Good Friday
West Henrietta - 1962

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IN NOMINE JESU

St. Luke 23: 46 And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, He said: Father, into Thy hands I commend My Spriit: and having said thus, He gave up the ghost.

When Martin Luther wrote his explanation to the Sixth Petition of the Lord's Prayer, he concluded with this prayer: And finally, when our last hour has come, grant us a blessed end, and graciously take us from this vale of tears to Thyself in heaven. When your last hour comes, how will you die? This is important! And you can't avoid it! I am well aware of the fact that most people today shun the subject of death. They don't want to talk about it. A mother once remarked: I never bring my children to a funeral. It makes me shudder every time I have to attend. But tonight we come point blank before death. We meet it in the death of our Lord Jesus Christ. My one and only prayer is that each one of you might learn of Him how to live and how to die! Listen: And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, He said: Father, into Thy hands I commend My Spirit; and having said thus, He gave up the ghost.

We are living in a disillusioned world. Some years back many people felt they knew everything. Now they feel that no one knows anything. Agnosticism - the philosophy that nobody knows anything for sure - seems today to be the highest mark of intelligence. When you talk about heaven and eternity, people are quick to ask: How do you Know? Or they ask such foolish questions as: Have you been there? No, we haven't been there - but about this we have no doubts. Jesus, the Son of God, who was in the bosom of the Father, came down from heaven and reveled to us the truth about death and the world to come!

In Jesus' thinking death was never the end nor a leap into the dark. He always spoke of death as the beginning of life.... of an eternal life with the Father When speaking of His own death He told His disciples: I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again I leave the world, and go to the Father. Again He said: I go to pre pare a place for you and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto Myself; that where I am ye may be also. Notice there are no maybe's no doubts! He says that's the way it will be. When Jesus came to comfort Mary and Martha, whose brother had died, He said: I am the

Resurrection and the Life; he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live. And whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die. To the penitent malefactor on the Cross He gave the assurance: Today shalt thou be with Me in paradise.

Jesus believed what He preached. There were false prophets in the time of Christ just as there are false prophets today who preach many things they themselves are not sure about or which they don't believe. Jesus was sure of what He preached and He believed what He preached. Look at His last Word from the Cross: Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit. They crucified Him at 9 o'clock in the morning. It was now well nigh onto 3 o'clock. Jesus had reached His hour of death. Would He now perhaps change His mind? Many people are inclined to talk big as long as things are going along all right - but when the chips are down, that's a different story. Would Jesus act differently now that His own death was near? Not at all! With the same confidence with which our children go to sleep at night, praying, Now I lay me down to sleep, I pray Thee Lord my soul to keep, Jesus in His dying hour confides: Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit.

There was no fear of death in Jesus' heart. It is reported that when King Louis of France, who had massacred the Huguenots in cold blood on St. Bartholomew's night, was about to die, he became so terrified and frightened that he perspired drops of blood. When one of the unbelieving queens of England was about to die, she cried out: My kingdom for one minute of time. But Jesus was not afraid to die. He had complete and total confidence in His heavenly Father. He knew His love. He also knew His Father's power. He knew that in His Father's hands His soul would be perfectly safe. That's why He said, Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit. The story is told about an uncle who gave his little nephew a silver dollar at a Sunday School picnic because he won the Bible contest, and as he gave him the dollar he remarked, Now you will be careful not to lose it, won't you? And the boy replied, Oh, I won't lose it, I'll give it to my Father to keep for me. He felt that in his father's hands the dollar would be perfectly safe. So Jesus knew that in His

Father's hands His soul was perfectly safe.

Death can be that way for you and me too. We can die with peace in our hearts, with confidence that God is our loving Father, who will not let us down, but will keep us safe through eternity. We, too, can say calmly, Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit. We can pray with David, The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want....Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for Thou are with me.....Goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

But - you say - how is this possible? How can I die with that kind of confidence? How can I really be sure that God is my Father? Here it is: When Jesus had cried out with a loud voice, He said: Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit and our text adds, And having said thus, He gave up the ghost. This simply means, He died. He died! Jesus died! And Jesus is the Son of God! When the soldiers came to break the bones of the malefactors, they found that Jesus was already dead. But to make assurance doubly sure, one of the soldiers thrust his spear into His side. Jesus, the Son of God, died! And why did He die? No, He wasn't exhausted. He did not suffocate to death. He cried with a loud voice only a moment before this. This is not the manner of a man who is dying from exhaustion or suffocation. Death did not take Him. He took death. He came into the world that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil. To His disciples Jesus had said, No man taketh My life from Me. I have the power to lay it down and the power to take it again. Scripture teaches that Jesus' death was entirely voluntary. And mark this - it was substitutionary! The wages of sin is death. But Jesus had no sin. He must have died for the sins of someone else. So the Bible teaches: God made Him to be sin for us who knew no sin that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.

Jesus' death saved us from eternal death, so that we need no longer fear temporal death. His death is our life. His death makes it possible for us to call God our Father. His death makes it possible for us to die as He died: with peace of

heart and complete confidence that our soul is safe in the hands of our heavenly Father. We are redeemed! We are saved from sin, death, and the grave. I don't think I have to tell you how much that means to me. It means just as much to you. In Good Friday we see the fulfillment of Christmas, the fullfillment of the angel's song: Unto you is born th. in the city of David, a Savior, which is Christ, the Lord. The proclamation of Christmas and Good Friday is one: The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ, our Lord. And the glory of it is that it is for all people; for young and old, husbands and wives, parents and children.

Have you talked to your children about it? Have you told them the good news? Have you talked to your spouse, your neighbor, your schoolmate, your fellow worker on the job? Have you told them what Good Friday means to you? No, don't argue religion, but tell the Good News! Jesus died for us that whosoever believes in Him will not perish, but will have everlasting life.

There was a father of six children, who took a very active part in the church all his life. He brought all his children to Holy Baptism, diligently taught them the Word at home, brought them to confirmation instruction, set them an example by regular church attendance. Yet, when he was on his deathbed and the pastor asked him kindly what Jesus meant to him, he looked shocked, paused for a moment, and said: You know, pastor, I somehow never thought of that..... Will you, please, take time to think of that! What does Jesus' death mean to you? It was for you He died, for you that He cried, for you that He longs and waits and pleads: Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest for your souls.

Rest for your souls! How badly I need this every day. How badly you need this every day! Let us go then to Calvary tonight and every night to find that rest which Jesus in love has won for us. Here we will find peace, power, and hope for life, so that when our last hour comes, we will be able to rejoice with aged

Simeon: Lord, now lettest thou Thy servant depart in peace...for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation. Or to say with Jesus: Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit.

Amen.