

MINISTRY BY MAIL
Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship
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Sunday

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

Hymns: 38, 375:5, 383, 45, 644.

Lessons: Proverbs 15:24-33, 1 John 2:12-17, Luke 7:36-50.

Sermon Text: Hebrews 2:10-15.

Sermon by Pastor M. H. Eibs

Dear fellow redeemed in Christ:

What man's human reason tells him about his salvation, and what God's Word teaches, are two different things. No man would ever think of a plan of salvation that included shameful humiliation and death on a cross. Human reason would plan that the world's Savior should perform some great, appealing and praiseworthy deed. Man would think of the Savior of the world as one who would be eminently successful in the world, respected and loved by all. According to this reasoning, the hated and crucified Jesus Christ was a miserable failure.

A good example of what human reasoning comes up with may be seen from what the Unification Church of America, founded by Sun Myung Moon, taught. Here are some quotations from their publications concerning Jesus' death on the cross. "...we can ascertain that Jesus' having to take the path of death was unjust." (Divine Principle, p. 143) Another quote: "We, therefore, must realize that Jesus did not come to die on the cross." (p. 144) Another: "If the Jewish people believed that he was the Messiah, as both God and Jesus wanted, could they have crucified him? ... Jesus' crucifixion was the result of the ignorance and disbelief of the Jewish people and was not God's predestination to fulfill the whole purpose of Jesus' coming as the Messiah." Another: "If Jesus' crucifixion had originally been God's predestination, how could he have prayed even three times that the cup of death might pass from him?" (p. 145)

These quotations are clever half-truths, and any statement that is a half-truth is really a lie. It is, of course, true that the ignorance and unbelief of the Jews was involved in Jesus' crucifixion. But it is also true that God planned from eternity that Jesus should die on the cross for the salvation of all sinners in the world. Peter told the Jews in his sermon on Pentecost: "***This man was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross.***" (Acts 2:23)

Today we want to emphasize this truth as we learn from our text about

GOD'S PLAN OF SALVATION THROUGH JESUS OUR SAVIOR.

- 1. Jesus had to suffer and die as a true man;**
- 2. Thus Jesus put the devil out of commission, and freed us from the fear of death.**

The writer to the Hebrews says: "***In bringing many sons to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the author of their salvation perfect through suffering.***" These words speak of believers being brought to eternal glory in heaven and God's way of accomplishing this through Christ. God's way of salvation sounds strange to anyone who has not accepted the Gospel of Christ and who therefore judges everything according to his human reason. Paul spoke of this when he said: "***The message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.***" (1 Corinthians 1:18) God's way of salvation may seem like foolishness to human reason, but remember, it is the way the Creator and Preserver of the universe chose. Our text says that "***for him and through him everything exists.***"

"It was fitting" for God, our text says, that he **"should make the author of their salvation perfect through suffering."** It was proper, so far as God is concerned, to have his one and only son suffer for mankind. In another passage in Hebrews we are exhorted to look to **"Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."** (Hebrews 12:2) This book also says of Jesus: **"Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him."** (Hebrews. 5: 8-9) Also many other passages speak of Christ's suffering for our sins so that we might go to heaven. The fact is that without his suffering and death, Jesus could not have been a complete Savior, and could not have brought us to glory in heaven as God's sons. He had to sacrifice his body as our great High Priest in order to make atonement for our sins. He had to drink to the bitter dregs the cup of suffering the heavenly Father gave him. Only in this way was Jesus made perfect as the Author of our salvation.

Our text speaks of Jesus **"sharing in (our) humanity,"** in other words, of becoming flesh and blood as we are, of becoming a true man. Only in this way could Jesus suffer and die. And he had to suffer and die, for that was God's plan of salvation for sinners. We, then, as human beings, have Jesus as our true brother, for he shared our humanity. Our text says: **"Both the one who makes men holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers."**

We have been made holy through Christ shedding his blood in his suffering and death. **"The blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from every sin."** (I John 1:7) He, the holy and righteous One and we who are made holy through his blood, are of the same family. We have Jesus as our Brother. This is said in three Old Testament passages quoted in our text: **"I will declare your name to my brothers; in the presence of the congregation I will sing your praises.' And again, 'I will put my trust in him.' And again he says, 'Here am I, and the children God has given me.'" Jesus was not ashamed to acknowledge us as his brothers. After his resurrection, Jesus told the women to go to the disciples and give them a message: **"Go to my brothers and tell them, 'I am returning to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'" (John 20:17)****

This was God's plan of salvation, that Jesus should be a true man and suffer and die and thus be a brother among brothers. Jesus becoming a true man is emphasized in our text again. It speaks of another part of the salvation God planned for sinners. Jesus was to put the devil out of commission, and free us from the fear of death.

2.

Our text says: **"Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death- that is, the devil - and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death."** If Jesus is our Brother, then he too shares with us flesh and blood like all children of Adam. The purpose of his sharing our humanity was that he might die, and through death **"destroy him who holds the power of death."** It is God, of course, who has the absolute power of death. But it is the devil who by his temptation of Eve and the fall of man into sin brought death into this world. **"The wages of sin is death."** (Romans 6:23). Ever since the fall of man into sin in the Garden of Eden, the devil has held man in slavery by fear of death. Paul says that **"sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned."** (Romans 5:12) Every person has death to look forward to, and without salvation in Christ, man is doomed to eternal death in hell. That fear of death is like a terrible slavery or bondage.

But eternal death in hell is not what God wants for the children of men. Ezekiel records the words of the Lord: **"I take no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Sovereign Lord. Repent and live!"** (Ezekiel 18:32) Therefore God sent his Son as a true man with flesh and blood that he might suffer death, and through death he would destroy the devil who held the power of death. The death of Jesus was the way God would overcome sin and death, and thus do away with the devil's power. John writes: **"The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work."** (I John 3:8) Jesus' death on the cross did not do away with the devil. He still exists and still tempts us to sin. But Jesus' death on the cross did put an end to the devil's power over man in holding man in the slavery of fearing death. Thus we speak of putting the devil out of commission. Jesus' death on the cross atoned for all sins of all people. The Bible says: **"Christ was sacrificed once to take**

away the sins of many people." (Hebrews. 9:28) *"We have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all."* (Hebrews. 10:10) By Christ's sacrificial death on the cross Satan's power over us in holding us in the slavery of the fear of death all our life long is now ended. We have been set free by Christ, and we no longer have to fear death like slaves of the devil.

Christ's death on the cross as true man sent for our salvation was a death for everyone in the world. *"He died for all,"* (II Corinthians. 5:15) the Bible says. John says: *"He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world."* (I John 2:2) And God the Father has shown that he has accepted the sacrifice of his Son for the salvation of mankind by raising him from the dead, and declaring sinners justified for Jesus' sake. Paul says: *"He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification."* (Romans 4:25) This is the Gospel message, the good news, that God wants men everywhere to hear and to believe.

It is through faith in Jesus that we are assured that our enemy the devil has been conquered, and that we no longer have to fear death. It is through faith in Jesus that we are assured of being raised up to everlasting life on the last day. Jesus says: *"For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day."* (John 6:40) Jesus as our Good Shepherd has laid down his life for the sheep. He says: *"I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full."* (John 10:10) By faith in the resurrected Savior who died and conquered Satan we can fearlessly look forward to the day of our death. We can say in the words of Scripture: *"Death has been swallowed up in victory."* We can ask these words Hosea the prophet wrote: *"Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?"* And with Paul we can say: *"the sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God. He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."* (I Corinthians 15:54-57)

May God the Holy Spirit through the powerful Gospel Word we have in our text work faith in the hearts of all who hear it. And may God grant us the faith to confess:

"So help us, Jesus, Ground of faith;
Thou hast redeemed us by Thy death
From endless death and set us free.
We laud and praise and worship Thee." Amen. (The Lutheran Hymnal 596:8)

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