Ash Wednesday
Rolling Meadows - 1978

Rev. Carl F. Thrun

IN NOMINE JESU

ST. JOHN 18: 1-13

The battle in the Garden of Gethsemane is finished. Jesus has wrestled with God in th deepest recesses of His soul -- even to the point of "sweating blood." He has LOST TH BATTLE -- but He will WIN THE WAR. An angel comes to "minister to Him" -- but also to point Him to the CROSS. There is no ALTERNATE PLAN. He must go to the CROSS.

So now He stands in the Garden waiting for the "band of soldiers" to arrest Him. He announces to the officers that their search for Him is over. JUDAS, to fulfill his part of the bargain, plants the KISS OF DEATH on His cheek. The identification is complete. There is no mistake. THIS IS THE MAN MARKED FOR DEATH!

At the command of the officers
They BIND HIS WRISTS -- LEATHER THONGS -- TIGHT. They HAMPER THE CIRCULATION. They will be on Him for some time now. The thongs will be there when the HIGH PRIEST'S SOLDIER push and shove and blindfolds him and they all begin to knock Him around: "PROPHESY UNTO US, THOU CHRIST, WHO WAS IT THAT SMOTE THEE?"* The THONGS ~~were~~ will be there when PILATE'S SOLDIERS str~~uck~~ike Him and "PLAITED A CROWN OF THORNS" on His head. They ~~were~~ will be there throughout all the BEATINGS and SCOURGINGS. Finally they ~~are~~ will be taken off when He is "COMPELLED TO CARRY THE CROSS" to Calvary. Then ~~came to~~ will come the NAILS to hold Him until He dies.

* The thongs will be there after Herod's men decide to mock Him & make sport of Him.

JESUS stands bound before ANNAS AND CAIAPHAS. These were the leaders of the CHURCH of that day. They were all out for KEEPING THE CHURCH TOGETHER! "Let no carpenter's son disrupt the unity we have tried so hard to build." We want it to be known that we are for "peace at any cost." And by virtue of OUR AUTHORITY we will not allow this JESUS to disturb the TRADITIONAL IMAGE OF THE CHURCH. "IT IS EXPEDIENT THAT ONE MAN SHOULD DIE FOR THE PEOPLE."

JESUS stands bound before the FALSE WITNESSES. Bribed to PERJURE themselves, they accuse Him of BLASPHEMY. "HE IS GUILTY OF DEATH."

JESUS stands bound before KING HEROD. The king demands: "Do me a miracle!" And when he satisfies himself that THIS JESUS is no threat to him, he has his LITTLE JOKE and sends Him back to PILATE with a SPLENDID PURPLE ROBE draped around His shoulders. The SENTENCE is obvious.

JESUS stands bound before PONTIUS PILATE. Rather than do what would be JUST, and FAIR, and RIGHT -- "saying it like it is" -- Pilate tries to weasel out. He gives them a choice between JESUS and BARABBAS. And again, in the name of "peace at any price," he orders a SCOURGING. Finally -- in a tragic gesture -- he WASHES HIS HANDS of the whole matter. Ane JESUS is condemned WITHOUT CHARGE.

JESUS hangs on the CROSS -- bound before GOD. Here, after all, is the FINAL JUDGE. GOD will do the FAIR and JUST thing. And for the first time in the TRIAL there is a REAL INDICTMENT. The charge is S I N -- REBELLION AGAINST GOD -- BROKEN RELATIONSHIPS The charge demands the DEATH PENALTY. The charge demands BANISHMENT IN HELL. The sentence is IRREVOCABLE. It is carried out in SILENCE -- the DEADLY SILENCE AND DARKNESS out there on a SKULL-SHAPED HILL. The NAILS bind Him to the HOUR OF DEATH! It is the DEATH OF THE SINLESS ONE!

WHO IS ON TRIAL HERE? Let me tell you: YOU ARE! I AM! You may not understand it. I confess that I don't either. But we had better BELIEVE IT! ADAM'S SIN has BOUND YOUR WRISTS AND MINE. It is OUR OWN SINS that BIND OUR HANDS and DECLARE US GUILTY. S I N holds every one of us in BONDAGE. We are the SLAVES OF SIN! We are under the DOMINION OF SIN! We are BOUND -- whether we like it or not -- just as tightly as Jesus was bound.

WHO IS ON TRIAL HERE? YOU ARE! I AM! "God help us." We are "dust and ashes". We "deserve nothing but His wrath and punishment." We are the GUILTY ONES -- ready for the HOWLING HOSTS OF HELL.

But LOOK! They UNTIE HIM -- the "INNOCENT LAMB OF GOD." They UNTIE HIM -- and they

NAIL HIM TO A CROSS. He CRIES FROM HELL: "MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAST THOU FORSAKEN ME?" He STANDS IN OUR PLACE -- under the JUDGMENT OF GOD. Just think of it! "GOD MADE HIM WHO KNEW NO SIN TO BE MADE SIN FOR US THAT WE MIGHT BE MADE THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD IN HIM."

WHO IS ON TRIAL HERE? YOU ARE! I AM! THIS WHOLE SINFUL WORLD! We are -- all of us under CONDMENATION. WE ARE ON TRIAL. And HE HANGS THERE -- CRUCIFIED -- STRETCHED FROM THE CROSS -- HIS ARMS EXTENDED IN UTTER AGONY -- EMBRACING THE WORLD -- EMBRACING YOU AND ME! No more "dust and ashes" -- only "life and salvation." Come, let us join in the "Victory Feast of our Lord" -- FOR US. Amen.