

Crumbs – Good News for the Diaspora!

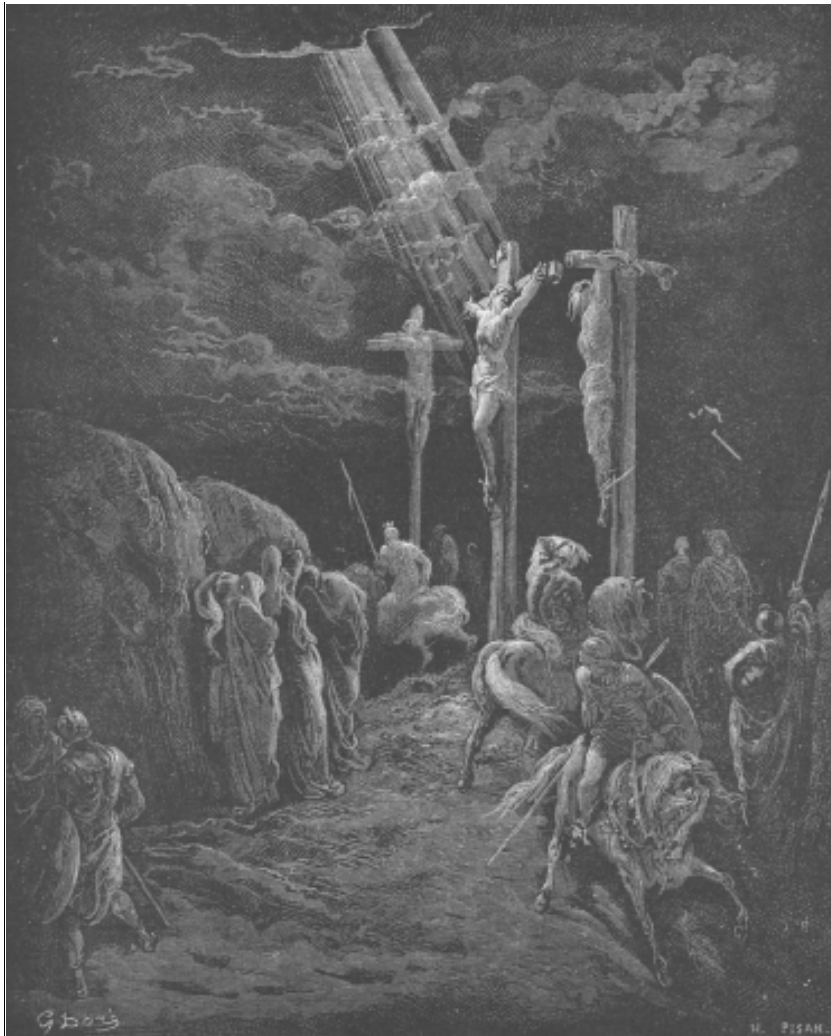


Illustration: The Crucifixion

A Devotional for the Week of the Sixth Sunday in Lent.

SUNDAY.

I thirst. – John 19:28.

Consider what the Savior had all suffered so far. And now He was in bodily anguish of death. In the prophecy He Himself relates this as follows: "I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels. My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and Thou hast brought me into the dust of death." (Psalm 22:14-15.) But Jesus also knew that all things were now accomplished that were necessary for our salvation. And now, like a poor dying man, He said: "I thirst." Does that not touch one's heart? Now there was a vessel full of vinegar; and straightway one of them that stood by ran, and took a sponge, and filled it with vinegar, and put it on a reed of hyssop, and put it to His mouth and gave Him to drink.

But in doing it, he mockingly remarked, together with the others: "Let Him alone: let us see whether Elias will come to take Him down!" Thus also that word of Scripture was fulfilled which, again, He Himself had spoken through the mouth of David: "They gave Me also gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave Me vinegar to drink." (Psalm 69:21.) When putting the two words together which came from the lips of Jesus in immediate succession, the words: "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" and: "I thirst," you must perceive that the Savior tasted all the anguish of death which we sinners have deserved. Thereby He merited for us that God will tenderly care for us in the hour of death, more tenderly than a mother cares for her sick and restless child, and through His Holy Spirit will soothe us into a blessed sleep.

PRAYER. – Lord Jesus Christ, since You did suffer all, yes, truly, all things for me and for my soul's welfare, I pray You: When the anguish of death shall come upon me, when my strength shall leave me, when my heart shall break with fear, when all human aid must vanish, do come and help me, shorten the agony of death, drive

the evil spirits from me, comfort me with the comfort of your salvation, and let me gently fall asleep in You. Amen.

Hymn 195, 6.

That thirst and bitter draught of Thine
Let help me bear with patience mine;
Thy piercing cry uphold my soul,
When floods of anguish o'er me roll!

MONDAY.

It is finished. Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit.
– *John 19:30 & Luke 23:46.*

When Jesus had received the vinegar, He said with a loud and cheerful voice: "*It is finished.*" The sin of the world was atoned for. The penalty of the world's sin had been endured. The inexorable justice of God which demands the punishment of the transgressor had received full satisfaction: God was reconciled unto the world. The sin of the world was forgiven. The punishment all mankind deserved was abolished. God's grace now was ready to receive all sinners as His children and to give them eternal life. Our Savior, our Substitute, had accomplished all this. Every sinner may and should now say in faith: "It is finished; all that was necessary to save me has been accomplished. Just as the Savior is your Savior and your Substitute, so also this word shall be your word: "*It is finished.*" You have not accomplished your salvation, but He has accomplished it for you, yes, for you; hence you too must say: "*It is finished.*" This word of Jesus penetrated into the highest heaven. Let it penetrate into your poor sinful heart. It saves you. – And again Jesus cried aloud and cheerfully: "*Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit.*"

Since He had finished all, there no longer lay upon Him the sin, penalty, and curse of the world; God's wrath, burning like fire, was turned into most fervent love; God no longer forsook Him, but held out His fatherly hands toward Him. And so Jesus said: "*Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit.*" In this, too, Jesus is your

Savior, your Substitute. All that is His is yours. This word, too, you may and must take from His lips. When your last hour come, you, too, shall say right gladly and confidently: "*Father, into Your hands I commend my spirit.*"

– And having said this, Jesus bowed His head, beckoned Death to come, and gave up the ghost. His human soul now was in the hands of the Father, while His human body hung dead upon the cross. And in soul and body His eternal Godhead had its being. And, Christian, when you die, the grace of God in Christ will keep your soul and your body. This is most certainly true.

PRAYER. – My dear Heavenly Father, who has made Your dear Son a Savior for me, a poor sinner, and did set Him forth to be my Redeemer, give to me, I implore You, Your grace and Holy Spirit, that when my last hour shall come, I may not look upon myself nor upon my unworthiness, but only upon my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, who has accomplished all things for me. And let me also with full confidence commend my soul into Your hands. And then keep my body and soul unto eternal life. Amen.

Hymn 207, 8.

The last, as woe and sufferings end,
"O God, my Father, I commend
Into Thy hands my spirit:"
Be this, dear Lord, my dying wish;
O heavenly Father, hear it.

TUESDAY.

By his own blood He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. – Hebrew 9:12.

The innermost part of the Temple at Jerusalem, the Holy of Holies, contained the Ark of the Covenant with the tables of the

Law. This Ark of the Covenant was covered with the mercy-seat and the cherubim, between whose extended wings the Shekinah appeared, the cloud which manifested the presence of the glory of the Lord. Into this Holy of Holies, which was shut off from view by a veil, or curtain, no man dared enter, save the high priest, and he only once a year, on the great Day of Atonement, when he bore the typifying blood of atonement. Thereby the Holy Spirit indicated that Christ, the true Atoner, had not yet come and finished His work of atonement. When Jesus died, this great, thick, heavy veil which hung before the Holy of Holies was rent in two from top to bottom by unseen hands. And thereby the Holy Spirit plainly indicated that Christ had now come and had finished His work of atonement, and that *Jesus, the Crucified, is this Christ*.

Yes, Jesus has reconciled us to God; by His own blood He entered in once into the holy place, that is to say, He appeared before God whom we had offended, having obtained eternal salvation for us. And now every sinner can come to God in Jesus' name and cheerfully say: "Abba, Father!" – And something more happened when Jesus died. The earth quaked, the rocks rent, the graves about Jerusalem were opened, and many bodies of the saints of God that slept arose and came out of their graves; and after His resurrection they went into the Holy City, as Jerusalem was called, and appeared unto many. Thereby, too, the Holy Ghost plainly indicated that Christ had now come and had finished His work of atonement and eternal redemption, and that *Jesus, the Crucified, is this Christ*. The earth, this great burying-ground, shall no longer be able to retain us. We who believe in Jesus shall rise, and see one another, and be reunited with one another. And even this old earth, which God has cursed because of our sins, shall become new. The holy seer says: "I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away." (Revelation 21:1.)

PRAYER. – My Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, true High Priest, Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world, I thank You that You have come, and by Your all-propitiating blood did once appear before the face of God, and did obtain eternal salvation for us. I thank You that You did rend the veil of guilt which separated me

from God. I thank You that in Your name I may come unto God and may call Him Father. I thank You that You have procured for me the resurrection from the dead and eternal bliss in heaven. Keep me in true faith, my Lord and Savior! Amen.

Hymn 314, 6.

Since Christ hath full atonement made
And brought to us salvation,
Each Christian therefore may be glad
And build on this foundation;
Thy grace alone, dear Lord, I plead,
Thy death my life now is indeed,
For Thou hast paid my ransom.

WEDNESDAY.

The preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us who are saved it is the power of God.

– 1 Corinthians 1:18.

When the centurion who stood over against the cross of Jesus, and they that were with him and were watching Jesus, saw that He cried out so triumphantly just before giving up the ghost, and when they saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly and glorified God, saying: "Certainly, this was a righteous man! Truly, this was the Son of God!" These people were converted by the Savior's suffering and death. Thereby the Holy Ghost shows that the preaching of the cross, which to them that perish is foolishness, nevertheless is the only power of God to kindle faith in the sinner's heart and through faith to save him. Will you note this well? And all the people that had gathered there, on beholding the things which were done, smote their breasts and returned. Were not these things the beginnings of faith in Jesus, the Crucified?

MAUNDY THURSDAY.

– And afar off stood all the acquaintances of Jesus and many women that had followed Him from Galilee, and beheld these things. Among them were Mary Magdalene, and Mary, the mother of James the Less and of Joses, and Salome, the mother of Zebedee's children (James and John), who had followed Jesus when He was in Galilee, and had ministered unto Him, and many other women that had come up with Him to Jerusalem. All these, with a longing and burning heart, beheld the cross of Jesus and could not turn their eyes away from it, though great temptation besetting them threatened to stifle their faith. Thereby the Holy Ghost would teach us that we who believe in Jesus should always abide with the preaching of the Cross, for this is the only power of God to preserve our faith against every temptation unto a blessed end. The eyes of our faith must be directed toward our Redeemer as He hung upon the accursed tree; otherwise it is an empty show.

PRAYER. – God, Holy Ghost, let me abide with the preaching of the Cross, that my faith may be proved and found steadfast against every temptation. For within this Word is Your divine power, by which alone saving faith can dwell within my heart. Grant me Your grace, O precious Comforter, that my eyes may be ever fixed upon my crucified Redeemer, and that they may rest upon Him when my sight grows dim in my dying hour. Amen.

Hymn 201, 10.

Be Thou my Consolation
And Shield when I must die;
Remind me of Thy passion,
When my last hour draws nigh.
Mine eyes shall then behold Thee,
Upon Thy cross shall dwell,
My heart by faith enfold Thee
Who dieth thus, dies well!

This is He that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth. – 1 John 5:6.

In Deuteronomy 21:22-23 you may read that it was forbidden to let the bodies of hanged criminals remain upon the tree over night, lest the land be defiled. And remember the day on which Christ died was the day preceding the great Easter Sabbath, called Preparation. Therefore the chief council sent to Pilate, and asked him to order the legs of the crucified to be broken and their bodies taken away. So the soldiers broke the legs of the two malefactors who were crucified with Christ. But when they came to Jesus and saw that He was dead already, they did not break His legs; but one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and forthwith there came out blood and water.

The Apostle John was an eyewitness of this. And in his Gospel, where he tells of this occurrence, he says: "And he that saw it bears record, and his record is true, and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe. For these things were done, that the scripture should be fulfilled: 'A bone of Him shall not be broken.' And again another scripture saith: 'They shall look on Him whom they pierced.'" All the details of the death of Jesus proved that He is the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world, prophesied and typified in the Old Testament, and that He is the Christ Jehovah, whom they were to pierce. (Exodus 12:46 & Zechariah 12:10.)

Thus the blood and water that flowed from the cleft side of Jesus is the fountain opened for sin and uncleanness whereof Zechariah prophesies. (Zechariah 13:1.) And this fountain flows for us in Baptism and in the Lord's Supper. For when John says that Christ comes by water and blood, he means by water Baptism and by blood the Lord's Supper. And in the Word, too, which is spirit, the Savior comes to us and makes the fountain flow for us therein. And the Word, which is spirit, convinces us through the divine power of the Spirit dwelling within it that this Word is truth, and so kindles saving faith within us.

PRAYER. – Lord Jesus, who did suffer Your heart to be cleft that from there the fountain might flow which cleanses us from all sin and uncleanness, to the end that we poor sinners may stand before God righteous and be saved, I give thanks to You that You do cause this fountain to flow freely in the Word, in Baptism and in Holy Communion. Grant me Your Holy Ghost, dear Savior, that I may always eagerly seek Your salvation in these means of grace, in order that I may inherit life eternal which You have purchased for me at so great a price. Amen.

Hymn 436, 6.

Lord, I believe in simple trust,
Strength in my weakness give me,
For I am naught but sinful dust,
Nor of Thy Word bereave me!
Thy Baptism, Supper, and Thy Word.
My consolation are, O Lord,
For they contain my treasure.

GOOD FRIDAY.

Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers and shut thy doors about thee; hide thyself, as it were, for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast. – *Isaiah 26:20.*

Jesus had died upon the cross. What did they do with His body? – In Jerusalem there lived a member of the chief council named Joseph of Arimathea, a city of the Jews. He had not consented to the counsel and deed of them, for he was a good and just man, and waited for the kingdom of Christ; indeed, he was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly, for fear of the Jews. He went boldly to Pilate and besought him that he might take the body of Jesus from the cross. And Pilate marveled if He were already dead; and calling unto him the centurion, he asked him whether He had been any while dead. And when he knew it, he commanded the body of Jesus to be delivered unto Joseph. And Joseph bought fine linen for the burial of Jesus.

And there came also Nicodemus, who at the first came to Jesus by night, and brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pound weight. After they had taken the body of Jesus down, they wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, and wound it in linen clothes with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury. Now, nigh to Golgotha there was a garden and in the garden a new sepulcher, a tomb that belonged to Joseph, which he had hewn out of a rock, wherein was never man yet laid. There then laid they Jesus because the Jews' Preparation Day drew to a close. Soon it was six o'clock, the great Paschal Sabbath was drawing nigh. This place, however, was near at hand. And they rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulcher and departed. Mary Magdalene and Mary, the mother of Joses, also were there, sitting over against the sepulcher; other women also who came with Jesus from Galilee beheld how and where His body was laid. Then they likewise departed, and prepared spices and ointments to anoint the body of Jesus. And they rested the Sabbath day according to the law.

Thus the Savior was also laid in the grave for us, and hence the grave has lost its terrors for us. For us Christians it is to be a chamber where we are to sleep, and where no man will be able to wake us. There we shall be hidden, as it were, for a little moment; there we shall rest in peace until the wrath of God against the wicked world will be overpast.

PRAYER. – Merciful and kind Heavenly Father, who did cause Your Son to die and be buried for my sin, grant that in true faith I may be united with my Savior, and ever remain so, that by virtue of His death my death may become a blessed sleep, that by His grave my grave may be sanctified, and that, lastly, I may rise again unto everlasting joy, through the same, Your dear Son, Jesus Christ, my Lord. Amen.

Hymn 216, 2. 4. 5.

After Thy strife, | Life of my life,
Thou'rt in the tomb reposing,
Round Thee now a rock-hewn grave,
Rock of Ages, closing.

Breath of all breath! | I know from death
Thou wilt my dust awaken;
Wherefore should I dread the grave,
Or my faith be shaken?

To me the tomb | Shall be a room
Where I lie down on roses;
Who by faith hath conquered death,
Sweetly there reposes.

SATURDAY.

Neither wilt Thou suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption.
– *Psalm 16:10.*

On the day that followed the day of Preparation, hence on Easter Sabbath, the chief priests and Pharisees came together to Pilate, saying: "Sir, we remember what that deceiver said while He was yet alive: After three days I will rise again. Command therefore that the sepulcher be made sure until the third day, lest His disciples come by night, and steal Him away, and say unto the people: He is risen from the dead, so the last error shall be worse than the first." Pilate said to them: "Ye have a watch; go your way, make it as sure as you can." So they went and made the sepulcher sure, setting a watch and sealing the stone with the seal of the Chief Council. Troubled by secret unrest, they wanted to make altogether sure of keeping Jesus, whom they hated so bitterly, in death, grave, decay, and corruption, and relegate Him to utter oblivion. But here is God's prophecy concerning Christ: "Neither wilt Thou suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption." God kept Christ's body in the grave without corruption. Death and the grave had not swallowed up and overpowered Christ, but Christ had conquered death and the grave. Soon this became evident. It shall become fully evident to all the world on the Day of Judgment.

Also the present-day pharisaical and sadducean enemies of Christ, who fill so many pulpits and chairs of learning and seats of church-government, and would keep Christ in the grave, shall be utterly confounded: God will make them His footstool, and they shall wail and confess that the Holy One of God did not see corruption. But you, O Christian and child of God, do look upon the buried Savior with altogether different eyes: confess that He is your Substitute who bears your sin and suffers your death and your burial, and conquers it all for you, that you may live in righteousness and blessedness forever.

PRAYER. – Lord Jesus, I thank You that You did take my sin upon Yourself and into the grave, and did bury it there, and did procure for me eternal rest. You – Conqueror of sin and death and grave - grant that henceforth I may not stand in dread of my grave, but that in the knowledge of You may gladly enter my chamber, knowing that I am a partaker of Your victory – You who have abolished the terrors of the grave. Amen.

Hymn 215, 8.

O Jesus blest, | My Help and Rest,
With tears I now entreat Thee:
Make me love Thee to the last,
Till in heaven I greet Thee.

These devotions are adapted from *Crumbs* by C. M. Zorn (1914).
The hymn stanzas are from *Evangelical Lutheran Hymn-Book* (1918).
The illustration is from *The Doré Bible Gallery* (circa 1885).
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