

## Good Friday

April 3, 2026



*So Christ is now crucified and hangs on the cross as the worst thief, scoundrel, rebel, and murderer who has ever been on earth; and the innocent Lamb, Christ, must bear and pay for someone else's guilt. For it applies to us: those are our sins that burden His neck. We are this kind of sinners... for even if we are not all so coarse as to carry them out in deed, we are still guilty of them before God.*

—Martin Luther—

*Sermons on the Gospel of John, LW 69*

### PROCLAMATION POINTS

*The following are some thoughts and questions to be used for a text study on the weekly lessons, or for jump-starting the imagination of the preacher and hearer in preparing for the proclamation event.*

#### First Reading: Isaiah 52:13–53:12

Luther said that this reading from Isaiah is the “foremost passage on the suffering and resurrection of Christ, and there is hardly another like it” (LW 17:215). The Suffering Servant endured all sorts of violence against him, and yet he did not retaliate. In fact, he kept his mouth shut; he remained quiet in his forsakenness and affliction. Isaiah maintained that we are all sheep who have gone astray from the Shepherd, but it was precisely the Shepherd Servant who was the lamb led to the slaughter to bear our sin.

- *What sort of emotions arise for you as you read this passage?*
- *Isaiah said that the servant will be lifted high and greatly exalted. How does this reflect Jesus being lifted up on the cross? Where is the exaltation?*

#### Psalm 22

The psalmist cried out to God in anguish, “Why have you forsaken me?” He was consumed by the closeness of his death and was inconsolable in his utter abandonment. Jesus would cry out these same words from the cross of Calvary as the last breaths of life left his stricken body (Mk 15:34; Mt 27:46).

- *Have you ever felt completely forsaken by someone? By God? What was that like and how did you make it through?*
- *What's the difference between feeling forsaken and being forsaken? Is the difference important here?*

#### Second Reading: Hebrews 4:14–16; 5:8–9

The author of Hebrews taught that Christ learned obedience through his great suffering. This high priest of ours understands what it is like to be human, with all of the temptations and distractions that keep us from a life of faithfulness to God. Yet, this One who suffered and died a shameful death was perfectly sinless and made himself the source of our eternal life in God.

- *Obedience can be a “bad word” in our culture. How do we learn obedience to God through the trials and suffering we experience?*
- *How is Christ our “help and refuge” in this life, especially in the face of trials?*

#### Gospel Reading: John 18:1–19:42

As Peter pulled out a sword and cut off the ear of the high priest's slave, Jesus chastised him and commanded him to

put his sword back in its sheath. “Shall I not drink of the cup that my Father has given me?” Jesus asked. All along, Jesus and his disciples freely ate and drank together along with those whom no one else wanted to dine. This partaking of the bread and cup were signs of the coming kingdom of God, of the salvation that was at hand.

Jesus' ministry was characterized by eating, drinking and feeding the poor, proclaiming the coming wedding feast, doing miracles of bread and fish, and instituting Holy Communion at the Last Supper. For Jesus, taking the cup was part of his lot in this human life. Whether it was positive or negative, in judgment or in grace and favor, Jesus would not deny the cup that he was given. It was his fate. It was his legacy and he would not deny it or walk away from it.

- *In what ways does God show mercy and grace in the many feeding stories of the Bible?*
- *How does Jesus' drinking of the cup indicate his acceptance of the suffering he is about to endure?*
- *How is our Christian life also a drinking of this same cup as Jesus drank from?*

While questioning Jesus, Pilate asked a question that pointed to the very truth of who Jesus was and what he was doing. “What is truth?” Pilate wasn't particularly interested in the answer to his question; he didn't even wait for a response. The question of truth continues to linger. In every generation the church faces challenges to the truth of the Gospel. Through heresies, other religions, scientific discoveries, and scholarly pursuits, the church regularly finds itself trying to find ways to speak the truth of the Gospel in the face of such challenges. Something we too often forget in these attempts is that the truth is not simply a set of propositions or facts. The truth is a person — Jesus Christ. The truth was standing in front of Pilate, but Pilate couldn't see him. Pilate didn't belong to the truth.

The truth dwells in our midst, making himself known through the Holy Spirit. The truth of the Gospel is not that Christians have the best arguments and have an answer to every challenge. The truth of the Gospel is that this man, Jesus Christ, is God in the flesh, accomplishing God's will among us. Faith, then, is not being convinced that the Gospel story is most likely accurate. Rather, faith — saving faith — is the result of the self-revelation of the One who is the Truth grabbing hold of us, whom he has chosen.

- *How does this understanding of Jesus himself as Truth push against the ways we try to prove that something is true?*