Good Friday 2020

 O scattered flock of the stricken Shepherd, let us meditate on the suffering Christ!

Behold his grief upon the cross, His gaping wounds as He hangs there, and the bitter agony of His death. Behold his head, before which the holy angels bow in reverential fear, is pierced with bloodied thorns; his face, beautiful and more radiant than the sun, is now defiled by the spit of the ungodly; his eyes, more luminous than any bolt of lightning, now darken in death; his ears, accustomed to the praises of the angelic hosts, are now abused by the taunting insults and mockery of proud sinners; his mouth, that proclaimed like none other that His kingdom of mercy is here, is made to drink the vinegar and the gall; his feet, at whose footstool the entire world bows in humble adoration, are pierced with rusty nails; his hands, which have stretched out the heavens and measured the universe, are now extended upon the cross and fastened with spikes; his body, the most sacred habitation of the Godhead, is shred like raw hamburger and pierced with a spear; and finally his tongue, which did not suffer injury, but now prays for those who crucified Him.

Behold, Him who rules in heaven with His Father is most shamefully abused upon the cross by sinners. God suffers. God sheds his sacred blood. God died.

From the greatness of the price paid, see the greatness of your peril; from the cost of remedy, consider how great your dreadful disease. Behold how great indeed were your wounds of sin, which could be healed only by the wounds of the living and life-giving body of the Son of God; desperate indeed was that disease which could be cured only by the death of the Great Physician Himself.

This is the Father’s cup of wrath that He gave to His one and only Son to drink. Consider the blazing wrath of God inside the cup which caused such suffering for His beloved Son. In drinking that bitter cup, the innocent Jesus swallowed and digested all sin, becomes the greatest sinner of all and falls under the judgment of God. The waves of God’s wrath rushed upon Him on the cross and the pains of hell shook his soul with such violence that He cried out: My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me?”

Behold the innocent Lord suffers eternal death in that very moment of hellish forsakenness. Only then after he felt eternal death upon the cross, does he breathe his last and suffer the lesser death. The cup is emptied.

Where would you be if the Lord had not drunk that bitter cup of suffering and eternal death? Who would intercede for you in the judgment of God? What comfort could you have in the moment of your death or what peace could rush in to soothe the terrors of your soul when the magnitude of your sin takes hold?

So great is your debt to cause such grief and suffering of Jesus. And yet greater is the love of God that paid your debt in full. It is finished Jesus cried out in a loud triumphant cry. He paid what you could not. He suffered for your good. His pain brought you peace. His holy blood satisfied the judgment of God and now becomes your greatest joy, for his blood seals you as one who is declared worthy of eternal life and fills the chalice with blessing upon blessing, taken by your sinful lips yet when they touch the blood of the Lamb, your lips, your soul and your whole body are cleansed and purified, justified and now belong to God alone.

Behold was there ever love like this? See what love has done! It put the holy Son of God into a borrowed grave, your grave and then buried the sin of the world. If God could say to Abraham after he was ready to sacrifice his son Isaac, “Now I know that you fear [me], seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son from me”, what can we say of the Father who delivered up to death His only-begotten Son for us! God loved us while we were yet enemies. Will He forget us now that we are reconciled by the death of His Son?

Behold the love of God in the Passion of our Lord! Jesus bends His head to kiss me; He extends His arms to embrace me as He welcomes me home; He opens his nail-pierced hands to bestow gifts of grace upon me; He opens His side that I may behold His heart glowing with love for me; He is lifted up from the earth upon his bloody cross to draw all people unto Himself; His wounds heavy with grief yet gleam with love.

In His wounds are found the very thing your restless soul searches, the peace of God, the forgiveness of sin, and life everlasting. Behold the blood that flowed from five parts of His body, crushed as grapes by the weight of divine wrath over the severity of our sins, pours out on all sides the precious life-blood that now fills His chalice and is for us the cup of blessing, the cup of forgiveness, the cup of His love.

Was there ever love like His?