The Fifth Wednesday in Lent
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Rolling Meadows, Illinois

Rev. Carl F. 'hrun

IN NOMINE JESU

St. Matthew 27: 46: AND ABOUT THE NINTH HOUR JESUS CRIED WITH A LOUD VOICE, "ELI, ELI, LA'MA SABACH-THA'NI?" THAT IS, "MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAST THOU FORSAKEN ME?"

"BEHOLD THE MAN" ON THE CROSS! His BODY is CONTORTED in AGONY - His FACE is STREAKED with BLOOD - His FEATURES reveal His EXTREMITY! "BEHOLD THE MAN" - - - His body BROKEN - - SUSPENDED on the CROSS as a CRIMINAL! This is NOT a SINNER such as WE ARE. He is the CHRIST - the SON of GOD! LOOK at the CROSS! GOD IS THERE! Only there can God be FOUND!

What is the MEANING of THIS FEARFUL CRY, "MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAST THOU FORSAKEN ME?" It is DREADFUL enough and HARD enough to understand that the CHRIST of God, the SON of GOD, endured REVILING and SMITING and the CROSS at the HANDS of MEN - - - - that He was MOCKED and SPAT upon and CROWNED with THORNS at the HANDS of MEN. But THIS CRY is the ULTIMATE of EVERYTHING that is DREADFUL - - - - FAR EXCEEDING in FRIGHTFULNESS even the SUFFERING of the CROSS. God's SON is FORSAKEN by GOD! His THIRST is MUCH MORE than just a PHYSICAL THIRST - - - it is a THIRST FOR GOD! The CHRIST of God is CAST into GODLESSNESS in the TRUEST and FULLEST SENSE of the word.

Do you see what this MEANS? He who HIMSELF had said: "I AND MY FATHER ARE ONE" - - "HE WHO HAS SEEN ME HAS SEEN THE FATHER" - - - - - - THIS JESUS NO LONGER SEES THE FATHER - THIS JESUS IS WITHOUT GOD! Instead of DIVINE STRENGTH - there is within Him only a BARREN WASTELAND. His SOUL is "DRIED UP LIKE A POTSHERD " - - - a piece of BROKEN POTTERY. His PRAYER receives NO ANSWER - - His WEEPING finds NO COMFORT.

God has NO RELIEF for His SON. God turns AWAY from Him - - and that means that He "turns ON Him" with His TERRIBLE WRATH! God makes the CHRIST "GODLESS" - - - - and subjects Him to TERRIBLE JUDGMENT! God deprives the INNOCENT CHRIST of everything that He had with Him before the WORLD BEGAN. God casts Him AWAY into GUILT and PERDITION.

We human beings have often RIDICULED and FORSAKEN CHRIST. But HERE, GOD HIMSELF is the CAUSE of His most TERRIBLE FORSAKENESS and ABANDONMENT. You and I have OFTEN TORTURED and CRUCIFIED HIM. But HERE, God Himself AFFLICTS upon HIS SON the GREATEST TORMENT. Even if men had wanted to, they could have NOT DISTURBED the COMMUNION between GOD and HIS SON. But NOW, God Himself WITHDRAWS from His

SON. And that is what makes the CRUCIFIXION of JESUS CHRIST the most DECISIVE EVENT of ALL TIME. As Luther says, "Christ was DAMNED and ABANDONED more than ALL the SAINTS."

Only by FORSAKING HIS SON does God make HIM LIKE US in EVERY RESPECT. True - He was LIKE US in HIS FLESH and BLOOD - - - - He was LIKE US in HIS PAIN. But there is an AGONY FAR MORE TERRIBLE than these. In His GOD FORSAKENESS Christ COMPLETELY takes OUR PLACE - - - He SUFFERS EVERYTHING that is REALLY and RIGHTLY OURS. He SUFFERS the SEPARATION from God that HANGS OVER ALL of US SINNERS. The WRATH under which WE STAND - - - - the JUDGMENT pronounced on OUR SINS - - - - NOW STRIKE HIM! Our PUNISHMENT is LAID upon the INNOCENT ONE. God "makes HIM who KNEW NO SIN to be MADE SIN FOR US."

This is the MESSAGE - - - and this is what makes this the most COMFORTING WORD of the ENTIRE BIBLE! Hear this: "God again turns to you - - God PUNISHES ME. God takes AWAY YOUR PUNISHMENT - - God CRUSHES ME beneath His ANGER. God LIFTS YOU UP in His LOVE - - God CONDEMNS and FORSAKES ME. God NO LONGER SEES YOUR SIN or JUDGES your GUILT - - God has REJECTED ME."

Since Christ was FORSAKEN by GOD, no one else is EVER FORSAKEN. This is the PROMISE of the WRITER to the HEBREWS: "I WILL NEVER FAIL NOR FORSAKE YOU." If ever you think YOU are FORSAKEN by God - - then LOOK at CHRIST! If ever your GUILT oppresses you and you FEAR your SIN is SO GREAT that God CANNOT FORGIVE IT - - - you are WRONG! For YOU Christ has SUFFERED the WRATH of God - - and there is NO LONGER ANY DESPAIR that cannot NOW be REMOVED. For YOU and for ME He was PUNISHED - - - so that NOW GOD LOOKS upon US as being WITHOUT SIN. For YOU and for ME He was FORSAKEN - - so that we can now have COMMUNION with GOD! With ANGELS and ARCHANGELS and ALL the company of HEAVEN we can SIT DOWN and EAT WITH HIM. Our SIN is FORGIVEN - - - our LONELINESS is ENDED. Amen.!!!