

# "The Cleansing Blood of Jesus" -- 1 John 1:5-10

Our Redeemer Lutheran Church -- March 17, 1998

Memorial Service for Ernie Gunter

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Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Dear family members of Ernie, friends, neighbors, members of the family of God here at Our Redeemer, and especially you, Velma,

On this day when your hearts are saddened with the great loss you have been called to endure and which you have experienced, may the comfort of God's Word be yours as you hear about what God in Christ has done for Ernie and what God in Christ has done, and will do, for you, if like Ernie, you trust in Him. As you are well aware, Ernie died either from leukemia or complications arising from that disease associated with the blood.

Blood is one of the main themes of the Holy Scriptures running like a red thread and weaving through the pages from Genesis to the final book of the Bible. The first reference to blood is made when the innocent animal is slain in order to provide an adequate covering for Adam and Eve's guilt and shame. The last reference is of the risen, triumphant, victorious Lord Jesus in Revelation 19, where His robe is dipped in blood. In between these two references, a great deal of blood is shed -- some bad blood and some good blood.

May the words of 1 John 1:5-10 be a comfort to you this day and in the days that follow - for as many days as the Lord allots you in this fallen world. Please listen to those words of the Scriptures under the theme of ...

... *The Cleansing Blood of Jesus*

*This is the message we have heard from Him and proclaim to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say we have fellowship with Him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not live according to the truth; but if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the Blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just, and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His Word is not in us.*

Thus far the Word of the LORD our God.

The Scriptures reveal to us that life is in the blood. What the Bible has revealed thousands of years ago has been discovered by the medical community in the last few centuries - life is in the blood. It seems that one of the first things that a doctor has done in order to determine what is going on with a

person is a blood test ... sometimes, many blood tests. That certainly was the situation with Ernie and the results of the blood tests indicated that Ernie had some terrible things taking place in his body. You might even say, that he had some bad blood.

That, of course, is not unique to Ernie ... we all, in one way or another, have bad blood. In addition to diseased blood that leads to death, there are blood feuds that people have. Cain rose up against his brother and killed him. Abel's blood cried out to the Lord from the ground, seeking vengeance for the sin committed. Judas betrayed Jesus and, in an attempt to ease his conscience, sought to return the 30 pieces of silver to the temple. However, it was blood money and therefore, not appropriate for use in the church. So, the religious leaders bought a cemetery with it, buried strangers in it. The plot of ground was named "The Field of Blood".

We can be sitting in a hospital room one minute sitting on the edge of the bed, eating a bowl of corn flakes, and making jokes about purchasing a Ford or a Chevrolet as Ernie was doing last Thursday morning, and be on a ventilator that same evening because our blood is not able to process oxygen and expel the carbon dioxide. Bad blood, blood feuds, diseased blood, and ground cursed by the shedding of blood is a result of our sinful condition and life in this sin-infested world. While life is in the blood, the blood that pumps through our veins is only good for a few days, for several months, or a limited number of years. We attempt to wriggle out from this connection between death and sin, but the Word of God pins us to the truth. As the Apostle John wrote, *If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.* To make sure that we understand this is the situation for each one of us, he repeats it, *If we say we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His Word is not in us.*

So, what do we do? Too often we try to fix the problem ourselves, denying that we are sick and trying some home remedies. When that fails and we our condition worsens, we go to the doctor. On Friday evening I visited Ernie and noted that he had two units of whole blood hung on the IV pole and being given to him intravenously. Was that the solution? The life is in the blood and now Ernie was getting blood that someone else had given. What good did it do him? Without it, he might have died that Friday. With the blood, he would live longer, but how much longer? Less than 24 hours. Blood from another human being was but a band-aid.

The solution, the remedy, the cure had to come from someone else. On that Friday evening he opened his eyes slightly and he heard the Invocation as we began in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. He heard the Christian faith in the words of the Apostles' Creed. He listened to the 23rd Psalm and took comfort in the Lord's Prayer. Ernie heard the words of the *Benedicamus* -- "Lord, now let Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy Word." He was preparing to depart in peace. Finally, he listened to the *Benediction* -- "The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make His face shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace."

He was reaching out and seeking the comfort of God's Word. His IV-laden hand reached out through the rail of the hospital bed and was held until he fell asleep. How could he have peace at such a time when he knew he was dying? The answer is a simple one. He looked to the Lord Jesus and trusted in Him. He looked to the cross and saw the Author of Life dying for His sins, and not for Ernie's sins only, but for the sins of the whole world -- yours and mine included. He beheld the crucified Savior with His holy, precious Blood being shed for him, for you, and for me. There, dear people, there is the Good News for you today from God: *The Blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.*

Or as we will sing in a moment:

Abel's blood for vengeance, Pleaded to the skies;

But the Blood of Jesus, For our pardon cries.

Glory be to Jesus, Who in bitter pains,

Poured for me the LifeBlood, From His sacred veins.

On the cross the eternal Son of God had loaded upon Him the guilt, the penalty, and the Divine reaction against all your sins. On that cruel, accursed tree at Golgotha, He was betrayed by man, He was assaulted by the forces of the devil, and He was forsaken by God. In our place, He suffered the pangs of hell so that you might never have to spend a second in that lake of fire. In our place, He died the horrible death that separates from God so that you and I might never have to experience that death at all, but that, at the instant our hearts stop beating for the last time, we will enter into eternal paradise as Ernie has and be with God forever.

Ernie is there and it's not because of who Ernie was or what Ernie did. It's because of what Jesus did and who Jesus was and is. Indeed, *the Blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin*. It's because our Lord Jesus, Who died for us, also rose again, defeating the devil, our sin, and death itself. That is the Good News for you, today, Velma, and God calls you and the rest of us to hear this Good News and believe in it and trust in it and to bear fruit that befits repentance. *If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just, and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

On Thursday, arrangements were made for Ernie to receive the Lord's Supper during the next visit. He desired to partake of that holy meal where Jesus declared not only, *This is My Body*, but *This is My Blood*. Because of his rapidly declining physical condition and being put on a ventilator, he was not able to receive the Body and Blood of Jesus in Communion. Instead, he entered the joy of his Lord and the heavenly banquet that is now his.

So, who are you here today? Are you someone who has never heard the message of Christianity before? Well, please be assured that *the Blood of Jesus ... cleanses you from all sin*. Are you a person who has wandered away from the Lord and His Church. If so, please know that *the Blood of Jesus ... cleanses you from all sin*. If you are one who has never wandered from the faith and who has remained faithful in your attendance at the Divine Services and the Lord's Supper, then thank God and know that *the Blood of Jesus ... cleanses you from all sin*. For all of us, the Bible declares, *If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just, and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

Please hear the words of the sermon text once more and, the one who has ears to hear, let that one listen carefully.

*This is the message we have heard from Him and proclaim to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say we have fellowship with Him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not live according to the truth; but if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the Blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just, and will*

*forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His Word is not in us.*

Amen.