



GOD ON TRIAL: TESTIMONY

Midweek Lent

BETHEL EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH | York, Nebraska

March 20, 2024

SERIES THEME: GOD ON TRIAL

The unbelieving world has always insisted on putting God on trial. As our society becomes more secular, we Christians are increasingly aware of the many ways in which God—and his people—are judged. Temptations are many in this environment: treating unbelievers as enemies, retreating from the world, even questioning God ourselves. How do we live as people of God in this hostile world? We find our model—and our motivation—in Jesus. This series takes us back to the moments when God was literally on trial before humankind in the person of Christ. In these inspired episodes, we find forgiveness for us and all people, love for our enemies, strength for our faith, and courage to testify to the truth.

Worship Leader

Pastor Justin Dauck

Organist/Pianist

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Acknowledgments

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Opening Hymn: 784 Now the Light Has Gone Away

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|---|---|--|---|
| 1 | Now the light has gone away;
Father, listen while I pray,
asking you to watch and keep
and to send me quiet sleep. | O bring me and all I love
to your happy home above. | |
| 2 | Jesus, Savior, wash away
all that I've done wrong today.
Make me ever more like you,
good and gentle, kind and true. | 4 | Now my evening praise I give;
you once died that I might live.
All your precious gifts are free—
oh, how good you are to me! |
| 3 | Let my near and dear ones be
safe with you eternally. | 5 | Ah, my best and kindest Friend,
you will love me to the end.
Let me love you more and more,
always better than before. |

Text: Frances R. Havergal, 1836–1879, alt.
Text: Public domain

Confession of Sins

In the name of our God, to whom all hearts are open and from whom no secrets are hidden.

Amen.

I confess that I am by nature sinful.

I am guilty of many sins.

I am distressed by the sins that trouble me.

For all this I am sorry. I pray for forgiveness.

Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love.

Jesus says to his people, "If you forgive anyone's sins, their sins are forgiven." His death paid for the guilt of your sins and the sins of the whole world. Do you believe this?

Yes, I believe.

By the authority of Christ, I forgive you your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son + and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

Psalm: 119D Teach Me, O LORD

Refrain

Teach me, O LORD, the way of your statutes.

Tone

Oh, how I / love your law!
I meditate on it / all day long.
Your commands are always / with me
and make me wiser than my / enemies.
I have more insight than all my / teachers,
for I meditate on your / statutes. *Refrain*

I have kept my feet from every / evil path
so that I might o- / bey your word.
How sweet are your words / to my taste,
sweeter than honey / to my mouth!
I gain understanding from your / precepts;
therefore I hate every / wrong path.

**Glory be to the Father and / to the Son
and to the Holy / Spirit,
as it was in the be- / ginning,
is now, and will be forever. / Amen. *Refrain***

Tune: Thomas Pavlechko
Setting: Thomas Pavlechko

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Psalm Prayer

Lord, your word is my delight. When I was lost in the darkness of sin, you penetrated my heart with the light of your Word. Let it enlighten my path each day that I may serve you in holiness. Let your Word shine through all I say and do so that others may see you and praise your saving name. In Jesus' name we pray.

Amen.

Passion History

Matthew 27:27–66

The Soldiers Mock Jesus

²⁷ Then the governor's soldiers took Jesus into the Praetorium and gathered the whole cohort of soldiers around him. ²⁸ They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him. ²⁹ They twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on his head. They put a staff in his right hand, knelt in front of him, and mocked him by saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" ³⁰ They spit on him, took the staff, and hit him repeatedly on his head.

The Crucifixion

³¹ After they had mocked him, they took off the robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him away to crucify him.

³² As they were going out of the city, they found a man of Cyrene named Simon. They forced him to carry Jesus' cross. ³³ They came to a place called Golgotha, which means "The place of the skull." ³⁴ They offered Jesus wine to drink, mixed with gall; but when he tasted it, he would not drink it. ³⁵ After they had crucified him, they divided his clothing among themselves by casting lots. ³⁶ Then they sat down and were keeping watch over him there. ³⁷ Above his head they posted the written charge against him: "This is Jesus, the King of the Jews."

³⁸ At the same time two criminals were crucified with him, one on his right and one on his left. ³⁹ People who passed by kept insulting him, shaking their heads, ⁴⁰ and saying, "You who were going to destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save yourself! If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross!"

⁴¹ In the same way the chief priests, experts in the law, and elders kept mocking him. They said, ⁴² "He saved others, but he cannot save himself. If he's the King of Israel, let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him. ⁴³ He trusts in God. Let God rescue him now, if he wants him, because he said, 'I am the Son of God.'" ⁴⁴ In the same way even the criminals who were crucified with him kept insulting him.

Jesus' Death

⁴⁵ From the sixth hour until the ninth hour, there was darkness over all the land. ⁴⁶ About the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "*Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?*" which means "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

⁴⁷ When some of those standing there heard this, they said, "This fellow is calling for Elijah."

⁴⁸ Immediately one of them ran, took a sponge, and soaked it with sour wine. Then he put it on a stick and gave him a drink. ⁴⁹ The rest said, "Leave him alone. Let's see if Elijah comes to save him."

⁵⁰ After Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, he gave up his spirit. ⁵¹ Suddenly, the temple curtain was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook and rocks were split. ⁵² Tombs were opened, and many bodies of saints who had fallen asleep were raised to life. ⁵³ Those who came out of the tombs went into the holy city after Jesus' resurrection and appeared to many people. ⁵⁴ When the centurion and those who were guarding Jesus with him saw the earthquake and the things that had happened, they were terrified and said, "Truly this was the Son of God." ⁵⁵ Many women who had followed Jesus from Galilee and who had served him were there, watching from a distance. ⁵⁶ Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of Zebedee's sons.

Jesus' Burial

⁵⁷ When it was evening, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who was also a disciple of Jesus. ⁵⁸ He went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then Pilate ordered that it be given to him. ⁵⁹ Joseph took the body, wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, ⁶⁰ and laid it in his own new tomb that he had cut in the rock. He rolled a large stone over the tomb's entrance and left. ⁶¹ Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were there sitting opposite the tomb.

The Guard

⁶² On the next day, which was the day after the Preparation Day, the chief priests and Pharisees gathered in the presence of Pilate ⁶³ and said, "Sir, we remembered what that deceiver said while he was still alive: 'After three days I will rise again.' ⁶⁴ So give a command that the tomb be made secure until the third day. Otherwise his disciples might steal his body and tell the people, 'He is risen from the dead.' And this last deception will be worse than the first."

⁶⁵ Pilate said to them, "You have a guard. Go, make it as secure as you know how." ⁶⁶ So they went and made the tomb secure by sealing the stone and posting a guard.

Hymn of the Day: 406 In the Hour of Trial

- 1 In the hour of trial,
Jesus, plead for me
lest by base denial
I unworthy be.
When you see me waver,
with a look recall,
nor for fear or favor
ever let me fall.
- 2 With forbidden pleasures
should this vain world charm
or its tempting treasures
spread to work me harm,
bring to my remembrance
sad Gethsemane
or, in darker semblance,
cross-crowned Calvary.
- 3 Should your mercy send me
sorrow, toil, and woe,
or should pain attend me
on my path below,
grant that I may never
fail your cross to view;
grant that I may ever
cast my care on you.
- 4 When my life is ending,
though in grief or pain,
when my body changes
back to dust again,
on your truth relying,
through that mortal strife,
Jesus, take me, dying,
to eternal life.

Text: James Montgomery, 1771–1854, alt.
Text: Public domain

Sermon

Sermon Text

Matthew 26:57–75

Jesus Before the Sanhedrin

⁵⁷ Those who had arrested Jesus led him away to Caiaphas, the high priest, where the experts in the law and the elders were assembled. ⁵⁸ Peter was following him at a distance and went as far as the courtyard of the high priest. He went inside and sat down with the guards to see how it would turn out.

⁵⁹ The chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin were looking for false testimony against Jesus so that they could put him to death. ⁶⁰ They found none, even though many false witnesses came forward. Finally two came forward ⁶¹ and said, "This fellow said, 'I am able to destroy the temple of God and rebuild it in three days.'"

⁶² The high priest stood up and said to him, "Have you no answer? What is this that these men are testifying against you?" ⁶³ But Jesus remained silent. Then the high priest said to him, "I place you under oath by the living God: Tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God!"

⁶⁴ Jesus said to him, "It is as you have said. But I tell you, soon you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of power and coming on the clouds of heaven."

⁶⁵ Then the high priest tore his robes and said, "He has spoken blasphemy! Why do we need any more witnesses? See, you have just heard the blasphemy!" ⁶⁶ What do you think?"

They answered, "He is deserving of death!" ⁶⁷ Then they spit in his face and punched him. Some slapped him ⁶⁸ and said, "Prophecy to us, Christ! Who hit you?" ⁶⁹ Meanwhile Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard. A servant girl came to him and said, "You were also with Jesus the Galilean."

⁷⁰ But he denied it in front of everyone, saying, "I don't know what you're talking about."

⁷¹ When Peter went out to the entryway, someone else saw him and said to those who were there, "This fellow was with Jesus of Nazareth."

⁷² Again Peter denied it with an oath and said, "I do not know the man."

⁷³ After a little while those who stood by came and said to Peter, "Surely you are also one of them because even your accent gives you away."

⁷⁴ Then he began to curse and to swear, "I do not know the man!" Just then the rooster crowed. ⁷⁵ And Peter remembered the word Jesus had spoken, "Before the rooster crows, you will deny me three times." And he went outside and wept bitterly.

Offering

Offering Hymn: 655 Before You, God, the Judge of All

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1 Before you, God, the judge of all,
with grief and shame I humbly fall.
I see my sins against you, Lord,
my sins of thought and deed and
word.
They press me sore; to you I flee:
O God, be merciful to me! | but let him draw to you my heart
that truly penitent I be:
O God, be merciful to me! |
| 2 O Lord, my God, to you I pray:
O cast me not in wrath away!
Let your good Spirit ne'er depart, | 3 O Jesus, let your precious blood
be to my soul a cleansing flood.
Turn not, O Lord, your guest away,
but grant that justified I may
go to my house at peace to be:
O God, be merciful to me! |

Text: tr. Carl Döving, 1867–1937, alt.; Magnus B. Landstad, 1802–1880, abr.
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Responsive Prayer

Gracious Lord, according to your will and promise,

You sent your Son into our world to atone for sin and restore eternal life.

You planned his path to the cross,

and he followed it perfectly.

He confronted the blindness of unbelief, the confusion of doubt, and the hurt of death

but was not deterred as he proclaimed your kingdom to the least, the last, and the lost.

As we hear and contemplate the holy record of our Savior's passion and death,

Use the sharp message of the law to empty us of pride and self-reliance.

Humble us as we view the Savior in his humility,

remembering and believing that he endured the cross so we might be freed from its horror.

In his suffering show us our healing,

in his grief show us our joy,

and in his death show us our life.

Hear our prayers, Lord, for the sake of Jesus. Amen.

Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven,

hallowed be thy name,

thy kingdom come,

thy will be done

on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread;

and forgive us our trespasses,

as we forgive those

who trespass against us;

and lead us not into temptation,

but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom

and the power and the glory

forever and ever. Amen.

Blessing

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him.

Amen.

Closing Hymn: 430 Stricken, Smitten, and Afflicted

- 1 Stricken, smitten, and afflicted,
see him dying on the tree!
'Tis the Christ, by man rejected;
yes, my soul, 'tis he, 'tis he.
'Tis the long-expected Prophet,
David's son, yet David's Lord;
proofs I see sufficient of it:
'tis the true and faithful Word.
- 2 Tell me, as you hear him groaning,
was there ever grief like his,
friends through fear his cause
disowning,
foes insulting his distress?
Many hands were raised to wound
him,
none would intervene to save;
but the deepest stroke that pierced
him was the stroke that justice gave.
- 3 If you think of sin but lightly
nor suppose the evil great,
here you see its nature rightly,
here its guilt may estimate.
Mark the sacrifice appointed,
see who bears the awful load;
'tis the Word, the Lord's anointed,
Son of Man and Son of God.
- 4 Here we have a firm foundation,
here the refuge of the lost:
Christ, the rock of our salvation,
is the name of which we boast;
Lamb of God, for sinners wounded,
sacrifice to cancel guilt!
None shall ever be confounded
who on him their hope have built.

Text: Thomas Kelly, 1769–1855, alt.
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