

Good Friday “God’s Eyes” April 2020

May the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be pleasing unto You, O Lord, our Rock and our Redeemer. Amen!

Our first six midweek Lenten sermons focused on what is seen through the eyes of various characters in the Passion—the perspectives of Judas, Peter, the chief priests and scribes, Pontius Pilate, the Roman soldiers, and the Jewish crowd. Last night, we meditated on how there is much more than meets the eye going on at the Last Supper. Tomorrow night, as we await Easter morn, we’ll meditate upon the sealed tomb of Jesus with the sorrowful women, and on Sunday we’ll look at the empty tomb through the eyes of the Easter angel. But tonight, we’ll view Jesus’ crucifixion through God’s eyes—what God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit saw, and what they accomplished at the cross for us men and for our salvation.

What did God the Father see on Good Friday? He saw His only-begotten Son suffering and dying unjustly on a Roman cross. Can you imagine watching your own child die in this way? It is unfathomable. As sinful mortals, we cannot understand what it is like to be the immortal, holy God, but surely the Father’s heart was grieved beyond words.

Yet what’s even more unfathomable is that God loves us so much that He willingly inflicted this on His beloved Son. St. Paul wrote that the Father “did not spare His own Son but gave Him up for us all” (Romans 8:32), and that “God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8). He didn’t wait around for us to clean up our act first, but while we were ungodly and enemies of God, He had His own Son slaughtered in our place, under His righteous anger against the sin of the world.

This means that we provoked the death of Jesus. On Pentecost, St. Peter preached, “This Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, **you** crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men”

(Acts 2:23). The Father gave the Son to the world, but “**You** crucified and killed” Him. Yes, Peter is also talking to you and me. He isn’t offering some anti-Judaic rant but an indictment of **all** sinners.

Whether a sinner lived in the first or twenty-first century, the guilt and blame is all the same: we all crucified the Son of God by our sin. As we sing in the Lenten hymn, *Upon the Cross Extended*:

I caused Your grief and sighing
 By evils multiplying
 As countless as the sands.
 I caused the woes unnumbered
 With which Your soul is cumbered,
 Your sorrows raised by wicked hands. (LSB 453:4)

And the hymn, *O Darkest Woe*:

O child of woe!
 Who struck the blow
 That killed our gracious Master?
 "It was I" thy conscience cries,
 "I have wrought disaster." (LSB 448:3)

As we acknowledge our sin and unworthiness, we need to see **ourselves** nailing Jesus to the tree, but at the same time, His crucifixion was “according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God” the Father. What value did the Father see in this plan? The Father saw, and now all of us can see, God’s own **glory** being manifested to the world. This is what Jesus prayed for, just hours before His crucifixion: Jesus “lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said, ‘Father, the hour has come; glorify Your Son that the Son may glorify You, since You have given Him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom You have given Him. And this is eternal life, that they know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. I glorified You on earth, having accomplished the work that You gave Me to do’” (John 17:1–4).

The Father and the Son both glory in having mercy on sinners. That is what they accomplished during Christ’s perfect life, suffering, death, and resurrection. The Father sees all of our sin taken upon Jesus on the cross, even the sin of crucifying His Son. Moreover, He sees His wrath against sin being poured out upon the Son and the gates of hell prevailing over Him. Yes, hell is being under God’s wrath, and that is what the Father sees Jesus taking, in our place, to save us.

Now for the Son's perspective. Jesus always knew that His name means "the Lord saves," so He sees Himself as the object of the Father's wrath but as the subject of our salvation. He drinks His Father's wrath down to its dregs, finally crying out in abandonment from His Father, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" But this is no cry of despair. He suffers abandonment from His Father, He suffers the pains of a sinner condemned to hell, but still He looks to His Father with perfect love and trust: "My God, My God!" He cries, with unbroken faith. With the words "Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit" (Luke 23:46), He breathes His last. He still knows His Father loves Him and will raise Him from the dead on the third day.

On Good Friday, what does Jesus see when He looks at you and all sinners? He recognizes us as the cause of His woe, but He doesn't hold this against us. The Lamb of God bears this willingly. He wants nothing other than to be our Savior. He looks at us and then prays, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." He stares into our sinful eyes and says, "I love you all the same. I and My Father love you so much that We would make this sacrifice for you. I am offering Myself under the Father's wrath in your place, to save you from your sins and spare you from hell."

Finally, what does the Holy Spirit see? First, He sees the Son and comes to Jesus' aid as He offers His life as a ransom to the Father. We don't know the ins and outs of this, but the Epistle to the Hebrews says that Christ, "through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God" (Hebrews 9:14), thus accomplishing our redemption by the blood of His cross. Jesus had received the Spirit without measure in His Baptism, and we know that the Spirit is the Helper, so it makes sense that the Holy Spirit not only helped Jesus fulfill all righteousness during His earthly ministry, but also helped Him offer Himself to the Father on the cross.

Second, on Good Friday, the Spirit sees that everything necessary for the salvation of sinners is achieved by the Son. Again, Jesus had promised just hours before His death, "When the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all the truth . . . He will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take what is Mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is Mine; therefore, I said that He will take what is Mine and declare it to you" (John 16:13–15). Here we see the Holy Trinity working together in their natural perfect harmony.

The Father gave the Son the task of redeeming mankind. The Son willingly took this task upon Himself. And the Holy Spirit joyfully proclaims this message to us so we may enjoy the benefits of the Son's sacrificial death.

The Spirit takes what is Christ's and declares it to us. He takes the righteousness of Jesus and instills it in the waters of Holy Baptism to make it a life-giving water, rich in grace, and a washing of new birth into God's eternal kingdom. He takes the forgiveness of Jesus and declares it to us through the Gospel and through the words of Absolution. And He presents to us the body given and blood shed for us on the cross to be received for forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation in Holy Communion.

On Good Friday, God's eyes see everything necessary to save us from sin, death, and hell. Although our own eyes look upon our guilt, unworthiness, and impurity, the Father looks upon our sin forgiven for Christ's sake, the Son credits His own righteousness to our account, and the Holy Spirit makes us a participant in the holiness of Jesus.

We are baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, so keep this truth on your mind, in your heart, and before your eyes at all times: When God looks at us, He sees the apple of His eye, His beloved child united with Christ in His death and raised up to new, eternal life with Him. Amen.

May the love of God and the grace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit abide in you to life everlasting. Amen!