

Good Friday A, 2011

Text: John 18:1 – 19:42

Title: Blood and Water

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Blood and water.

There are so many images to consider in St. John's passion.

Jesus in the garden- flashing swords and falling ears, the words, "I Am" no match for the torches and weapons.

Jesus before the High Priest, speaking openly and plainly, receiving no answer except a slap across the face.

Jesus before Pilate, talking of kings and truth, and the priests intent to keep the Passover even while handing over the firstborn Son to the angels of death.

Jesus the King, clothed in purple and crowned with the thorns whose seed Adam had sown in paradise.

Jesus before the crowd, hearing them praise Caesar and ask for Barabbas rather than lifting their voices to acclaim their true King.

Jesus at the place of death- skulls and criminals, nailed to the tree.

Jesus hanging naked, while the soldiers play games for His clothes.

Jesus caring for His mother and His disciple, putting them together in one family.

Jesus, thirsting, with a dirty sponge pressed to the doors of His lips, lifted by the hyssop that had painted the thresholds of Israel with the blood of the Lamb.

Jesus bowing His head in obedience, giving up His spirit, laying down His life for the sheep.

And then...

Blood and water. The Rock of Ages has been cleft, with the water and the blood flowing from His riven side.

There's one picture that St. John wants you to hold onto.

Blood and water.

Only one time in the course of the passion does St. John talk to you. Not just to the people of his day and age, but to you, directly to you. Only here, at this point in the story, with the blood and water.

John says, “He who saw it has borne witness— his testimony is true, and he knows that he is telling the truth— that you also may believe.”

Most likely, John is the witness. He was there. He is the telling the truth. His words are trustworthy.

John writes these words for you.

“That you also may believe.”

That’s you. These words are for you. St. John wants you to believe, too.

To believe what? That Jesus was truly dead, and the blood and water flow from His side, and that His blood and water have saved you.

Blood and water.

Jesus said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. ⁵⁴Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. ⁵⁵For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. ⁵⁶Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him.

Jesus’ blood is not ordinary blood.

God’s people were forbidden from drinking blood. The life was in the blood, and the life belonged to God, so they were not to eat meat that still had its blood.

But Jesus changes that.

Jesus’ blood is different. Jesus’ blood gives life, everlasting life, and He invites you to drink His blood. Jesus gives His blood and even His flesh for the life of the world.

For us, blood is something nasty, to be avoided. Blood bears disease and illness. Most of us have lived through the AIDS scare of the 1980s and 90s. Our blood is not good. It’s full of disease and death.

Jesus’ blood is different. Jesus’ blood infuses you with His life. Jesus is your blood-brother and your life is joined to His.

The people of Jerusalem cried out for Jesus’ blood to be on them and their children. They spoke better than they knew. The blood of Jesus is on your head, on your hands, and in your heart. And that’s a good thing.

In the Old Testament, blood especially was used for cleansing. The OT rituals used lots of blood, sprinkled and splashed all over the place – on the ground, on the holy things, and even on the people.

Jesus blood cleanses you once and for all. The blood of Jesus cleanses you from all sin.

"These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation. They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

Blood and water.

First the blood, then the water.

Jesus said, "'Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again,¹⁴ but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life," and, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink.³⁸ Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'"

From Jesus flows the living water. Water of new life, new birth. Jesus' water leaves you satisfied, refreshed, never needing drink again.

God had provided water to His people in the wilderness, even as they complained and sinned against Him. He provided water from a rock to quench their thirst.

And now He does so again- water from the Rock, flowing to those wandering in the wilderness of sin and death, making it a paradise, Eden restored. Even here at Golgotha the living water flows. And it doesn't stop here.

¹Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb ²through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. ³No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him.

Blood and water.

That's why you are here today. Not just to hear about Jesus' death long ago. You already know the story well.

You are here because Jesus' death means something for you. Jesus' death has touched you. Jesus' death has changed you. Jesus' death has enlivened you through the blood and water.

The water from Jesus' side has flowed to you in Holy Baptism. In Holy Baptism you were joined to the death of Jesus Christ. The water has flowed from Golgotha to the font.

In the waters of Holy Baptism you were crucified and buried with Jesus Christ. In Holy Baptism the cross is used to crucify your old Adam, so that a new person is born. Jesus said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God."

The blood from Jesus' side has flowed to you in the Lord's Supper. In the Lord's Supper you drink the very blood of Christ. The blood has flowed from Golgotha to the altar.

In the Lord's Supper, Jesus' blood cleanses you from the inside out.

In the church of Ss. Peter and Paul, in Weimar, Germany, there hangs a painting by Lucas Cranach directly behind the altar, a friend and contemporary of Martin Luther.

In the center of the painting is Christ on the cross. Next to Jesus are three people.

The first is John the Baptist, who points to Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

Next to John is a self-portrait of the artist himself. A stream of blood from Jesus side flows directly down on Cranach's head.

And next to the artist stands Martin Luther with his Bible open to John 1:7, "The blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin."

It has. It does. It will.

And the water, too.

It's true, it's trustworthy, it really happened.

Happy Good Friday.