Carl Thrun

Luke 23: 34

FIFTH ~~SUNDAY~~ WEEK IN LENT:

Intro. Here in this prayer of Jesus from the cross we cannot help but marvel at the extent of His love. When we consider these blasphemers and murderers, we cannot be anything else than amazed that Jesus did not ask His Father to send fire from heaven to consume them. Our Lord, lover of sinners, does not take revenge. In His greatest agony, He forgets Himself, turns His attention from Himself, and begins to speak of grace and mercy.

I. "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." Behold the suffering Savior lifting up His eyes to heaven and asking a prayer of forgiveness. Is there greater love than this? In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus says to His disciples: "Pray for them...which persecute you." Here our Lord does this very thing. He personally fulfills the commandment which He has given His disciples.

II. Are you ready to forgive and pray for your enemies? Think of the man or woman who has hurt your feelings. Think of the person whose personality doesn't appeal to you. Think of the person who has done you some wrong. Think of the recent conflict which took place in your home. The Lord wants you to forgive others their trespasses as He forgives yours. As he was being stoned to death, Stephen prayed: "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge!" James the Just cried out as they hurled him down from the pinnacle of the temple: "Lord, forgive them; for they know not what they do." This must be the attitude of every true Christian.

III. Jesus intercedes for us constantly. "There is one Mediator between God and man, the Man, Christ Jesus." Our Lord, being true man knew what it is to be human. In all things he was as we are except that He had no sin. He was tempted in all things as we are tempted. He knows what human nature is. What a great comfort it is to know that we have a real, honest-to-goodness Man praying on our behalf, a God-Man at that.

IV. Our Savior's prayers are answered. Jerusalem was spared by God for forty years as a result of Christ's prayer on the cross. We are all enemies of Christ according to the flesh. By ourselves we couldn't be a friend of Jesus even if we wanted to. Our Old Adam, that sinful nature rebels against the holy Jesus. Our inner self, longing to go the way of the devil, the world, and our flesh is the cause of our Lord's going to the cross. In such a state we are His enemies. But Jesus prays for us that we might be spared, that we might come to true repentance, about-face and with His help do the will of God.

V. There is no sin too great that Jesus will not forgive it. No matter what you may have done in your past life, it is not bad enough that Jesus will not make it as white as snow and completely blot it out. There on the cross He suffered the torments of hell for all kinds of sin. Not one escaped Him. He suffered for you because He love you. He would have you recognize your sin and plead to Him for forgiveness. If you ask with a contrite heart, your request will be granted.

VI. Jesus will help you live a life apart from sin. He is not only ready and willing to forgive you your sins, but He is also willing to help you rebuild your lives so that you can do the will of His Father. With His aid your lives will become better and better. Not that you will ever achieve perfection here on this earth, but you will become more saintly if you allow Him to dwell in your hearts. Constant use of the Word and Sacraments will bring the suffering Savior down into your hearts to dwell. He will make you temples of God.

Concl. May God give each of us the love of Jesus, making us ready and willing to forgive others their trespasses as He forgives our trespasses.

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