

**MINISTRY BY MAIL**  
**Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship**  
[www.lutheranlccf.org](http://www.lutheranlccf.org)  
**Maundy Thursday and Good Friday, April 6-7, 2023**

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(Hymns found in The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)

Hymns: 150, 409: 3, 151: 4-7, 153, 158.

Lessons Psalm 22, 2 Corinthians 5:14-21, Passion History Parts 6 & 7

Sermon Text: Luke 23: 23-32.

Sermon by Pastor Robert Mehlretter

NOTE: The Passion History is found on the LCCF website on the WEEKLY SERMON page.  
<http://www.lutheranlccf.org/MinistrybyMail.html>

In the name of Jesus Christ, dear fellow redeemed,

Luther said that the preaching of Christ's suffering will continue until the end of the world. Luther was right. God began the preaching of the cross when he promised Adam and Eve a Savior in the garden. According to Genesis, God promised to send the Seed of the woman, who would crush the serpent's head. But this great conqueror of sin, death, and the devil would suffer; Satan would bruise his heel, meaning that he would take his life. As long as the world endures, there will never be such a time when preaching about the cross of Christ will be unnecessary. The gospel of the crucified, dead, buried, and risen again Savior is the greatest truth of the Bible.

But if the preaching of Christ's suffering is to be beneficial, it must be done in keeping with Scripture. Luther also said, "The cause and end of the sufferings of Christ is: Suffered for us. . . you use the history of the sufferings of Christ in a blessed manner if you write at each little part of it: that happened for my sake, so that I would be redeemed from sin and eternal death." For us. Let's keep this in mind while we walk with him as

**JESUS WAS LED OUT OF THE CITY FOR EXECUTION**

- 1. Jesus endured disgrace and humiliation.**
- 2. Jesus' last sermon was so full of instruction.**

*"They led him away."* This was the usual procedure. The place of execution was outside the city. The law of Moses required that the execution of criminals take place outside the camp; and so, also the one who was *"numbered with the transgressors"* must die outside the gates. Likewise, the Old Testament scapegoat, bearing the sins of the people, could not remain in the camp. Jesus, the great sin-bearer, had to carry the sins out of the Holy City, as the writer to the Hebrews says, *"And so Jesus also suffered outside the city gate to make the people holy through his own blood"* (Hebrews 13:12). So even being led outside the city was a great humiliation for the Lord of glory, equal to being placed on "murderer's row" in prison. The "way" on which Jesus went forth is traditionally known as the Via Dolorosa, the Way of Sorrows. This way led to Golgotha or Calvary, The Place of the Skull. All we can say definitely about its location is that it was outside the city.

Beginning the walk to Calvary, which under normal circumstances was probably not a very long walk, Jesus, according to John's gospel, was carrying his own cross. He was no different from any other criminal condemned to this type of death. For Jesus, this was most painful. The cross pressed down on his back which was lacerated and bleeding from the scourging by the Roman soldiers.

Because the cross was an instrument of death for the vilest criminals, Jesus became a shameful, bloody spectacle for all those who watched the procession to Calvary. Adding to the shame was the fact that *"two other men, both criminals, were also led out with him to be executed."* Thus nothing was omitted that might increase the Savior's disgrace and humiliation. It was just as Isaiah wrote, *"He . . . was numbered with the transgressors"* (Isaiah 53:12).

Besides all the disgrace and humiliation and all the physical suffering on the way to the cross, and we are not mentioning all of it, there was the spiritual suffering foretold in the Old Testament and underscored in the New Testament Jesus was walking to Calvary, and so when he took the cross, he at the same time was taking our sins and the sins of the whole world upon himself, a burden so great that we cannot imagine its burden. Because his cross was really our cross, he bore for us the curse and wrath of God, the curse of the law.

Why did he suffer all this agony of body and soul, the depths of which we can never measure, at least not this side of heaven? He did it all for us because he loves us and because he was looking forward to the joy of having thousands upon thousands of individuals in his heaven with him, individuals redeemed by his blood. And what shall we say to all this? “Thousand, thousand thanks shall be, dearest Jesus, unto thee.”

In this frame of mind, we are also ready to hear Jesus’ last sermon.

### **Jesus’ last sermon was so full of instruction.**

At some point in this journey, Jesus collapsed under the weight of the cross. This is not surprising when we consider what Jesus had been through: the agony of Gethsemane, probably no nourishment or sleep in the last 12 hours, the scourging, the crown of thorns, the beatings by both the Jews and Romans, and the anguish of being shuttled from one unjust judge to another. It was at this point, then, that Simon of Cyrene was compelled to carry Jesus’ cross the rest of the way to Golgotha. Simon came from Cyrene, a large city in what is now Libya, North Africa. The city had a large Jewish community. Like multitudes of foreign Jews, he had most likely come to Jerusalem for the Passover. Coming in from the country, he was forced by the Romans to carry Jesus’ cross.

Then we read: *“A large number of people followed him, including women who mourned and wept for him. Jesus turned and said to them, ‘Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me; weep for yourselves and for your children. For the time will come when you will say, ‘Blessed are the barren women, the wombs that never bore and the breasts that never nursed!’ Then they will say to the mountains, ‘Fall on us!’ and to the hills, ‘Cover us!’ For if men do these things when the tree is green, what will happen when it is dry?’”*

Many of the women of Jerusalem followed among the large crowd accompanying Jesus to Calvary. Apparently, they at least were not hostile to him and by gesture and voice showed sympathy and compassion for him. Now, Jesus was no stick or stone without emotions and feelings! After all, if he would have been strengthened in the Garden of Gethsemane by the watchful presence of even three disciples, would he not have welcomed the interest of sympathetic women? Of course he would have, and he did. Turning to them, he addressed them. But before we listen to his last public address before his crucifixion, we should note that here, as on several occasions just before and during his passion, Jesus asserted his divine authority. He stopped the procession, and it would not move on until he had his say.

How beautifully the unselfish nature of Jesus showed itself once again. Here he was suffering and moving on to still greater suffering, but he thought not of himself but of these women of Jerusalem. As someone has said, “He was too human to be ungrateful for their sympathy, but too divine to be unmindful of their souls’ peril.”

Jesus’ sermon was short, but so instructive, showing us the only way, the only saving way to view his passion. *“Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me,”* he said. There were other women in the crowd whose tears he did not forbid. Their tears were a comfort to him, women like his mother, and Salome, Mary Magdalene, Mary and Martha of Bethany. These women believed in him and truly loved him as Lord and Savior. Not so these *“daughters of Jerusalem.”* Therefore, Jesus told them, *“Do not weep for me.”* He was saying, “Ladies, don’t give me your sympathy. What I want from you is repentance. Your tears for me will not save you.” You see, Jesus doesn’t want to be lamented; he wants to be believed.

And to whoever did not believe, Jesus said, *“Weep for yourselves and for your children.”* Why? *“For the time will come when you will say, ‘Blessed are the barren women, the wombs that never bore and the breasts that never nursed!’ Then they will say to the mountains, ‘Fall on us!’ and to the hills, ‘Cover us!’”* Jesus had in mind, first of all, the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in A.D. 70, barely 40 years later, a destruction so cruel, so thorough, so extreme, that childlessness, the curse of women in the Old Testament time, would be considered a blessing. All those men, women, and children would be caught in the terrible judgment on Jerusalem because they rejected their Savior. They would prefer and beg for a sudden, violent death.

But, as in his teaching on Tuesday of Holy Week, Jesus’ prophecy of Jerusalem’s destruction merged with that of the coming of judgment day. Then too unbelievers will *“say to the mountains, ‘Fall on us!’ and to the*

*hills, 'Cover us!'*” For having rejected the Savior, they will have to accept him as Judge. There will be no escape. For *“if men do these things when the tree is green, what will happen when it is dry?”* The green tree or green wood is Jesus, the Branch out of the root of Jesse. The dry tree or dry wood is the unbelievers, those who do not believe the gospel, as Peter says, *“For it is time for judgment to begin with the family of God; and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who do not obey the gospel of God? And, ‘If it is hard for the righteous to be saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?’”* (1 Peter 4:17,18). Now, if such terrible punishment was given to one who was sinless, but upon whom the Lord laid the iniquity of us all, what will happen to the guilty when they meet the burning fire of God’s wrath on that great day when heaven and earth shall pass away? All we would say is, “From this preserve us, heavenly Father!”

And so, when we recognize our own utter sinfulness, then we do not mourn for what Christ has suffered, but for what he has suffered for us. May God give us tears of sorrow over our sin and what we have caused the Savior. He carried our sins. He suffered for our transgressions. When we understand and especially believe that he was crucified for us, then all will be well with our souls! Amen.

(Adapted from an unknown author)