**Covered from God’s Wrath**

Based on [Luke 23:27-43](http://biblia.com/books/esv/Lk23.27-43)

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The Last Sunday of the Church Year

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Today’s scripture teaches us about God’s wrath against sin and the atonement Christ won on the cross to spare you from it. **First, on the way to the cross, Jesus teaches that his suffering is not cause for weeping, our sins and the judgment they deserve are.** God’s wrath is a consuming fire and it burns away sinners like so much dry wood. If anyone is to escape the final judgment they need to be covered from it. **Second, that is why Jesus willingly walked the road to the cross so that from there he could cover your sins and intercede for you before his Father in heaven.** And finally, to those who are given to know the depth of their sin and that it deserves death and hell, they are given this Gospel. To those who come to Jesus for salvation; they will not die in their sins, but be with him in paradise.

Already battered and bloody, Jesus says on his way to the cross, “**Do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and your children.**” He is speaking to women who are mourning his suffering at the time, but the teaching remains. Jesus does not need our sympathy or our tears. He knew full well what would happen to him before he entered Jerusalem, before He let Judas betray him into the hands of sinful men. He knew what it would mean when he stood before the Sanhedrin and gave no defense to false accusations; when he stood before Pilate and did not recognize his authority. Jesus was not a helpless victim; he was a willing sacrifice. He did not die for your sympathy; he died for *you* a lost and condemned sinner.

Jesus does not need your tears. Nevertheless there are others who need your tears, and need them very badly. You, yourselves and your children. Sinners are to weep for themselves and for their sins. They are to sob like Peter, that their tears may lead them to something that is worthwhile, a sincere regret for their trespasses. God does not you’re your sympathy, he requires your repentance; your sorrow for your sins. “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise” (Psalm 51:17).

It is on account of your sins, your children’s sins and the sins of the whole world that the judgment of God’s wrath is coming upon the earth. God is love, and because he is love he hates every false way, every broken commandment and work of the flesh that defiles others and his creation. Jesus wept for Jerusalem knowing the city was going to suffer Judgment for their sins, and for what they were about to do to Him. He wept and said, “**O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing**!”

The wrath of God is coming to judge all sin. This is most certainly true. And that is why Jesus came to the cross: to gather you under his wings, to cover you and protect you from it. When the wrath of God comes, it will be so terrible for sinners to face that **they will begin to say to the mountains, ‘Fall on us”, and to the hills, “cover us**.” They would rather be buried under a pile of rubble than have to face the wrath of God. But there is only one hiding place, the man Jesus Christ. He so loves the world that he calls it to repentance, calls it to him, so that it may hide in the shadow of his cross.

 Just as one finds safety from the scorching sun by standing under the shade of a tree; Jesus is lifted up on the tree of the cross suffering the scorching wrath of God and creating, if you will, a shadow of safety under its branches and his outstretched arms. Atonement means to cover, and Jesus made atonement on the cross so that now there is no condemnation for those who are in Him.

But as you are given shade to hide in the shadow of his wings, you remember that he has borne that wrath in His body. And if the almighty, perfect and just God did not spare his only begotten son, but gave him up for us all; what do you suppose he will do on that day to His enemies who reject the sacrifice he made for them? As Jesus puts it, i**f such wrath is poured out when the wood is green, what will happen when it is dry?**

**Jesus Christ suffered this baptism of fire on the cross; died and yet he lives.** What will happen when those who remain dead in their trespasses, the chaff, the dry wood when that fire comes upon the earth? If Jesus must suffer as he does--**sinless as he is and bearing only the sins of others**--what will they have to suffer who sin until the judgment, and reject the salvation God offers to them in the atoning sacrifice of his Son? Jesus warns, “**Their worm will never die; and the fire will not be quenched**” (Mark 9:43).

Now someone might say that this is all too much fire and brimstone. That may be; but it is true. And when you search the scriptures the testimony is clear that this is what will take place. And Jesus, as he willingly walks to his cross about to face that very same agony, he is thinking of you. He loves you and so he warns you of the wrath to come. He wants you to know you need to take cover, your sins need to be atoned for. That is why he’s going to the cross. And this is not doom and gloom, but good news, a message of cheer. Even though this wrath is coming, you have a place of refuge in Him.

And Jesus Christ is the only refuge you need. Hebrews 4:15 says, “**We do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.**” Jesus suffered the full extent of the world’s rage, and offence. He was innocent and yet was numbered with the transgressors. He was nailed to a cross and stripped naked before the people who stood by gawking at his humiliation. He was mocked and ridiculed. He was taunted and tempted to save himself, and he resisted.

Whatever you have suffered in this life, he has suffered more, but unlike you he did nothing wrong. As a righteous and innocent servant of God, he is your high priest, lifted up in agony he prays for you. God does not hear the prayers of the unrighteous. But the perfect lamb of God pleads for you,“**Father forgive them, for they know not what they do**.” Jesus says elsewhere, “love your enemies, pray for those who persecute you.” He did not come to condemn the world but to save it. He did not come to smite his enemies, but to bring news of peace.

What is plainly taught to us today is the utter perfection and innocence of Jesus Christ, and the utter corruption and guilt of mankind. And though he is innocent, he was crucified between two criminals, one on his right and one on his left. One of the criminals is an example of unbelief. He does not fear the wrath of God and does not believe in Justice or the final Judgment. He only looks to this world, his present suffering and resonating with rulers and the soldiers says, “**Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us!**”

But the other criminal, by faith, sees things as they are. And he rebukes the other saying, “**Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we are receiving the due reward of our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong**.” This is a perfect confession of sins, and it is like what we confess every Sunday. Not only that we are sinners, but that our sin deserves punishment; they deserve death and hell; they deserve the wrath of God and we are without excuse.

After he confesses his sins and that he deserves whatever he suffers; he turns to Jesus with this request, “Jesus remember me when you come into your kingdom.” Pilate put an inscription on the cross “Jesus King of the Jews.” He meant it as a Joke; but the criminal believed it. And it is true. Christ is our king, and that means he has a kingdom. But his kingdom is not of this world, but of the world to come. He says, “Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise.”

Today’s scripture teaches us about God’s wrath against sin and the atonement Christ won on the cross to spare you from it. **Jesus teaches that his suffering is not cause for weeping, our sins and the judgment they deserve are.** **He teaches that from the cross he covers your sins from that judgment and intercede for you before his Father in heaven.** And, to you who are given to know the depth of your sin and that it deserves death and hell, you are given this Gospel. To those who come to Jesus asking for salvation; you will not die in your sins, but be with Him in paradise.