered this hellish burden. All the sin of the world, of every person who had ever and will ever live, is placed upon Him and He suffers the punishment for it.

God had ever hearkened to the prayers of His Old Testament people; they were never put the shame of being totally abandoned. But in this moment, the Father totally withdraws His gracious presence from His beloved Son and there is only wrath. But Jesus, even as He suffers the unimaginable torments of eternal death, cries out to His Father. He is ever the Faithful One.

*Ye who think of sin but lightly
Nor suppose the evil great
Here may view its nature rightly,
Here its guilt may estimate.
Mark the sacrifice appointed,
See who bears the awful load;
'Tis the Word, the Lord's anointed,
Son of Man and Son of God.*

LSB 451:3

The Fourth Sunday in Lent

“But I am a worm and not a man, scorned by mankind and despised by the people. All who see Me mock Me; they make mouths at Me; they wag their heads; ‘He trusts in the LORD; let Him deliver Him; let Him rescue Him, for He delights in Him!’” (Psalm 22:6–8).

In addition to the unrivaled pain of the spiritual torment Jesus undergoes, the mockery which He has already endured continues even as He hangs on the cross:

those who passed by derided Him, wagging their heads and saying, “You who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save Yourself! If You are the Son of God, come down from the cross.” So also the chief priests, with the scribes and elders, mocked Him, saying, “He saved others; He cannot save Himself. He is the King of Israel; let Him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in Him. He trusts in God; let God deliver Him now, if He desires Him. For He said, ‘I am the Son of God’” (Matthew 27:39–43).

The earliest promises and types of the Lord’s Passion often pointed to the substance of our Lord’s sacrifice; what He would accomplish for us. As we see in abundance in Psalm 22 and in many of the later prophecies of the Old Testament, God also set forth the visible signs, the details, which would accompany this event. The holy evangelist’s description of the mockery Christ suffers on the cross makes clear for us that our Lord’s suffering and death fulfills the Scriptures down to the last detail. He is indeed Lamb whom Abraham had spoken of so many centuries before!

*Why, what hath my Lord done?
What makes this rage and spite?
He made the lame to run,
He gave the blind their sight.
Sweet injuries!
Yet they at these
Themselves displease and ‘gainst Him rise.*

LSB 430:4

Monday after the Fourth Sunday in Lent

“I am poured out like water, and all My bones are out of joint; My heart is like wax; it is melted within My breast; My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and My tongue sticks to my jaws; You lay Me in the dust of death” (Psalm 22:14–15).

Though the Gospels give us the historical account of the Lord’s Passion, the details of His physical suffering are given in no better clarity than this part of the Old Testament. Both Testaments together supply a full picture for us; both are needed for the edification of our faith.

We see the toll of the lack of sleep and food, the sapping of His strength and blood from the Garden of Gethsemane on through the flagellation and to the crucifixion. It is no wonder the Romans pressed Simon of Cyrene into service, to carry the Lord’s cross for Him!

A final reprieve is given in the sour wine, lifted up to Him on a sponge and hyssop branch after He can bear the parched mouth no more, crying out “I thirst.” The evangelist John tells us that Jesus said this to fulfill the Scripture (John 19:28), giving voice to the suffering prophesied here.

The Lord’s life ebbs away, accompanied by sheer exhaustion, His strength running out as a candle held over a high flame. We see Him suffer what we each deserve. The abandonment by His Father is the suffering of the eternal wrath that is due us for our sins. He also bears the temporal woes that are owed to us. We see not just a terrible injustice done to a holy Man, but the satisfying of all to which we are indebted.

Who is it at work in all this? The Son Himself, to be sure. He willingly endures it for us. But it is according to the plan of the Father. The Father has sent His Son for this very purpose. It is the Father who lays the Son into the dust of death. All that the Son suffers is “*according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God*” (Acts 2:23).

*Whence come these sorrows, whence this mortal anguish?
It is my sins for which Thou, Lord, must languish;
Yea, all the wrath, the woe, Thou dost inherit,
This I do merit.*

LSB 439:3

Tuesday after the Fourth Sunday in Lent

“For dogs encompass Me; a company of evildoers encircles Me; they have pierced My hands and feet” (Psalm 22:16).

The Lord arrives at Golgotha surrounded by the Roman soldiers who have goaded Him on, mocking this “King of the Jews,” having their fun at His expense. They are ritually unclean dogs spoken of in the psalm. Foreigners brought into this sad picture. In tow are also the chief priests, scribes, and pharisees, the supposed “holy men” of Israel. These are those who, above all others, should have recognized the Messiah. In fact, they are evildoers, having orchestrated His demise they have come to see its conclusion. Together the dogs and evildoers see Him crucified, the nails driven through His flesh, making gaping holes in His hands and feet.

The psalmist saw all this ages before; in a time long preceding the invention of this most cruel manner of execution. The Son of God set the image before David’s eyes and spoke through David’s mouth and pen to give His people a picture in words of what their Messiah would endure.

He would not, however, simply suffer this at the hands of unbelievers and scoffers. He suffered this on their behalf. Even from the cross He intercedes for those who hate Him to the point of crucifying Him (Luke 23:34). And as He Himself has said (Matthew 20:28; John 10:11), as the great hymns of our faith teach us to sing, He also underwent this for you; for your own sake.

*Make me see Your great distress,
Anguish, and affliction,
Bonds and stripes and wretchedness
And Your crucifixion;
Make me see how scourge and rod,
Spear and nails did wound You,
How for them You died, O God,
Who with thorns had crowned You.*

*Yet, O Lord, not thus alone
Make me see Your passion,
But its cause to me make known
And its termination.
Ah, I also and my sin
Wrought Your deep affliction;
This indeed the cause has been
Of Your crucifixion.*

LSB 440:2–3

Wednesday after the Fourth Sunday in Lent

“they divide My garments among them, and for My clothing they cast lots” (Psalm 22:18).

What is perhaps the most stunning detail of the Passion given in the Old Testament is noted in all four Gospels. Matthew, Mark, and Luke simply record the event (Matthew 27:35; Mark 15:24; Luke 23:34), while John goes on to point out that it fulfills what is written in Psalm 22:

When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they took His garments and divided them into four parts, one part for each soldier; also His tunic. But the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom, so they said to one another, “Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it to see whose it shall be.” This was to fulfill the Scripture which says, “They divided My garments among them, and for My clothing they cast lots” (John 19:23–24).

Our artistic depictions portray the crucified Lord in His loincloth. This is a modern nicety; the Romans had no concerns for the modesty of a criminal being executed. Indeed, hanging on a cross naked for all to see was a further part of the humiliation.

This prophecy is given and fulfilled that we may find comfort in this degradation which our Lord suffers. He is well acquainted with indignity and shame. He is the most wronged, most sinned against person who has ever lived. He bears it all. This passive obedience, the fruits of what He suffers and bears, are given to us in Holy Baptism. In those blessed waters He covers and restores us to the purity and innocence we had before God before the Fall into sin. His loss is our gain.

*O sacred Head, now wounded,
With grief and shame weighed down,
Now scornfully surrounded
With thorns, Thine only crown.
O sacred Head, what glory,
What bliss, till now was Thine!
Yet, though despised and gory,
I joy to call Thee mine.*

LSB 450:1

Thursday after the Fourth Sunday in Lent

“Give Me not up to the will of My adversaries; for false witnesses have risen against Me, and they breathe out violence” (Psalm 27:12).

The Lord is brought before the Sanhedrin after His arrest and is put on trial, but not in accord with the Law of Moses. The Eighth Commandment directs us to explain everything in the kindest way and forbids us to tell lies. In the Book of Deuteronomy, we read what God required for the conviction of a crime: *“A single witness shall not suffice against a person for any crime or for any wrong in connection with any offense that he has committed. Only on the evidence of two witnesses or of three witnesses shall a charge be established” (19:15).* The Son of God, the very One who spoke these words to Moses, is not afforded the opportunity of a fair trial:

many bore false witness against Him, but their testimony did not agree. And some stood up and bore false witness against Him, saying, “We heard Him say, ‘I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and in three days I will build another, not made with hands.’” Yet even about this their testimony did not agree (Mark 14:56–59).

We stand under just reproach for our sins, condemned under the demands of God’s Law, accused by our own conscience, and our hearts pricked by the Devil’s sharp attacks of shame and regret. Where we offer excuses and self-justification for our wrongs, Christ, though He is truly blameless, stands silent. Though we bend over backwards to avoid godly rebuke, He is slapped for speaking the plain truth. Through the abuse and destruction of the temple of His body, the reproach that is due us is laid upon Him and satisfied. Men speak ill of Him and worse, so that God speaks well of you, declaring you righteous and innocent.

*Thou hast suffered men to bruise Thee,
That from pain I might be free;
Falsely did Thy foes accuse Thee:
Thence I gain security;
Comfortless Thy soul did languish
Me to comfort in my anguish.
Thousand, thousand thanks shall be,
Dearest Jesus unto Thee.*

LSB 420:5

Friday after the Fourth Sunday in Lent

“Into Your hand I commit My spirit; You have redeemed Me, O LORD, faithful God” (Psalm 31:5).

In the series of words of our Lord from the cross recorded in Holy Scripture, this is the last. Like His cry of spiritual suffering as He is forsaken by the Father, this one also is from the Book of Psalms. Even as He drew on God’s Word in His suffering, so now He does in death.

Though it was the Father who, in His will for our salvation, sent the Son to be the sacrificial Lamb, Jesus, in the ultimate act of faith and love, commends His spirit to His Father: *“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. This charge I have received from My Father” (Jn 10:17b–18).*

He truly died; His soul separated from His body. This does not mean the Divine Nature left the human flesh, that only the human Jesus died. The eternal Son of God and the flesh born of the virgin Mary are inseparable. So even in death, the Son of God is united to the body. The Son has gone through all that we do, including death and the grave. With these words He fulfills the Scriptures.

He also teaches us how to die; trusting in the Lord who is also our Father by virtue of our baptism into Christ. He will redeem our bodies from the grave even as He receives our soul at the time of death into His consolation and care.

*My Savior, be Thou near me
When death is at my door;
Then let Thy presence cheer me,
Forsake me nevermore!
When soul and body languish,
O leave me not alone,
But take away mine anguish
By virtue of thine own!*

*Be Thou my consolation,
My shield, when I must die;
Remind me of Thy passion
When my last hour draws night.
Mine eyes shall then behold Thee,
Upon Thy cross shall dwell,
My heart shall then enfold Thee.
Who dieth thus dies well.*

LSB 450:6–7

Saturday after the Fourth Sunday in Lent

“For I hear the whispering of many—terror on every side!—as they scheme together against Me, as they plot to take My life” (Psalm 31:13).

Jesus is not surprised by any of what happens to Him. Three times, in increasing detail, He predicts to His disciples that He will be betrayed in Jerusalem, handed over from the priests to the Gentiles, that He will be mocked, flogged, crucified, and that He will rise again on the third day (Matthew 16:21; 17:22–23; 20:18–19). Throughout His ministry, Jesus knew the evil thoughts of the hearts of those who opposed Him. As He sits in the upper room with the disciples, He knows that His hour *“to depart out of this world to the Father”* had come (John 13:1).

The chief priests and elders take counsel early on the morning of Good Friday, scheming to ensure that His fate is sealed (Matthew 27:1). As they plot to take the Lord’s life, He entrusts Himself to the will of His Father. He knows what is to come, in every painful detail.

Why does He go through with it? If He knows all that is to come out of the plots and plans of evil men, why does He not flee? Love. *“Jesus knew that His hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end”* (John 13:1). Treachery and hate does not put an end to His love for us. It is taken up into the plan of God, used as the means to accomplish His loving plan for our salvation.

*“Yes, Father, yes, most willingly
I’ll bear what You command Me.
My will conforms to Your decree,
I’ll do what You have asked Me.”
O wondrous Love, what have You done!
The Father offers up His Son,
Desiring our salvation.
O Love, how strong You are to save!
You lay the One into the grave
Who built the earth’s foundation.*

LSB 438:3

The Fifth Sunday in Lent

“Even My close friend in whom I trusted, who ate My bread, has lifted his heel against Me” (Psalm 41:9).

Jesus knows *all* the particulars of His suffering. He knows that it is Judas who would betray Him (John 13:21–27). We can easily read over Judas’ betray as just another detail in the Passion. The psalmist foretells and shares with us the deep agony of the Lord’s heart. Judas was one of the 12. He had followed the Lord for three years. He had witnessed the miracles, heard Jesus’ teaching. The closeness of Jesus and the 12 Disciples is seen in their regular sharing of bread together. Eating together was an act of close friendship.

It is one thing to be rejected and hated by enemies, but there is a particular grief to being delivered into the enemies’ hands by a friend. The Hebrew translated as “*close friend*,” literally reads “a man at peace with me.” Jesus and Judas were to be at peace through the breaking-in of the Kingdom of God with the advent of Israel’s Messiah. Judas was sent out by the Lord with his brother Disciples to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, announcing the arrival of the Savior (Matthew 10:5–7).

Why Judas betrayed Jesus is uncertain. Was he disillusioned? Trying to force Jesus’ hand into a triumphant confrontation? Perhaps it was simply done out of greed. We know that Judas helped himself to the disciples’ moneybag (John 12:6). Whatever the precise reason, “*Satan entered into Judas ... [and he] went away and conferred with the chief priests and officers how he might betray him to them. And they agreed to give him money*” (Luke 22:3–5). And so the hand of the betrayer rests upon the festal table in the Upper Room (Luke 22:21).

Lord, keep us ever faithful to You. May we never betray You! Amen.

*For us He prayed; for us He taught; For us by wickedness betrayed,
For us His daily works He wrought, For us, in crown of thorns arrayed
By words and signs and actions thus He bore the shameful cross and death;
Still seeking not Himself but us. For us He gave His dying breath.*

LSB 544:4–5

Monday after the Fifth Sunday in Lent

“They also gave Me gall for My food, And for My thirst they gave Me vinegar to drink” (Psalm 69:21).

John’s Gospel tells us how shortly before His death, Jesus speaks of His thirst, and is then given “sour wine” (John 19:29). Matthew and Mark speak of another beverage offered to Jesus by the Romans once the procession reached Golgotha and before He was crucified. Matthew speaks of “wine . . . mixed with gall,” that is, a bitter substance (Matthew 27:34). Mark identifies the particular bitter additive: myrrh (Mark 15:23). The Lord refuses the “refreshment.”

It is thought by some that the myrrh was to serve as a painkiller, to dull the excruciating sensations that were to come as the nails were driven in. However, the Romans cared next to nothing for the comfort of those whom they crucified. Indeed, the horror and cries of pain were part of the intent. Perhaps the bitter taste of myrrh was added to make already cheap wine unpalatable for the exhausted and parched Jesus. Yet another instance of mockery at Jesus’ expense. In either case, Jesus declines the attempt to alleviate His physical suffering or one swig of bitterness is enough.

It is not just the bitter dregs of God’s wrath for our sins that is given our Lord to drain. Every sour consequence of sin, the bitter agonies that we bring upon ourselves are also experienced and borne by Him on the cross.

*They crown Thy head with thorns, they smite, they scourge Thee;
With cruel mockings to the cross they urge Thee;
They give Thee gall to drink, they still decry Thee;
They crucify Thee.*

LSB 439:2

Tuesday after the Fifth Sunday in Lent

“The Stone that the builders rejected has become the Cornerstone. This is the LORD’s doing; it is marvelous in our eyes.” (Psalm 118:22–23).

The Passion of Our Lord tells us the story of His rejection. The confrontation that has gradually increased throughout His ministry ratchets up to its climax as the chief priests and scribes reject Jesus of Nazareth unto death. The offense of a humble man from Galilee, who seems so ordinary and yet makes the astounding claims about Himself that He does, is too much for them. They commit and succeed in putting Him to death. The Parable which Jesus tells and the explanation that He gives earlier in Holy Week comes to pass. They reject the Stone. They put the beloved Son to death (Luke 20:9–18).

Their smug mockery of Him as He suffers on the cross confirms their rejection. Even today, for Jews and Muslims, also many Christians, a *suffering* Savior is too much to stomach; it must be rejected, set aside, and ignored. The Stone’s rejection, Christ crucified, is a stumbling block and foolishness to Jews and Gentiles (1 Corinthians 1:23).

And yet this is His hour of glory. As He is lifted up from the earth He draws all people to Himself as the Savior who has died for them. He is raised in vindication, made the cornerstone of the new Israel, the chosen people of God, the holy Christian church, with the foundation of the apostles and prophets, and all of us as living stones built up into the spiritual house (Ephesians 2:20; 1 Peter 2:4–5).

We are built up and strengthened in this house and fellowship with God and one another as we receive the Holy Communion – the giving of the fruits of His rejection and glorification. As we prepare to do so, we sing the later words of this same Psalm: “Hosanna! Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord!” (Psalm 118:25, 26).

*Christ Jesus is the ground of faith,
Who was made flesh and suffered death;
All then who trust in Him alone
Are built on this chief cornerstone.*

LSB 571:2

Wednesday after the Fifth Sunday in Lent

“And the LORD appointed a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights” (Jonah 1:17).

Jonah was willingly cast into the sea to satisfy the Lord’s anger and save his fellow sailors (Jonah 1:12, 15). Threatened with drowning, God sent a fish to swallow Jonah, delivering him from death. The Bible does not describe it, but we can imagine the unpleasant atmosphere of the fish’s belly (an early Christian poem does this quite colorfully)! From here Jonah offers his prayer, recognizing it is God at work in his being cast into the sea, threatened with loss of life, yet rescued from the pit by this strange deliverance (Jonah 2:2–9). It is again at the Lord’s bidding that Jonah is vomited out upon land after three days in the fish (Jonah 2:10).

The wrathful judgment, descent into a watery grave, deliverance from the stinking tomb, and release back into the world above is all contained in the Lord’s own use of the phrase “the sign of Jonah.” Of all the prophets of the Old Testament to whom people liken Jesus, Jonah is the only prophet to whom Jesus likens Himself: *“just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will be Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth”* (Matthew 12:40).

Jesus undergoes far more than the threat of drowning and deliverance through the stinking gut of a fish. He is consumed in God’s wrath for sin, even though unlike Jonah, He was faithful in all that He did. He is totally obedient to His Father’s will, even when it comes to being cast into suffering eternal and temporal death for us. He is then delivered, conquering death, ripping its belly open for us, bringing us out of the depths of the grave.

*Christ, the life of all the living,
Christ the death of death, our foe,
Who, Thyself for me once giving
To the darkest depths of woe:
Through Thy suff’rings, death, and merit
I eternal life inherit.
Thousand, thousand thanks shall be,
Dearest Jesus, unto Thee.*

LSB 420:1

Thursday after the Fifth Sunday in Lent

“I gave My back to those who strike, and My cheeks to those who pull out the beard; I hid not My face from disgrace and spitting” (Isaiah 50:6).

Chapters 42, 49, 50, and 52–53 of Isaiah contain the Four Servant Songs, the words of the One who would be sent by God redeem Israel and bring the Lord’s salvation to all the earth. These words from the Third Servant Song show our Lord’s unique and perfect obedience in His suffering. He willingly receives the physical abuse at the hands of the Sanhedrin and the Romans. He does not shield His face, does not strike back, does not call down the legions of angels to rescue Him. He endures it even without any malicious thoughts toward planning their comeuppance.

Our Servant serves by suffering for us. It is not just the ire of wicked men two thousand years ago that He bears, it is the awful penalty which we deserve. What we merit by our sins fall upon Him. In the words of the great preacher of the Middle Ages, Bernard of Clairvaux:

He was whipped for you, so that He could free you from the whipping of eternal wrath; He was crowned with thorns for you, so that He could crown you in heaven; He was wounded for you, so that He could heal you.

Bernard presents the spiritual significance of what the Messiah says in Isaiah 50. This is the passive obedience of Jesus. What He suffers and undergoes is His perfect accord with the Father’s will and plan to save us, by meting out the punishment for sin upon Jesus.

*Who is it, Lord, that bruised You?
Who has so sore abused You
And caused You all your woe?
We all must make confession
Of sin and dire transgression
While You no ways of evil know.*

LSB 453:3

Friday after the Fifth Sunday in Lent

“Behold, My Servant shall act wisely; He shall be high and lifted up, and shall be exalted. As many were astonished at You—His appearance was so marred, beyond human semblance, and His form beyond that of the children of mankind—so shall He sprinkle many nations. Kings shall shut their mouths because of Him, for that which has not been told them they see, and that which they have not heard they understand” (Isaiah 52:13–15).

Yesterday’s devotion on the Third Servant Song showed how the Servant of the Lord would suffer. In the Fourth and final Servant Song, we see prophesied that the Servant would suffer unto death. Yet in this death, the Servant triumphs. The opening verse of this section summarizes the central thought of the whole Fourth Song: the Servant’s exaltation.

The Song describes in precise detail what the Servant suffers. As we read it, we ponder how these were done for us. Faith marvels at the fact that it is through this that our Lord is exalted. From the appalling disfigurement of His body in the depths of His humiliation, He proceeds to the glorification of His body that will never fade away. By means of His great suffering, we are delivered, His blood is sprinkled upon us.

The despised and rejected Messiah, derided by kings and haughty spirits over His humiliation, will appear in splendor, displaying for all to see the glorified wounds of His passion. Their tongues will be mute then. Their pride and unbelief put to flight. We ponder now, in the silent devotion of faith. We see Him abused and lifted up on the cross. By God’s grace and the illumination of the Holy Spirit through His Word, we see and hear and understand.

<i>Upon the cross extended</i>	<i>Come, see these things and ponder,</i>
<i>See, world, your Lord suspended.</i>	<i>Your soul will fill with wonder</i>
<i>Your Savior yields His breath.</i>	<i>As blood streams from each pore.</i>
<i>The Prince of Life from heaven</i>	<i>Through grief beyond all knowing</i>
<i>Himself has freely given</i>	<i>From His great heart came flowing</i>
<i>To shame and blows and bitter death.</i>	<i>Sighs welling from its deepest core.</i>

LSB 453:1–2

Saturday after the Fifth Sunday in Lent

“He had no form or majesty that we should look at Him, and no beauty that we should desire Him. He was despised and rejected by men, a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief; and as One from Whom men hide their faces He was despised, and we esteemed Him not” (Isaiah 53:2–3).

While the verses in yesterday’s devotion speak of the physical disfigurement inflicted on Jesus in the depths of His humiliation, the verses today speak of His humiliation throughout His whole life. The art produced by believing hearts often portrays the Lord with a lovely countenance. The Bible does not directly describe Jesus’ appearance, but the point of the passage above indicates that the Lord seemed quite ordinary. The glory of the Beautiful Savior was only seen in the foretaste on the Mount of Transfiguration. His ordinariness and humble human roots contributed to His rejection.

Jesus’ rejection was not limited to what happened during Holy Week. Already at the beginning of His life, there was no room for Him, his mother, and Joseph in the homes of Bethlehem. He was forced to be born in a stable, with none (save the shepherds) having the eyes to see that Israel’s Messiah was born. As He began His public ministry, He was derided in His hometown, nearly driven off a cliff (Luke 4:16–30). The word of His great preaching was met with skepticism – *“Is not this the carpenter’s son?”* (Matthew 13:55) – even from future disciples: *“Can anything good come out of Nazareth?”* (John 1:46).

He is already well acquainted with the grief of not being received by the time of His entry into Jerusalem. He has taken up the sorrows of all those He has comforted and healed. He is despised for bringing the consoling word of forgiveness to tax collectors and sinners, given little esteem by *“the righteous who need no repentance”* (Luke 15:7).

*What punishment so strange is suffered yonder!
The Shepherd dies for sheep that loved to wander;
The Master pays the debt His servants owe Him,
Who would not know Him.*

LSB 439:4

Palm Sunday

“Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But He was pierced for our transgressions; He was crushed for our iniquities; upon Him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with His wounds we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all” (Isaiah 53:4–6).

These verses are perhaps the clearest statement of the substitutionary atonement (or vicarious satisfaction) in the entire Old Testament. The first-person plural pronouns, “our,” “us,” “we,” abound. But aside from speaking of how we each sinfully go our own way, these pronouns are not used in relation not to our own activity, what *we* do. Rather, they all speak of what He has done for us; what He gives us because of His chastisement. There is only one Person that any of this can be said of: Jesus Christ. He alone could bear our sin, be our Savior, and grant us His peace.

He suffers the penalty of our transgressions and iniquities. They are placed upon Him by God, given to Him as though they were His very own, and so He suffers the punishment for them. This acquits us of suffering for them. Instead, because He has suffered in our place, we are given the peace of the forgiveness of sins. Out of His injuries on the tree of the cross comes healing. Our sin was imputed, placed upon Him. His perfect satisfaction of the Law, both His obedience to it, and His suffering for our breaking it, is imputed to us.

*What Thou, my Lord, hast suffered
Was all for sinner’s gain;
Mine, mine was the transgression,
But Thine the deadly pain.
Lo, here I fall, my Savior!
‘Tis I deserve Thy place;
Look on me with Thy favor,
And grant to me Thy grace.*

*What language shall I borrow
To thank Thee, dearest Friend,
For this Thy dying sorrow,
Thy pity without end?
O make me Thine forever!
And should I fainting be,
Lord, let me never, never,
Outlive my love for Thee.*

LSB 450:3, 5

Holy Monday

“He was oppressed, and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so He opened not His mouth. By oppression and judgment He was taken away; and as for His generation, who considered that He was cut off out of the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of My people? And they made His grave with the wicked and with a rich man in His death, although He had done no violence, and there was no deceit in His mouth” (Isaiah 53:7–9).

Pharaoh was justly punished for his sin and unbelief, yet he lamented what befell him and implored Moses to take the plagues away. He changed his mind after letting the Hebrews go, and sought to slay them. Though Jesus is the spotless Lamb, pronounced by both Pilate and Herod to be innocent no less than five times (Luke 23:4, 14, 15, 20, 22), He suffers great affliction. Though the accusations are manifestly false and the abuse is terrible, the Lord is remarkably silent.

At His trials He speaks only to confess the truth of who He is: the Messiah, the Son of God, the true King. On the cross, His mouth opens only to fulfill the Scriptures, to show total faith toward God, and fervent love to His neighbors: the penitent thief, His mother, and even those who crucified Him.

The Lamb dies for sinners in midst of sinners, lifted up between two thieves, a contemptible death. And yet He is laid to rest in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea, generously and lovingly wrapped in linen with spices and aloe (John 19:38–40).

*A Lamb goes uncomplaining forth,
The guilt of sinners bearing
And, laden with the sins of earth,
None else the burden sharing;
Goes patient on, grows weak and faint,
To slaughter led without complaint,
That spotless life to offer,
He bears with stripes, the wounds, the lies,
The mockery and yet replies,
“All this I gladly suffer.”*

Holy Tuesday

“Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush Him; He has put Him to grief; when His soul makes an offering for guilt, He shall see His offspring; He shall prolong His days; the will of the LORD shall prosper in His hand. Out of the anguish of His soul He shall see and be satisfied; by His knowledge shall the Righteous One, My Servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and He shall bear their iniquities. Therefore I will divide Him a portion with the many, and He shall divide the spoil with the strong, because He poured out His soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors; yet He bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors” (Isaiah 53:10–12).

Who is at work in the Lord’s Passion? The chief priests orchestrate the death sentence and the Romans carry it out, but Isaiah makes clear who is behind it all. First, it is the Father. The Father did not desire to mete out His just wrath for our sin upon us, for He loves His creation, He desires *not* the death of the wicked (Ezekiel 18:23). Instead, in His boundless mercy, He sent His Son to offer His life for us.

There we see the second Person of the Trinity, the Son in human flesh, also at work in His Passion. Yes, He suffers passively. At the same time, He is the true and great High Priest who offers the sacrifice for guilt. The term used here in Isaiah is the exact term for the guilt offering of Leviticus chapters 5 and 6. He is not just the Priest; He is the sacrifice. He offers His life, His whole being, pouring His own soul out to death, in reparation for our sins. In so doing He makes us righteous. Out of His death is our life.

*O sorrow dread!
Our God is dead,
Upon the cross extended.
There His love enlivened us
As His life was ended.*

*Thy Bridegroom dead!
God’s Lamb has bled
Upon thy sin forever,
Pouring out His sinless self
In this vast endeavor.*

*O Jesus Christ,
Who sacrificed
Thy life for lifeless mortals:
Be my life in death and bring
Me to heaven’s portals!*

LSB 448:2, 4, 7

Holy Wednesday

“If it seems good to you, give me my wages; but if not, keep them.’ And they weighed out as my wages thirty pieces of silver. Then the LORD said to me, ‘Throw it to the potter’—the lordly price at which I was priced by them. So I took the thirty pieces of silver and threw them into the house of the LORD, to the potter” (Zechariah 11:12–13).

Zechariah lived during the rebuilding of the temple after the return of the exiles from Babylon. The next to last prophet to come until John the Baptist, he was, along with so many other preachers of God’s Word, treated poorly, and his preaching was rejected. Before leaving, he asks for the compensation due him for his livelihood. They give him 30 pieces of silver, the price owed when an ox gored a slave (Exodus 21:32). The “*lordly price*” (sarcasm is intended here) was then thrown into the temple, showing the offense against God’s preacher is really given to God Himself. In this action we see a picture of the betrayal of our Lord.

We see how little Judas valued his Master. Worth only as much as a dead slave. Indeed, later He will be condemned to death while a murderer goes free! Casting the silver into the temple (Matthew 27:3–5), Judas shows the rejection of Jesus by the leaders of Israel, and therefore God’s rejection of them. Clinging to their position and prestige, they condemn Jesus, but are unwilling to ritually “stain” themselves with blood money. They purchase a field to bury the poor and indigent (Matthew 27:6–8). Living in the sin of rejection of God’s Word and clinging to their own desires, the spiritually dead are left to their own devices (Matthew 8:22).

*Should some lust or sharp temptation
Fascinate my sinful mind,
Draw me to Your cross and passion,
And new courage I shall find.
Or should Satan press me hard,
Let me then be on my guard,
Saying, “Christ for me was wounded,”
That the tempter flee confounded.*

LSB 421:2

Maundy Thursday

“*Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd, against the Man who stands next to Me, declares the LORD of hosts. ‘Strike the Shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered; I will turn My hand against the little ones’*” (Zechariah 13:7).

Jesus heads up the Mount of Olives with the eleven disciples. He tells them the unthinkable truth that on that very night they would all fall away because of Him (Matthew 26:31). They had exhorted one another to go with Him to Jerusalem in order to die with Him (John 11:16). Led by Peter, they all vow to die before they would deny Him. But the Scriptures must be fulfilled. God Himself would strike His Son with the sword of His wrath. The sheep will scatter. The disciples run away – one cannot get away quickly enough, leaving his cloak in the hands of the guard as he flees away naked (Mark 14:51–52).

This disowning of the Lord by His closest friends no doubt hurt Him. It showed their weakness, their inability in even the smallest way to participate in the Lord’s unique sacrifice for sin. But He who died alone, suffering the deep stroke of divine justice, would come to His friends, console, comfort, and forgive their groaning consciences. He would send them out to preach His death and resurrection, not scattering, but gathering together all the sheep around their Shepherd, feeding and tending them with His Word and Sacrament to heal all our grief, fear, and distresses.

*Tell me, ye who hear Him groaning,
Was there ever grief like His?
Friends through fear His cause disowning,
Foes insulting His distress;
Many hands were raised to wound Him,
None would intervene to save;
But the deepest stroke that pierced Him
Was the stroke that justice gave.*

LSB 451:2

Good Friday

“I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy, so that, when they look on Me, on Him Whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over Him, as one weeps over a firstborn” (Zechariah 12:10).

The people of Jerusalem look upon the Lord, lifted up in death, His heart pierced by a Roman lance. They see a dead and false Messiah. Through the prophet Zechariah, God make clear that this is none other than God Himself, for that is who is speaking in the prophecy of chapter 12. The King of Kings and Lord of Lords, eternal God, the Great I AM, has His heart run through, punctured, with an iron spear. For one final time, He bleeds.

From the pierced side of the Savior comes grace and mercy – the blood that satisfied the debt of our sin. Through the waters of baptism, the Holy Spirit is given, granting faith to see this scene with the eyes of faith. Today is *Good Friday*. The Son of God has accomplished the task He came to do. He has borne all the sin of the world in His body, was made to be sin for us even though He Himself knew no sin. He has paid the debt which we owed, ransomed us from Satan’s clutches. Out of His death comes our life! We look upon the Lord today and we see God’s loving heart at work, even in death, to save us.

*The royal banners forward go;
The cross shows forth redemption’s flow,
Where He, by whom our flesh was made,
Our ransom in His flesh has paid:*

*Where deep for us the spear was dyed,
Life’s torrent rushing from His side,
To wash us in the precious flood
Where flowed the water and the blood.*

LSB 455:1–2

Holy Saturday

“My heart is glad, and My whole being rejoices; My flesh also dwells secure. For You will not abandon My soul to Sheol, or let your Holy One see corruption” (Psalm 16:9–10).

The Lord’s body lay dead in the tomb. Though mourned by who loved Him, He rested secure. He had given the promise that He would rise again! The Father would not abandon the body of His Son, could not leave human flesh to rot and decay. Perfect satisfaction had been made on the cross. The corruption of the grave will not touch the Body of Jesus.

He sleeps in death. He rests on this Sabbath Day to show His satisfaction in the new creation He has made by His death. He has fashioned His holy church, the mother of all those who are alive to God in Christ Jesus. It is in the blood and water from His side that we are given the new birth of water and the spirit, joined to Christ’s death.

He also rests in the tomb to make the graves of His holy ones, His Christians, holy – places set apart for Him – for them to lay in peaceful sleep as grains of wheat, waiting to spout up to new life on the coming Day of Resurrection. This too has been promised to us in our baptism. These words of Christ in the psalm, are our own prayer of hope and confidence in Him. The decay of sin that creeps upon us will be undone. We will follow Him, where He is, there shall we be (John 12:26). He will *“transform our lowly body to be like His glorious body”* (Philippians 3:21). We shall be as He is; we shall see Him face to face (1 John 3:2)!

*Lord, let at last Thine angels come,
To Abr’ham’s bosom bear me home,
That I may die unfearing;
And in its narrow chamber keep
My body safe in peaceful sleep
Until Thy reappearing.
And then from death awaken me,
That these mine eyes with joy may see,
O Son of God, Thy glorious face,
My Savior and my fount of grace.
Lord Jesus Christ, my prayer attend, my prayer attend,
And I will praise Thee without end.*

LSB 708:3