

Lutheran Church of the Master
580 Kuhn Road, Carol Stream, Illinois 60188
Curt Gerald, Interim Pastor

April 2, 2010

Good Friday

"Tetelestai"

John 19:30 (New International Version)

³⁰When he had received the drink, Jesus said, "It is finished." With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

ΚΑΤΑ ΙΩΑΝΝΗΝ 19:30 (1881 Westcott-Hort New Testament)

³⁰οτε ουν ελαβεν το οξος [ο] ιησους ειπεν **ΤΕΤΕΛΕΣΤΑΙ** και κλινας την κεφαλην παρεδωκεν το πνευμα

The Bible says that Jesus said: "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." (John 15:13)

Tonight I am basing my sermon on that hymn from our childhood ... a very simple hymn ... that says "Jesus Love me, this I know ... for the Bible tells me so." And the second stanza of that song says:

Jesus love me! He who died
Heaven's gate to open wide!
He will wash away my sin,
Let His little child come in.

That is what this day is about, you know. You may be disappointed to hear it stated so simply ... after all, this is a children's song ... and so it is ... for it is a song to be sung by all God's children.

I remember Dr. Rozenhales at Luther Theological Seminary in St. Paul ... a learned man with several earned doctorates ... who when his wife

died made it clear that the song that must be sung was this one because of its clear theology ... and so this gathering of the theologically astute sang this wonderfully powerfully simple song ... *Jesus Loves Me*.

And the Bible does tell us that this Jesus died ... that is what this the second day of the Triduum is about ... the Jesus who commanded his disciples to love each other and the whole world and commanded his disciples to share this meal often together until he returns ... this same Jesus died on our behalf ... gave his life in exchange for ours ... because he loves us so.

To borrow a phrase from Calvin Miller, in his book *Jesus Loves Me*, we might say that Jesus "rewrote my autobiography" by taking my place as the defendant in order that I might become a witness to what he has done!

And defendants we are ... according to this Bible ... for it says again and again that we "are by nature sinful and unclean." In a court of law, we would be declared *GUILTY* as charged. But the court we stand before is the Court of Heaven ... and God is the judge ... and after all the evidence has been submitted ... when the Judge asks the defendant to stand for the judgment, Jesus takes our place and says: "Sit down ... I'm here in your place" ... and God looks at his Son with sadness and says: "DEATH!" And we are set free ... and he is taken off to death row.

Next Friday I'm going on retreat with our 8th Grade Confirmands ... that day is April 9 ... on this day the Church remembers Dietrich Bonhoeffer ... next Friday night we're going to talk about this simple yet powerfull German theologian who resisted the Nazis in World War II Germany and was hanged for his faith inspired activism in 1945 at the age of 39.

You may have read his *Cost of Discipleship*, first published in 1937. If you have read his book, you may remember that he starts by talking about "Costly Grace." He wrote: "Cheap grace is the deadly enemy of our Church. We are fighting today for costly grace. ... Cheap grace is the preaching for forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without church discipline, Communion without confession, absolution without personal confession. Cheap grace is graced without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate.

Costly grace is the treasure hidden in the field; for the sake of it a man will gladly go and sell all that he has ... the call of Jesus Christ at which the disciple leaves his nets and follows him ... costly because it calls us to follow, and it is grace because it calls us to follow Jesus Christ. It is costly because it costs a man his life, and it is grace because it gives a man the only true life ... Above all, it is costly because it cost God the life of his Son ... grace because God did not reckon his Son too dear a price to pay for our life."

In a Passiontide devotional at the Technical University in Berlin in 1932, he had said: "We are the Church beneath the cross, that is, in disguise. Yet here as well, all we can do is realized that our kingdom, too, is not of this world."

For those of us who believe, because the Bible tells us so, that this world is not the kingdom ... that there is another place where God is ... even though God is also here and now ... the cross becomes the open doorway into the eternity of God's presence!

In our service this evening, we celebrate the Cross. That is not to say it is a rip-roaring party with hats and balloons and noise makers ... though it could be ... but it is a time to celebrate ... to say THANKS for taking my place ... to hear the Scriptures and to sing some songs and to reflect on the meaning of the Cross.

And it all is a gift given to us in one gracious word that flows from our Savior's lips in the Gospel of John ... that word is TETELESTAI ... which means ... "it is finished." The IT is salvation ... yours and mine. The way it is finished is through what Jesus did there.

Cheap ... never! Grace ... ever!

Costly? Of course ... from God's point of view.

Free? That too ... from where we sit.