

# Ascension Lutheran Church

Pastor Godkin's Sermon for the week of March 28, 20 10

## Life Turns Out Differently Through Christ—Thanks Beto God! (Luke 23:18-25)

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Our text is from the 23<sup>rd</sup> chapter of the Gospel according to St. Luke:

<sup>18</sup>With one voice they cried out, "Away with this man! Release Barabbas!"  
<sup>19</sup>(Barabbas had been thrown into prison for an insurrection in the city, and for murder.)  
<sup>20</sup>Wanting to release Jesus, Pilate appealed to them for a gain. <sup>21</sup>But they kept shouting, "Crucify him! Crucify him!" <sup>22</sup>For the third time he spoke to them: "Why? What crime has this man committed? I have found in him no grounds for the death penalty. Therefore I will have him punished and then release him." <sup>23</sup>But with loud shouts they insistently demanded that he be crucified, and their shouts prevailed. <sup>24</sup>So Pilate decided to grant their demand. <sup>25</sup>Here he released the man who had been thrown into prison for insurrection and murder, the one they asked for, and surrendered Jesus to their will.

This is the text.

Dear friends in Christ, His mother, Mary, stood at a distance, watching as his body was taken down from the cross and wrapped in a finely woven linen shroud. As the sturdy white fabric enveloped his lifeless remains, she timed to look upon her Son one last time. His head and body already covered by the cloth, all that remained visible were his hands, feet, and face. As she looked upon them, they revealed the intensity of the suffering he had endured.

Rigid and stiff, they lay folded across his chest, above the wrists, unbearably large gashes could be seen—the place where the nails had dripped open a hole in his flesh. The deep, dark red of his wounds looked all the more shockingly real against the impressively white and soft of the burial cloth.

Consumed with sorrow, grief, and pain, Mary turned away from that dreadful image, certain those nails had ruined her life. Life, you see, doesn't always turn out the way you might expect.

Just a few days before, it had all been so different. Riding confidently into town, seated on a donkey, thousands of people waved palm branches and cheered his name. With great enthusiasm, they cried aloud, "Hosanna! Bless the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!" (Mk 11:9–10). The excitement, the energy, the passion for her Son was like nothing she had ever seen.

But then, suddenly, everything changed. He was betrayed, arrested, put on trial, and nailed to that terrible cross. Her hopes and dreams now shattered, she had nothing left except the haunting image of his stiff and rigid hands, feet, and face. The unbearable large gashes, the deep, dark red of his wounds. Those nails, you see, had ruined her life. Life doesn't always turn out the way you might expect.

The older and older you get, the more you discover how true that statement is. The excitement, the energy, the wonder you experience as a child slowly fades away, leaving you with the mundane routine of bills, work, and family obligations. As you grow

up, you come to learn that the hopes and dreams of fulfilled.

We spend our lives thinking, if only my marriage we make a little more money; if only my children were just a little more attractive—then I would be happy all too often, loving marriages grow cold, exciting their way, and youthful bodies grow old. And then, strikes. Suffering, disease, and death disrupt our slumber and causing us to cry out in despair.

“Why, God, would you allow this to happen? Why, God full of sorrow and pain and hurt?” These are the

These are the ultimate questions that can be answered by Jesus Christ. For as we will soon celebrate at the after he died, Jesus rose again from the dead and appeared in the Upper Room where they had been hiding. His mother,

Strong and full of life, Jesus raised his arms into all to see. Incredibly, just above both wrists, the been seen, except now they looked—somehow—beautiful. awe, Mary stared at his wounds, realizing in that moment that life after all—the nail had saved her life.

Friends, if you walk in His Word now you will surely gaze upon his nail-scarred hands, you, too, will have ruined your life as actually used by God to do something that has caused you sorrow will not simply be an everlasting source of joy. You will realize that it is true and that most assuredly, “All things work together for the good of those who love God.” Your cries of pain will one day be transformed

For now, our sufferings may seem to be the undoing since Christ bears those scars for us, through the present suffering will one day be transformed into glory. In Romans 8, “I consider our present sufferings not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed to us.”

Life, you see, doesn't always turn out the way we expect. The peace of God that surpasses all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

your youth never quite seem to be

real little bit better; if only I could be a little more successful; if only I were . Then I would finally be content. But career sturn dull, gifted children lose when we least expect it, tragedy humdrum lives, waking us from our

, does life always have to be so timate questions we all must face.

too only in light of the cross of end of this Holy Week, a few days ppeared before his disciples in the Mary, was there as well.

the air; his hands opened wide, inviting large gashes left by the nails could still Filled with wonder, joy, and oment that the nail hadn't ruined her

stand before the Lord in glory, realize that everything you thought veit. In that moment, every single forgotten, but will become for you an eScripture of Romans 8:28 is indeed the for the good of those who love d into endless songs of praise.

go for everything we hope for. But cross, we can be confident that our everlasting joy. For as St. Paul wrote worth comparing with the glory that

xpect. Thanks be to God. Amen. The your hearts and minds in Christ