

Sermon: Good Friday

Text: Matthew 27:50-51: “And when Jesus had cried again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit. At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom.”

Theme: The way to God is open!

Goal: To show that Jesus opened the way to God through His blood shed on the cross.

Dear Friends,

I – He gave up His spirit

Jesus suffered for hours. His suffering was not only the hours he hung on the cross. His suffering was not only caused by the soldiers who flogged Him, or by the crown of thorns on His head, or by the nails in His hands and feet. His inner anguish caused much more suffering than the bodily injuries. He said to His disciples in the Garden of Gethsemane: “My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death” (Mark 14:34). Then He went to pray. “And being in anguish, He prayed more earnestly, and His sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground” (Luke 22:44). To be betrayed by one of His disciples, to be disowned by another disciple, to be abandoned by all of them, left Him alone in His suffering.

For me, personally, the deepest and biggest anguish of Jesus happened when He cried from the cross: “Eli, Eli, lama sabachtani? – which means, ‘My God, my God, why have You forsaken Me?’” He was suffering the absence of God, the hell itself on our behalf and on behalf of all humankind!

But in all these sufferings and anguish Jesus didn't stumble on His way to pay for our sins and to conquer our freedom and the reconciliation with God. *Jesus was in control of His life right to the end when in a show of strength, He cried out loudly and then He gave up His spirit, saying: "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit" (Luke 23:46). *No one took His life from Him; He gave it as a ransom for all men* (1 Timothy 1:6) (ABC 11680). His task was accomplished! The ransom was paid. "It is finished!" (John 19:30).*

II – The curtain of the temple

The first sign that His sacrifice was accepted by God was that "the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom". Some would say that this is only one little detail of the narrative. No! It has a tremendous meaning for us Christians of the New Testament. The old order had gone; everything is made new! (1 Corinthians 5:17).

The inner curtain of the temple separated the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place. The tearing of the curtain signified Christ's making it possible for believers to go directly into God's presence. (CSSB Matt 27:51). *The way to God was open through Jesus, and the old system of priests and sacrifices that dominated the temple and its activities* (ABC 1168) had passed away.

To understand better the role that curtain played in the worship of God's people in the Old Covenant, and what happened when it was turned out when Jesus died, let me read some texts from the Letter to the Hebrews (9:6-7,11-12,15; 10:19-23): "The priests entered regularly into the outer room to carry on their ministry. But only the high priest entered the inner room, and that only once a year, and never without blood, which he offered for himself and for the sins of the people... But when Christ came as High Priest ... He did not enter by means of the blood of

goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption... For this reason, Christ is the Mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance—now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant... Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful.”

Conclusion: Thanks to Jesus suffering’ and death we are released from suffering in hell and from eternal death. By faith, He gives us freedom and life; freedom even to approach God in confidence as our beloved Father; confidence to “draw near to God with a sincere heart and the full assurance that faith brings” to come to the Lord’s Supper and to receive the very body and very blood of our Lord Jesus for forgiveness of our sins.

Thousand, thousand thanks are due, Dearest Jesus unto You. (LW 94)

Amen.