

“The Blessed Exchange”

1I Corinthians 5:21; Isaiah 53:5-6

Sermon for Good Friday 2019

Emmanuel Lutheran Church, Rifle, Colorado

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The question this evening is this: what is God going to do? He must punish transgression of His commandments, that is, He must punish sin. He must punish the arrogance, selfishness, and nastiness of sin. If He does not, then He is complicit with it, agrees with it. But God could never do that.

But here is the problem. Sin has corrupted us. We are not holy and righteous by nature.

If God punishes the sinner for sin, the sinner dies, completely, eternally. The sinner will then be lost in relation to God.

God does not want this to happen, because God is love (1 John 4:8).

What is love? It is willing and doing the good for the other, without any regard for whether it will be of benefit to oneself. God wills and does the good for us, always. God is love by nature. God cannot deny Himself.

So He does not want the sinner to die. He does not want to lose the sinner. But He must put the sinner to death on account of sin. Who would not fear Him?

So again, what is God to do?

We see God’s answer on display this evening, as we see the death of Jesus. Someone must die for sin. But this cannot be the sinner, if the sinner is to belong to God.

So God the Father says, “I will send my Son to become a human being. I will place all human sin on Him. I will set the sinner free from condemnation. I will see the sinner in the righteousness of My Son.”

God the Son says, “I love My Father. I will heed His call. I love Adam and his children. I created them and breathed life into them. I will go for them. I will become a human being. I will bear the sin of all. I will suffer God’s holy wrath against all sin. I will give my righteousness to the sinner. I will die that the sinner may live. I will die so that the sinner can be my brother”

And so God willed it. And so it was done. And so we remember this evening.

Your sin, my sin, all sin, is taken off our shoulders and placed on Jesus. His righteousness is given to us. The Father calls His own Son, sin. The Father calls the sinner, you and I, righteous and claims us as His own.

God made Him who knew no sin to be sin in our place, so that we become the righteousness of God in Him, says the Apostle Paul (2 Corinthians 5:21).

The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all, says the Prophet (Isaiah 53:5-6).

This is amazing. Amazing grace. This is the blessed exchange. By it we are reconciled to God. God has made the way of peace.

For those who admit their sin and long for freedom from its power and condemnation, this blessed exchange is pure life. For those who don’t, for those who are convinced that they are not that bad, and that they are doing just fine on their own, they must deal with God apart from this blessed exchange.

But this exchange does not happen in the abstract. God does not punish sin in the abstract. We realize this when we feel the fear of God’s wrath. Jesus being made sin in our place takes on an awful concrete reality. This reality is on display in the crucifixion and death of Jesus.

But just so, the Son’s triumph of life over death is not an abstract thing. It also happened in

concrete reality. Its reality will be on display two days from now, when Jesus lives again. Its reality will be on display one day when Jesus returns and raises our bodies from the grave.

But first, God's love must make atonement for the sinner's sin. He must take the burden of His wrath off the sinner's shoulders. He must take the burden upon Himself. Jesus must die under the awful burden of God's wrath. Jesus must go to the cross.

It is awful in what Jesus suffered. It is wonderful in what God was doing. It looks like death and disaster. It looks like the triumph of the power of darkness. But it is God's triumph over that power in redeeming sacrifice. It is our life and redemption. We grieve with a repentant sorrow over what our sin requires of Jesus. We worship with a deep and reverent awe and joy, as Jesus willingly takes from us a burden we could never bear.

So we trust Him and love Him. We would live for Him. We die in Him and live in Him. And because we don't trust Him, love Him, and live for Him perfectly, we are redeemed by Him, covered by Him. Because of what happened on that awful and yet Good Friday, we can say that we belong to Him. We belong to Him and to God, because Jesus has given Himself for us.

Amen.