

Good Friday
03/29/2013
Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church
John 18 & 19
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I bring you grace, mercy and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

The Word of God for our consideration this evening is from the Gospel according to St. John the 18th and 19th chapters.

Here are a couple of questions you should be asking yourself tonight:

Why are you here tonight? How do you regard the sufferings and death of Jesus who is the Christ?

A few years ago, memory serving me correctly, about the time of the release of Mel Gibson's movie **Passion of the Christ** the old argument about who was responsible for the death of Jesus raised its old ugly and useless head. Generally you'll hear two responses for that question.

The first says that the Jews did it. The Pharisees and Sadducees and the chief priests certainly wanted the deed done and were Jews. They were the "evil men" who plotted to kill Jesus and also plotted to re-kill the recently raised Lazarus. It was out of jealousy and fear of loss of position that they hauled Jesus to the Roman Governor to have Him executed, murdered if you like, because according to their law the Jews couldn't kill Him. Their enticement to Pilate was that Jesus claimed to be the King of the Jews. That was forbidden in Rome. There was no king but Caesar. To say otherwise was treason and punishable by death. The Jews made false claims against Jesus so they could have Him killed while having plausible deniability for the deed.

Pontius Pilate was the Roman representative in the region. He was the protector of the realm of Caesar and his interests in the area. Pilate knew an innocent man when he saw one. Jesus appeared to be innocent. This was further supported by Pilate's wife's vision that caused her to urge the governor to have nothing to do with Him. But Pilate was a politician. The people bringing Jesus to him were his constituents and while they didn't elect him a full blown rebellion against him sure would make his life much tougher and his position more precarious.

So the Jews delivered Jesus on false charges and Pilate crucified an innocent man. Yet this knowledge doesn't really answer the question "who is responsible for crucifying Jesus?" Peter supplies the answer in Acts 2. The 3000 people listening to his Pentecost sermon are told, "*Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom **you** crucified.*" They were guilty of crucifying Jesus and therefore you are guilty of crucifying Him and I am guilty of crucifying Him. It was the sins of the 3000 at Pentecost that nailed Jesus to the cross. It was your sins that nailed Jesus to the cross. If you want to know who is guilty of the blood of Jesus Christ then when you get home tonight simply look in the mirror. You're the man, you're the guilty one.

We normally don't think our sins are a big deal. Most we do with little thought to them. And yet if all our individual sins were suddenly revealed here before our brothers and sisters in Christ we'd all be compelled to hang our heads

and walk out in shame and embarrassment and probably never return. But our reaction pales in comparison to what God thinks about our sin.

God hates sin. He hates all the horrible sins you can think of in this world and there are many myriad. He hates the world's sin but God hates and despises your sin just as much. You think it's not a big deal generally, but God hates it. God will not be party to it. When Satan introduced sin in heaven he was banished to earth along with the angels who followed his lead. On earth Satan found willing accomplices in mankind. He found like minded beasts who tend to see things his way and you're just the latest in a long line sinful individuals. Satan is promised an eternity in hell and so are those who blissfully and ignorantly follow his lead all the way to the grave. It's God promised punishment for our disobedience. It's what we deserve.

But even as horrible as hell is it's not an adequate picture of the Father's hatred of sin. If you want the full picture you must look upon the mangled body of Jesus Christ. If you want to see God's revulsion at your sin you must look at the thorn wounded head, the whip marked back, the nail pierced hands and feet and the riven side. The Almighty's full wrath was poured out on the Son of God. God so despised your sin that He laid your punishment and my punishment not on us, but rather upon His Son. He left Jesus alone on the cross suffering for sin He didn't commit. You want to see who's responsible for the death of Jesus Christ? Look in the mirror.

But what I just described doesn't fully explain Jesus' death does it? If Jesus is just a convenient whipping boy for God then it's the greatest miscarriage

of justice ever. The full truth is that Jesus is God. He's not an unwilling victim of a father's rage. Jesus, the second person of the Trinity, willingly faced the wrath of the Father. He did it because the persons of the Holy Trinity share an agape, an unconditional love for creation and specifically for fallen mankind. The Godhead didn't want you to suffer what you deserved for your sins.

Christ Jesus is your substitute. He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Christ Jesus went to the cross in your place for the vanity and the enormity of your sin. The Son of God is the answer for the problem of your sin. He redeemed you willingly. The death of Christ was caused by your sin. The death of Christ was for your salvation. In Him alone you are forgiven. Amen.

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.