

## Jesus Suffered All Things Willingly

Luke 9:57-58,

Ash Wednesday, February 18, 2015

*Sermon Text: Luke 9:57-58*

*And it came to pass, that, as they went in the way, a certain man said unto him, Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest. And Jesus said unto him, Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.*

Beloved of the Lord.....It seems Lent is one of the most used and abused church seasons. Mardi Gras was yesterday in New Orleans on Tuesday, but it is called Fat Tuesday because everybody indulges themselves before they have to deny themselves during Lent. The entire week before Lent becomes one big party with a license to sin. Why does this happen? It is because men are taught that God's favor can be attained by man's self-denial. Many Christians give up something they like during Lent, thinking God is pleased by such works. The Muslims do this also. During their sacred month of Ramadan, from the rising to setting of the sun, good Muslims abstain from eating, drinking, smoking, and other excesses. But once the sun goes down, life becomes a party of indulgence until the sun rises the next day. Naturally all these works and efforts and sacrifices of men mean nothing to God, for all good works done to gain or earn something from God, is vanity. It is done for self and not God. This is why wise King Solomon once said, "Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do: and, behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun." The works of a man never justify a man in God's sight. They are an abomination to Him.

There is then only one offering on earth, one sacrifice by one Man which has had any merit or atoning value in God's sight, and that was the one time sacrifice of Christ for the sins of all. Hebrews 10 says of Jesus, "But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God..... For by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." True Christianity then is not about the works and sacrifices of men, but the onetime sacrifice of God Himself FOR ALL MEN. The Christian faith is entirely different from all the other false religions of the world. Moreover once we believe the Gospel of Christ, we see how Christ turned the heart of God Himself from wrath to favor, as the Bible says, "God was in Christ reconciling the whole world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." And though it is true there is nothing we as sinful men can do to save ourselves, when we hear and learn all Jesus has done, we can never do enough to thank Him. To know Him is to love Him and to love Him is to be eternally thankful. We know we don't need to do any good works at all to merit heaven, but knowing the good work of Christ on the cross, we willingly want to do all things for Him. So the Bible says "Faith worketh by love." Knowing Him we now sacrifice or give up our pride, our works, our vanity whereby we used to glorify self. Now we bow in faith and holy reference to Him who is worthy of all our love for we have been cleansed by His blood. The TRUE PURPOSE OF LENT THEN IS THIS, is not just to be sorry for our sins, but it is to believe in the onetime sacrifice of Christ, ONCE FOR ALL.

Knowing this, our four sermons during Lent will be as follows: ONE, Jesus suffered all things willingly, TWO, Jesus suffered on the path to Calvary, THREE, Jesus suffered betrayal, not just by Judas but His own disciples, and FOUR, Jesus suffered on the Altar of Sacrifice.

If we are to properly understand the sufferings of Christ for our sake, we must remember that Jesus is True God and True Man in one person. Everything the Man suffers, God suffers, and everything God suffers, Jesus the Man also suffers. Likewise if Jesus was God alone and not a Man, Jesus could never have suffered anything because who is able to hurt God? But because Jesus wanted to suffer for our sake, Jesus now becomes True Man with flesh and blood so He can be slain like a lamb upon the altar. So Jesus is captured, beaten, whipped, kept awake all night, spit upon, and crucified so that He dies. Our sins and God's wrath against Him for our sins, brought Him infinite suffering far beyond our understanding. Indeed Jesus suffered the punishments of hell upon the cross, because our sins were there. Yet Jesus willed it, He wanted it, and so did the Father and the Spirit, for this was the only way God's wrath against sin could be satisfied, the record of our sins erased. Who can pay this price, of Jesus blood? Nor should we overlook the fact that if Jesus were merely a man, this sacrifice would mean nothing to God, nor could it atone for the sins of others. One man cannot save a whole world of sin. But since Jesus is God and it is none other than God who is suffering and dying on the cross to set us free from sin's curse, this sacrifice has infinite value to save the entire world!

To put it another way, when Christ who is God places Himself into the scales of God's justice, God's justice can be satisfied. Correspondingly hell is eternal for men because man can never pay a price high enough to satisfy God. How much more is it merited by anyone who despises God's own gift of His Son by the cross? So both hell and heaven are eternal. Yet what took place in the heart of God when Jesus offered Himself a sacrifice for the sins of all? God was moved within, God was touched deeply in His heart. What Jesus did for you and I was so precious to the Father, God forgave the sins of all, and only wants all to believe in His Son. Can't we then see the vanity of our own works, when we try to deny ourselves something or do something good to merit forgiveness? Can God be pleased with this? Yet when men repent of their sins, namely they cast away their works as useless in God's sight, and now they simply believe in His Son, God says that man's faith is counted for righteousness. Romans 4:5 says, "To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness."

Thus today's focus is on the willingness of Christ to suffer for our sakes, not just on the cross, but throughout His life. Our catechism rightly says, "The Scriptures teach that – A. In His earthly life Christ suffered poverty, contempt, and persecution." So Jesus said, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head." For example, Jesus was born into this world, unto poor parents, Mary His mother, and Joseph His stepfather. They had only swaddling clothes to wrap Him in at time of birth. Second Corinthians 8:9 says, "Though He was rich, yet for

your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich.” Of course the financial plight of the parents does not redeem us from sin, nor does the financial poverty of Christ redeem us either. But He chose to be poor and not rich, so we see how lowly God is willing to stoop for us, that we might be lifted up to heaven. Likewise regarding our poverty on earth, how can we be poor when we are rich in grace, with a loving Father who daily feeds us from above? Truly by our sins we should be the poor people about to be cast off a cliff into hell, yet for Christ sake He opens the doors to heaven saying “Come for all things are now ready”. Not only does He give us each day our daily bread, but He gives us spiritual food, heavenly manna in the body and blood of Christ, which is “given and shed for you for the remission of sins.”

Jesus also suffered persecution immediately after birth. When Herod sought to murder the baby Jesus, His parents fled to Egypt. So we learn it is not sinful to flee persecution, for it is good to preserve your own life and not sinful. But also God does allow persecution and sometimes capture and a martyr's death. Persecution spreads the Gospel message of the love of Christ. Even in the Mideast today the flight of Christians by persecution will be a blessing to the region, which suffers under the devil's ISLAM. All should be able to see ISLAM is nothing more than the devil's religion, and they should see how true Christians would rather suffer death than deny Christ. Likewise no matter what ISIS does, these earthly devils will not prevail against God's Church, which will continue, world without end. “For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the LORD that hath mercy on thee.” Is. 54

It is strange to think about, but Jesus also suffered from the sins of His own earthly parents. When Jesus was twelve years old His mother falsely accused Him of evil, though Jesus had no sin. “Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business”....which is to say, “Don't scold Me, I am doing My Father's will.” Parents still sin after the manner of Mary today, but God has grace to cover the sins of parents also.

After this we jump to the age of 30, for this is when Jesus begins His public ministry. Here Jesus suffers again for our sake as He fasts in the wilderness for 40 days, to be tempted by the devil. He resists and overcomes temptation here for our sake, all by the power and strength of God's Word. “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every Word which proceedeth out of the mouth of God.” We suffer temptation also today, when God allows it, but we are not counted as holy by our resisting or overcoming sin, for Christ alone fulfilled the law and resisted the devil for us. He also sends us His Spirit now so we can resist also and overcome the devil, all by faith in Jesus. So the Bible says “Resist the devil and he will flee from you.” Likewise “the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly.” This is God's promise so mock the devil and tell him “the blood of Jesus Christ His Son, cleanses you from all sin.”

Another part of Jesus' suffering before the cross, was the hatred and enmity of the world. They called Jesus a liar, a sorcerer, adulterer, a son of the devil, a blasphemer, and so on. Loving their own works and the vanity of life, they also tried to murder Jesus on more than one occasion. Jesus really lived under the constant threat of death, yet He daily

trusted in His Father above to lead, guide, and protect Him, which the Father did, until that final hour. That is why we had the reading about the Jews of Nazareth, who rejected His Gospel and tried to throw Him headlong off a cliff. In John 8:59 also, when Jesus told the Jews, "Before Abraham was, I am", the Bible says, "Then took they up stones to cast at him: but Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by." Obviously Christ could have done the same at the time of Pilate, but again He willed to be the sacrifice for all people, so when the hour had truly come, Jesus did not resist but yielded Himself both to Pilate and the Father above. So the Bible says Jesus "being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." Jesus also said about the willful sacrifice of His own life, "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again."

Thus regarding our earthly sufferings dear Christian, "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." When you suffer think first upon all Christ was willing to suffer for you, and then rejoice that your affliction is a light affliction which lasts but for a moment. Indeed it works a far more eternal weight of glory, in that world above you, the city of God yet to come, that world without end, where Christ and the saints await your presence. "For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps." Hang on in faith knowing He will never let you go. Amen.