

## Nailed It

***“Even when you were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive with Christ by forgiving us all our trespasses. God erased the record of our debt brought against us by his legal demands. This record stood against us, but he took it away by nailing it to the cross.” (Colossians 2:13-14, Evangelical Heritage Version)***

We have entered another Lenten Season. We follow our Lord’s journey to the cross – a journey which culminates with His brutal death at Passover on a day we’ve come to call Good Friday. And even an unbeliever can look at Jesus’ death and conclude that He suffered dreadfully and innocently. An unbeliever could possibly also see Jesus as some sort of hero who was unnecessarily killed for promoting change or speaking up for the downtrodden. A non-Christian may likewise see Jesus’ death to be a model of how we ought to love our fellow human beings.

But was Jesus’ death merely a needless tragedy? Did He die because He was promoting a radical form of humanitarianism? Is the story of the cross merely an example of how we should love and sacrifice for others? Well, we ought to begin this discussion by pointing out, as we did throughout the Season of Epiphany, that the Holy Gospels tell us repeatedly that Jesus knew His identity – namely, that He was the Son of God born to Mary who came into this world to fulfill the Messianic work promised in the Old Testament. For even before our first parents’ banishment from the Garden of Eden for sinning against Him, the Lord told mankind’s tempter: ***“I will put hostility between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed. He will crush your head, and you will crush his heel” (Genesis 3:15, Evangelical Heritage Version).***

And this promise was bad news of course for the devil, but it was the best news ever for fallen sinners like you and me. In fact, this was the first time that God spoke His Gospel promise. And Jesus Christ is this promised ***“seed” (Genesis 3:15, Evangelical Heritage Version)*** who would rescue mankind from sin, death, and Satan. And He understood His mission and would even reveal His mission throughout His earthly ministry. ***“Look, we are going up to Jerusalem. The Son of Man will be handed over to the chief priests and experts in the law, and they will condemn him to death. They will hand him over to the Gentiles to mock, flog, and crucify him. On the third day he will be raised” (Matthew 20:18-19, Evangelical Heritage Version).*** ***“For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45, Evangelical Heritage Version).***

And Jesus accomplished His saving work. He bore the sins of everyone (1 John 2:2) upon the cross – suffering the eternal punishment each of us deserves and dying in your place and mine the death that belongs to every one of us. And He was innocent – for He had never sinned (1 Peter 2:22). In fact, Jesus is the only human being in the history of this world who hasn’t sinned. Yet He was charged with the sins of all people.

Jesus certainly came to bring change – but not the political and social change that people in His day and even today desire. He came to reverse what sin has brought into our lives. And this is monumental change. He came to win for us an everlasting kingdom. And He certainly loves all people and showed deep compassion for downtrodden sinners who could never rescue themselves.

But His death was no senseless tragedy. In fact, it was victory. And Jesus' bodily resurrection three days afterward showed that His sacrificial suffering and death has overcome sin, the devil, and the grave. His death was neither pointless nor unsuccessful. It fulfilled God's plan of salvation. Jesus' suffering and death were necessary for you and me to be delivered from eternal punishment and to be reconciled to our Creator. For ***“God erased the record of our debt brought against us by his legal demands. This record stood against us, but he took it away by nailing it to the cross.”***

No wonder Christians put up crosses and crucifixes in churches and wear them upon their bodies. This is also why ***“we preach Christ crucified”*** (1 Corinthians 1:23, Evangelical Heritage Version) and confess no other God and Savior than ***“Jesus Christ, and him crucified”*** (1 Corinthians 2:2, Evangelical Heritage Version). And dear Christian, you also receive ***“[Christ's] body, which is given for you”*** (Luke 22:19a, Evangelical Heritage Version) and ***“drink from [the cup]... for this is [Christ's] blood of the new testament, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins”*** (Matthew 26:27-28, Evangelical Heritage Version). See, our worship life as Christians is centered in the passion and death of Jesus Christ. The loss of Jesus' life is our victorious gain. His death is our life. And this new life that He gives us through Baptism not only inspires us to love and serve our fellow human beings, but it even empowers us to do so.

My friends, Jesus earned our deliverance. He nailed it – and in a very literal sense, for He was fastened upon an instrument of death as our substitute. For ***“the record of our debt brought against us by [God's] legal demands... he took it away by nailing it to the cross.”*** Our rebellious disobedience toward God and His Law has been forgiven. For by Christ's death, ***“God erased... this record... against us.”***

My fellow Christian, throughout this Lenten season we grieve our sins. And we may even be saddened by Jesus' degrading humiliation and torturous death. But let us also remember that Jesus voluntarily went to the cross for us and that He endured all that He did because He loves us unconditionally and cares for us more deeply than we could ever fully comprehend. This Gospel message brings abundant peace and hope. For the Good News is that ***“even when you were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive with Christ by forgiving us all our trespasses.”*** So, we daily look to the cross – and we do so knowing that an empty tomb awaits. For Jesus has completed God's long promised rescue plan. Therefore, as we follow Him to the cross, we know that He is now with us in His Means of Grace – freely giving us the forgiveness, life, and salvation that He earned for us that first Good Friday.

For by His grace, everyone clinging to Jesus through faith has the sure and certain hope that when his or her season of earthly life comes to its end, death shall not be the master. For the Christian belongs to the Savior who has conquered death by His death. Jesus is the Master. Therefore, death is neither insurmountable nor is it the end of life for those who believe in Jesus. For when believers pass from this life they enter into the Lord's nearer presence. And when the believer's body is placed into the grave, it only rests there until the day of resurrection unto eternal life. For Jesus has nailed it – He has earned our salvation. Blessed Lententide!

See you at worship,

Pastor

PS – We will have two Holy (Maundy) Thursday worship services this year as well as two Good Friday worship services this year – one in the afternoon and one in the evening. The intention is to accommodate those no longer driving at night as well as those who cannot take time off from work in the afternoon on Good Friday. As with the mid-week Lenten services this year, this Holy Week arrangement will also be evaluated afterward to see if it ought to be continued going into the future.

Holy (Maundy) Thursday is April 02. The worship service at **St. John's** that day will begin at **1:30PM** and at **St. Paul's** the worship service will start at **7PM**. On Good Friday (April 03), worship at **St. Paul's** will begin at **1:30PM** and at **St. John's** worship will start at **7PM**. The worship services on each day will be identical at both congregations. Easter Sunday worship services will be at the regular Sunday morning service times at each congregation. Thanks ~  
Pastor.