

Palm/Passion Luke
April 10, 2022

Grace and peace be with you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

There is only thing that I want you to remember from today's sermon – For You! Say it with me – For you!

Everything that Jesus does is for you! And that you is plural. For you all!

You may or may not realize that all four Gospels tell the Passion with slight differences.

In the Gospel of Luke, it is of utmost importance that you know that all Jesus does is for you! You all! All of you. All of us.

So, in Luke you will notice that Jesus is never abandoned. People, the disciples, and the crowds stick with Jesus through all of it.

As Jesus is led to the place of the skull, it's not just the women who follow, but disciples and crowds of people.

As Jesus is crucified, his followers watch on from a distance.

In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus is never alone, except in the tomb, on the Sabbath.

For Luke, it is super import that we know that all that Jesus does is for all of us – all of us – even Barabbas, the thief on the neighboring cross, and those who had him killed – Romans, religious leaders, and the people who shouted “crucify him!” It's even for the Centurion, the face of oppression, who comes to realize Jesus' true identity as he watches Jesus die.

For you! All that Jesus does is for you – for us! For everyone.

And it is really important to remember here on Passion Sunday that Jesus' death is not for God. It's not a sacrifice to pay God back or appease God's anger. Jesus dies for you – for us – for everyone – as a means of entering our story and then flipping it upside down. Violence is not the answer.

Life and love are, as evidenced in his Last Supper that Jesus was really excited to share with his disciples. It was the Passover meal. The meal that was for them.

As you may recall, the Passover is the celebration of the Angel of Death passing over the homes of the Israelites before Moses led the people out of Egypt. Death passed over the Israelites, and everyone who was with them in their homes where the blood of the lamb was painted on the frame of their door posts.

Now, the Passover lamb was not a sacrifice in the general understanding of sacrifice, because the lamb wasn't given to God. It didn't go up in smoke. No – the lamb was given to the people and the people ate the lamb. It was a gift given to the people from God so that they could be strengthened to leave slavery.

That is the meal that Jesus is eagerly celebrating with his disciples before his death on the cross – a meal of freedom – freedom from slavery, freedom from captivity. The lamb was given to the people to physically strengthen them for their march out of bondage.

Given for you. The lamb is given for you.

Jesus ties the Passover meal of freedom into the Last Supper where Jesus tells us – do this in remembrance of me – do this to remember what God has done - just like the Israelites were told to keep the Passover in remembrance of their freedom. So, we keep the Eucharist and we remember our freedom, freedom from the fear of sin and death, which is given for us in Jesus' life, death, and resurrection.

Jesus is given for you – for us, and the Eucharist is for you and all people to remember God's greatest act of love that completely sets us free from the captivity of death and the slavery of sin. Death has no hold over us. Sin has no hold over us. Because Jesus' life, death, and resurrection are for us.

The Passover meal has two functions. It is to remind the Jewish people of what God had done and to give them hope. God has set them free in the past and God will set them free again.

In the Eucharist, we are reminded that we are completely and totally set free from sin and death as we are reminded of God's mighty act of resurrection. And we are also strengthened in this meal to live as Christ in the world – to give of ourselves for the wellbeing of others. We become the “for you” to the world.

If you remember one thing today, remember that Jesus' life, death, and resurrection are not to appease God's anger or wrath. The crucifixion is not pointed at God at all, because that would actually be selfish.

God is the Holy Trinity after all – Father, Son, Holy Spirit. God is giving God’s self for you, not for God’s self. That makes sense, right? You can’t give yourself to yourself, right? And as Jesus heads to the cross Heaven is at peace, because it’s for you.

For you – for all of the yous – all of us. God does everything for humanity. All that God does is for you.

As we celebrate Holy Communion, keep in mind that in this meal we are remembering God’s unconditional love and we are being strengthened so that we can be God’s “for you” in the world.

Together, we are the body of Christ living for others. Filled with confidence and hope, we live the “for you” – not the “for me” – but the “for you” plural. When we share in this Meal with Jesus, we become his presence for the sake of the world.

This meal right here is actually a covert operation. Covert in that it’s not what some people think it is. It’s not about our salvation, salvation is already ours, it was sealed to our foreheads in baptism. This is all about the “for you” of the other.

It’s not for me. It’s given to me, but it’s for everyone else.

As Christ lives, dies, is resurrected, and sits at God’s right hand for us, we live the “for you” here and now, joined as one by the Holy Spirit to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ – the one who leads us in the way of unconditional love, feeding us and strengthening us right here at this table as we remember what God has done and is doing in us right now.

It’s good news, not good history.

This is how we live in hope and defiance to the ways of a selfish world.

This is all for us to be able to say as Jesus does – this gift is for you.

Say it with me again – For you.

Thanks be to God. Amen.