**Saved by the Blood**

Based on [Matthew 27:11-54](https://biblia.com/books/esv/Mt27.11-54)

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Passion/Palm Sunday ~ Palmarum

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It is written into the nature of the universe, it is a part of the eternal law of God, it is the way things are…that sin requires punishment. Sin incurs a debt. Sin…the heart that turns away from God…earns and deserves the wrath of God.

Part of the reason many people don’t get the true religion, or teach it wrongly, is because they think, that at the heart of it, sin is bad *only because it hurts other people,* or because it has a bad influence on others. Even if there were no one else around to learn from your mistake, your sin deserves punishment. Not just a few years in a correctional facility, in the hopes of finally being released back into society without recidivism. Your punishment is not merely a warning to others who would do the same. Your sin deserves a painful and righteous reckoning. Justice requires justice, sin…a pound of flesh. It is a personal offense to God, and it deserves a personal reckoning.

Someone might say that God cannot be loving if he is eager to punish every little thing. It isn’t a question of God living up to a four letter word called “love”. A huge part of our problem as human beings is we lack sympathy. It is tremendously difficult to really understand someone who comes from a different background or culture. How much more naieve is it to think that we can sympathize with the living God, who has always existed. Who doesn’t just have his own background and history…he created history. We can have no idea what it’s like for the almighty God to confront sin.

But we do know what it is like for a sinner to confront God. Isaiah says in the presence of God, “**Woe to me, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I come from a people of unclean lips**.” When Peter realizes that the man Jesus standing before him is actually the living God, he falls down and says “**Depart from me, for I am a sinful man**.” Scripture says, “**It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.**”

Yet for some reason, for this reason, for this little four letter word, God was pleased to come down from heaven and inhabit our flesh and assume our nature, not artificially, but really, incarnationally. God who build the earth’s foundation, didn’t just take the form of a man, he made himself to be conceived in the womb of a Woman. He was nine months in utero, was born, raised and grew in wisdom and stature…just like any other boy…only without sin. And when he was a man, he was anointed and sent. He began to heal the sick, raise the dead and preach repentance and the forgiveness of sins. All this God did as a man, born of a woman, veiled in human flesh, taking on the form of a minister…a servant.

It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. So for our sake the living God became man, and took on the humble form of a servant, so that we would not hesitate to stand in his presence. And he, being tempted like us in every way, was able to stand in ours without condemning us as we deserve.

On Palm Sunday, God in the form of a servant, humble and mounted on a donkey…bringing with him salvation. This perfectly righteous man--who is the living God--was surrounded by a bunch of filthy sinners, whose filthy rags are, by their nature, a stench in his nostrils. It is unpleasant for God to be in the presence of sinners, and especially amidst crowd of people who did not know what he came to do, who were so naive of the things that really make for peace.

What makes for peace is death, what balances accounts is blood. The wages of sin is death, and there is no forgiveness without the shedding of blood.

This is written into the universe, or else it is definitive of the very nature of God himself. Sin deserves punishment, in itself. Our bodies of flesh are what makes us men and not angels/spirits…and blood carries the life, and with it atonement is made for sins. Jesus says, “I am the bread of life…whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life.” Sin for Death, eating for life, these things go together.

The greatest treasure Jesus gives his church is his body and blood for us to eat and to drink. There are millions upon millions of Christians in the world who will not become Lutherans because we believe this. They think it is barbaric and superstitious popery...cannibalism even to say Christians are literally eating Jesus body and drinking his blood. Eternal life can’t be given that way, how silly of a means for God to give his grace.

How silly indeed; and we are silly creatures. How prideful man is, thinking he is more sophisticated than those who adhere to primitive religion. Do you know what your refrigerator is? The dictionary will say it’s a box that keeps your food cold. But more specifically what is it? It’s a morgue. For us meat-eaters at least, it is where we keep and preserve the energy of dead bodies so that we can profitably put them later in our mouths, chew them and get calories that preserve and promote our lives. Without this silly superstitious ritual of eating dead things, without this barbaric act of savagery, we would die…and yet it is the very means whereby we sustain our life.

How absolutely fitting is it, that God would use the same ritual. How appropriate that God would have us eat to feed us the forgiveness of sins, through his Son’s own life-giving flesh and blood. The life is in the blood, and Jesus Christ is the Life.

So it was a happy irony that Pontius Pilate, who was lukewarm about Jesus, thought it best he wash his hands of this man’s blood. It was a twist of fate that God’s own people, who were hot with anger and cold with envy shouted crucify him, let his blood be on us and our children. Father forgive them for they know not what they do, so he gives them the very blood they ask for, and he makes it a sacrament through which his church will have forgiveness unto life eternal.

The bread we break is a participation in the body of Christ. The cup we drink is a participation in the blood of Christ.