

Rethinking Religion



RETHINKING SACRIFICE

Good Friday

BETHEL EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH | York, Nebraska

March 29, 2024

SERIES THEME: RETHINKING RELIGION

Everyone has assumptions about God. Likewise, everyone has assumptions about religion. Increasingly, those assumptions are negative. Americans are walking away from Christianity in breathtaking numbers. It raises the question. How do those people know if their assumptions about religion are correct? Do they really understand Christianity at all? Do we? Do we truly understand this religion? In the season of Lent, as much as any other, Jesus teaches things that turns the world's assumptions about religion completely upside down. We call it "Christianity." So, in this holy season, let us go straight to Christ and let him replace assumptions with truth. Jesus, help us to rethink religion!

THEME OF THE DAY: RETHINKING SACRIFICE

In most religions the gods demand sacrifice. Followers are to surrender something of value to that god. Money. Time. Possessions. Some religions have even called for human sacrifice. Even people who think they aren't religious sacrifice to false gods. Take the man whose idol is success. What he wants most is to rise through the ranks at work. So, to pursue that idol, he sacrifices his family, spending little time with them. Throughout human history, false gods have expected you to die for them. In Christianity you meet a God willing to die for you. Today we see that the true God does not make our relationship with him conditional on how much we sacrifice for him. Instead, we are at peace with God because he sacrificed himself for us. It is one reason why we call it "Good Friday."

Worship Leader
Organist/Pianist

Pastor Justin Wilkens
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Acknowledgments

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Hymn: 430 Stricken, Smitten, and Afflicted



1 Strick-en, smit-ten, and af-flict-ed, see him dy-ing on the
2 Tell me, as you hear him groan-ing, was there ev-er grief like
3 If you think of sin but light-ly nor sup-pose the e-vil
4 Here we have a firm foun-da-tion, here the ref-u-ge of the



tree! 'Tis the Christ, by man re-ject-ed; yes, my
his, friends through fear his cause dis-own-ing, foes in-
great, here you see its na-ture right-ly, here its
lost: Christ, the rock of our sal-va-tion, is the



soul, 'tis he, 'tis he. 'Tis the long-ex-pect-ed
sult-ing his dis-tress? Man-y hands were raised to
guilt may es-ti-mate. Mark the sac-ri-fice ap-
name of which we boast; Lamb of God, for sin-ners



Proph-et, Da-vid's son, yet Da-vid's Lord; proofs I
wound him, none would in-ter-vene to save; but the
point-ed, see who bears the aw-ful load; 'tis the
wound-ed, sac-ri-fice to can-cel guilt! None shall



see suf-fi-cient of it: 'tis the true and faith-ful Word.
deep-est stroke that pierced him was the stroke that jus-tice gave.
Word, the Lord's a-noint-ed, Son of Man and Son of God.
ev-er be con-found-ed who on him their hope have built.

Text: Thomas Kelly, 1769–1855, alt.
Tune: Geistliche Volkslieder, Paderborn, 1850
Text and tune: Public domain

Confession

Scripture

Ephesians 2:1–3

Made Alive in Christ

¹ You were dead in your trespasses and sins, ² in which you formerly walked when you followed the ways of this present world. You were following the ruler of the domain of the air, the spirit now at work in the people who disobey.

³ Formerly, we all lived among them in the passions of our sinful flesh, as we carried out the desires of the sinful flesh and its thoughts. Like all the others, we were by nature objects of God's wrath.

Hymn: 947 Lamb of God, Pure and Holy

st. 1



1 Lamb of God, pure and ho - ly, who on the cross did suf - fer,



ev - er pa - tient and low - ly, your-self to scorn did of - fer.



All sin you car-ried for us, else had de-spair reigned o'er us:



have mer - cy on us, O Je - sus! O Je - sus!

Text: tr. The Lutheran Hymnal, 1941; Nicolaus Decius, c. 1485–after 1546

Tune: Nicolaus Decius, c. 1485–after 1546

Text and tune: Public domain

Scripture

Galatians 3:10

¹⁰ In fact, those who rely on the works of the law are under a curse. For it is written, "Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the book of the law."

Hymn: 947 Lamb of God, Pure and Holy

st. 2



2 Lamb of God, pure and ho - ly, who on the cross did suf - fer,



ev - er pa - tient and low - ly, your-self to scorn did of - fer.



All sin you car-ried for us, else had de-spair reigned o'er us:



have mer - cy on us, O Je - sus! O Je - sus!

Text: tr. The Lutheran Hymnal, 1941; Nicolaus Decius, c. 1485–after 1546

Tune: Nicolaus Decius, c. 1485–after 1546

Text and tune: Public domain

Scripture

James 4:8–10

⁸ Come near to God, and he will come near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded people. ⁹ Lament, mourn, and weep. Let your laughter be changed into mourning and your joy into gloom. ¹⁰ Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he will lift you up.

Hymn: 947 Lamb of God, Pure and Holy

st. 3



3 Lamb of God, pure and ho - ly, who on the cross did suf - fer,



ev - er pa - tient and low - ly, your-self to scorn did of - fer.

All sin you car-ried for us, else had de-spair reigned o'er us:
 your peace be with us, O Je - sus! O Je - sus!

Text: tr. The Lutheran Hymnal, 1941; Nicolaus Decius, c. 1485–after 1546
 Tune: Nicolaus Decius, c. 1485–after 1546
 Text and tune: Public domain

Prayer of the Day

Let us pray.

God Most Holy, look with mercy on this, your family, for whom our Lord Jesus Christ was willing to be betrayed, be given over into the hands of the wicked, and suffer death upon the cross. Keep us always faithful to him, our only Savior, who now lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever.

Amen.

First Reading

Isaiah 52:13—53:12

It was the Lord’s will to sacrifice his servant so that we might be justified.

The Suffering and Glory of the Servant

¹³ Look, my servant will succeed.
 He will rise. He will be lifted up. He will be highly exalted.
¹⁴ Just as many were appalled at him—
 his appearance was so disfigured that he did not look like a man,
 and his form was disfigured more than any other person—
¹⁵ so he will sprinkle many nations,
 and kings will shut their mouths because of him,
 because they will see something they had never been told before,
 and they will understand something they had never heard before.
¹ Who has believed our report,
 and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?

² He grew up before him like a tender shoot
and like a root from dry ground.
He had no attractiveness and no majesty.
When we saw him, nothing about his appearance made us desire him.

³ He was despised and rejected by men,
a man who knew grief,
who was well acquainted with suffering.
Like someone whom people cannot bear to look at,
he was despised,
and we thought nothing of him.

⁴ Surely he was taking up our weaknesses,
and he was carrying our sufferings.
We thought it was because of God
that he was stricken, smitten, and afflicted,
⁵ but it was because of our rebellion that he was pierced.
He was crushed for the guilt our sins deserved.
The punishment that brought us peace was upon him,
and by his wounds we are healed.

⁶ We all have gone astray like sheep.
Each of us has turned to his own way,
but the Lord has charged all our guilt to him.

⁷ He was oppressed, and he was afflicted,
yet he did not open his mouth.
Like a lamb he was led to the slaughter,
and like a sheep that is silent in front of its shearers,
he did not open his mouth.

⁸ He was taken away without a fair trial and without justice,
and of his generation, who even cared?
So, he was cut off from the land of the living.
He was struck because of the rebellion of my people.

⁹ They would have assigned him a grave with the wicked,
but he was given a grave with the rich in his death,
because he had done no violence,
and no deceit was in his mouth.

¹⁰ Yet it was the Lord's will to crush him
and to allow him to suffer.
Because you made his life a guilt offering, he will see offspring.
He will prolong his days,
and the Lord's gracious plan will succeed in his hand.

¹¹ After his soul experiences anguish, he will see the light of life.

He will provide satisfaction.

Through their knowledge of him, my just servant will justify the many,
for he himself carried their guilt.

¹² Therefore I will give him an allotment among the great,
and with the strong he will share plunder,
because he poured out his life to death,
and he let himself be counted with rebellious sinners.
He himself carried the sin of many,
and he intercedes for the rebels.

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

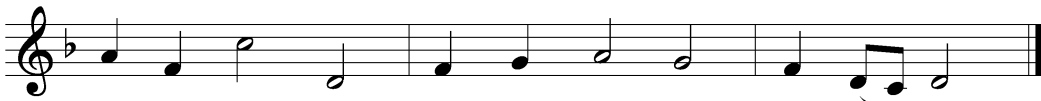
Psalm of the Day: 22D LORD, Why Have You Forsaken Me



1 LORD, why have you for - sak - en me, and why are
2 Yet you are ho - ly and the songs of praise of
3 But I am mocked and put to scorn. All those who
4 Yet you, O LORD, have been my God and on - ly



you so far a - way from my com-plaint and
Is - rael are your throne; when our an - ces - tors
see me laugh and say, "You trust in God, so
hope since I was born. With trou - ble near me,



my dis - tress poured out be - fore you night and day?
called on you, you saved them, res - cued all your own.
let us see the help of God to whom you pray."
none can help. My Sav - ior, leave me not for - lorn.

Text: Christopher L. Webber

Tune: Southern Harmony, 1835, ed. William Walker

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Tune: Public domain

Second Reading

Hebrews 7:26–28

Jesus is a superior high-priest, for he offered a vastly superior sacrifice.

²⁶ This is certainly the kind of high priest we needed: one who is holy, innocent, pure, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens. ²⁷ Unlike the other high priests, he does not need to offer sacrifices on a daily basis, first for his own sins and then for the sins of the people. In fact, he sacrificed for sins once and for all when he offered himself. ²⁸ For the law appoints as high priests men who have weaknesses. But the word of the oath, which came after the law, appointed the Son, who has been brought to his goal forever.

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Gospel Acclamation

Isaiah 53:4

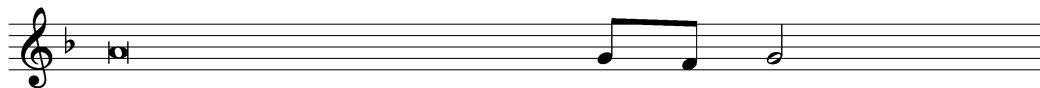


Refrain

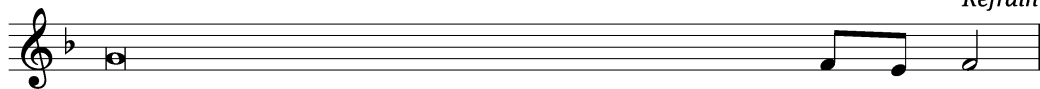


Glo - ry, praise, and hon - or to you, Lord Je - sus Christ.

Tone



Surely he took up our pain and bore our suf - fer - ing,



yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and af - flict - ed.

Tune: © 2021 Northwestern Publishing House. Used by permission: OneLicense no. 713578

Jesus is sacrificed on the cross.

¹⁷ Carrying his own cross, he went out to what is called the Place of a Skull, which in Aramaic is called Golgotha. ¹⁸ There they crucified him with two others, one on each side, and Jesus in the middle.

¹⁹ Pilate also had a notice written and fastened on the cross. It read, "Jesus the Nazarene, the King of the Jews."

²⁰ Many of the Jews read this notice, because the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city, and it was written in Aramaic, Latin, and Greek.

²¹ So the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate, "Do not write, 'The King of the Jews,' but that 'this man said, "I am the King of the Jews.'""

²² Pilate answered, "What I have written, I have written."

²³ When the soldiers crucified Jesus, they took his clothes and divided them into four parts, one part for each soldier. They also took his tunic, which was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom. ²⁴ So they said to one another, "Let's not tear it. Instead, let's cast lots to see who gets it." This was so that the Scripture might be fulfilled which says:

They divided my garments among them
and cast lots for my clothing.

So the soldiers did these things.

²⁵ Jesus' mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene were standing near the cross.

²⁶ When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, "Woman, here is your son!" ²⁷ Then he said to the disciple, "Here is your mother!" And from that time this disciple took her into his own home. ²⁸ After this, knowing that everything had now been finished, and to fulfill the Scripture, Jesus said, "I thirst." ²⁹ A jar full of sour wine was sitting there. So they put a sponge soaked in sour wine on a hyssop branch and held it to his mouth.

³⁰ When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, "It is finished!" Then, bowing his head, he gave up his spirit.

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise be to you, O Christ!

Hymn of the Day: 422 A Lamb Goes Uncomplaining Forth

sts. 1-2



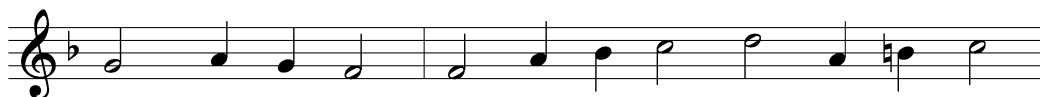
1 A Lamb goes un - com - plain - ing forth, our guilt and
2 This Lamb is Christ, the soul's great friend, the Lamb of



e - vil bear - ing and, lad - en with the sins of earth,
God, our Sav - ior; him God the Fa - ther chose to send



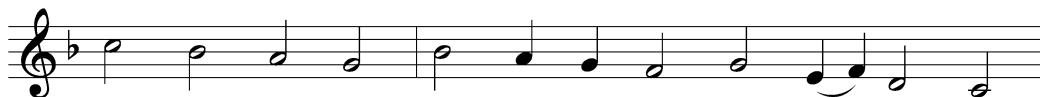
none else the bur - den shar - ing, goes pa - tient on,
to gain for us his fa - vor. "Go forth, my Son,"



grows weak and faint, to slaugh - ter led with - out com - plaint,
the Fa - ther said, "and free my chil - dren from their dread



that spot - less life to of - fer; bears shame and stripes
of guilt and con - dem - na - tion. The wrath and stripes



and wounds and death, an - guish and mock - er - y and saith,
are hard to bear, but by your pas - sion they will share



"Will - ing all this I suf - fer."
the fruit of your sal - va - tion."

Text: tr. The Lutheran Hymnal, 1941, alt.; Paul Gerhardt, 1607-1676, abr.
Tune: Wolfgang Dachstein, c. 1487-1553

Sermon

Apostles' Creed

**I believe in God, the Father Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried.
He descended into hell.
The third day he rose again from the dead.
He ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty.
From there he will come to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy Christian Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.**

Offering

Offering Hymn: 419 Sing, My Tongue, the Glorious Battle

sts. 1-2



1 Sing, my tongue, the glo - rious bat - tle, waged in blood on
2 Tell how, when at length the full - ness of th'ap - point - ed



Cal - va - ry; o'er the cross, tri - um - phant tro - phy,
time was come, he, the Word, was born of wom - an,



tell who strug - gled val - iant - ly; tell how earth's Re -
left for us his Fa - ther's home, blazed the path of



deem - er con - quered— vic - tim gain - ing vic - to - ry.
true o - be - dience, shone as light a - midst the gloom.

Text: Venantius Fortunatus, c. 530–609, abr.; (st. 1): tr. Michael D. Schultz, b. 1963; (st. 2): tr. John Mason Neale, 1818–1866, alt.
Tune: Carl F. Schalk, 1929–2021
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Bidding Prayer

Let us pray for the whole Church, that our gracious Father would defend her from the devil and keep her faithful to her Lord.

Almighty and everlasting God, you have revealed your saving name to the world through Jesus Christ our Lord. Protect us from the assaults of the evil one and help us remain faithful to your Word so that in every adversity, we may stand firm in our faith and give ourselves fully to our Savior's work, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Let us pray for those who serve in the public ministry and for all people of God.

Almighty and everlasting God, you rule over all things for the good of your people. Preserve us from divisive spirits and false teachers. Give your servants the grace to proclaim Christ joyfully in word and deed so that all who hear them may come to know their Savior better and be strengthened for their lives of service, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Let us pray for those who are being instructed in the Word, that they remain firm in the simple faith of Baptism.

Almighty and everlasting God, you make us your own dear children by the washing of rebirth and renewal in the Holy Spirit. Give strength to all who are buried with Christ in Baptism, that each day they may die to sin and rise again to live new and holy lives, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Let us pray for our earthly government, our rulers, and all who are in authority.

Almighty and everlasting God, you have established earthly government to keep a measure of order in this dying world and to protect us from the disorder of sin. Give to all rulers the wisdom to govern well and to all citizens the desire to obey them, so that we may live peaceful lives in all godliness and holiness, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Let us pray that our gracious Father would protect us and our communities from the many earthly calamities that threaten us.

Almighty and everlasting God, on all sides we are surrounded by danger from wars and famine, from disease and pestilence, with the devil begrudging us every minute of our lives. Protect us from all these miseries so that your name may still be glorified in them and so that we may safely pass through them to your heavenly kingdom, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Let us pray for those who are outside the Church, that they may come to know the one, true God and Jesus Christ, whom he has sent.

Almighty and everlasting God, your Son was lifted up on the cross so that he might draw all people to himself. Through the proclamation of your gospel, mercifully gather a people that are your very own, that we may join together around your throne in glory to praise and thank you forever, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Let us pray for our enemies and for all those who hate us.

Almighty and everlasting God, no one can harm us without grieving you, whose name we bear. We ask that you change the hearts of those who work against us and who hate us without reason. Give them repentance and faith so that they may be glad with us and find joy in your love, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Let us pray for all who suffer under cross and trial.

Almighty and everlasting God, you sent your Son into the world to bear our grief and to carry our sorrows. Help those who are suffering for your name's sake and who are struggling against

temptation, that they may not be overwhelmed with sadness but find relief in your grace, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

THE SACRAMENT

Preface

CW 165

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them up to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give him thanks and praise.

It is truly good and right that we should at all times and in all places give you thanks, O Lord, holy Father, almighty and everlasting God, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who brought the gift of salvation to all people by his death on the tree of the cross so that the devil, who overcame us by a tree, would in turn by a tree be overcome. Therefore, with all the saints on earth and hosts of heaven, we praise your holy name and join their glorious song:

Holy, holy, holy Lord God of heavenly hosts: heaven and earth are full of your glory.

Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.

Prayer of Thanksgiving

We give thanks to you, O God, through your dear Son, Jesus Christ, whom you sent to be our Savior, our Redeemer, and the messenger of your grace. Through him you made all things; in him you are well pleased. He is the incarnate Word, conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. To fulfill your promises, he stretched out his hands on the cross and released from eternal death all who believe in you.

As we remember Jesus' death and resurrection, we thank you that you have gathered us together to receive your Son's body and blood. Send us your Spirit, unite us as one, and strengthen our faith so that we may praise you in your Son, Jesus Christ. Through him, we glorify and honor you, O God our Father, with the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

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.**

Words of Institution

Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night he was betrayed, took bread; and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my + body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

Then he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you; this is my + blood of the new covenant, which is poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me."

The peace of the Lord be with you always.

Amen.

Distribution

Close Communion *We ask that only those who have previously spoken to our pastor or are members in good standing of this or another WELS or ELS congregation come to Holy Communion today. Our practice of Close Communion (which has been the practice of the Christian Church throughout the ages) is in no way trying to judge anyone's faith. What we are trying to do is follow the Bible's clear teaching (1 Corinthians 11) to first study God's Word together. As we do so, we can share with/review with you what the Lord's Supper is all about. You, then, also have an opportunity*

to examine what we believe and teach before you come to the Lord's Supper and make a public profession that you agree with what we teach.

Please use this time for silent meditation. Examination Questions on p.295 in hymnal.

Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good;
his mercy endures forever.

Whenever we eat this bread and drink this cup,
we proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

We give thanks, almighty God, that you have refreshed us with this saving gift. We pray that through it you will strengthen our faith in you and increase our love for one another. We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

Dialogue of the Cross

We glory in your cross, O Lord,
and we praise your holy resurrection,
for by your cross, joy has come into the world.

May God be gracious to us and bless us
and make his face shine on us—
**so that your ways may be known on earth
your salvation among all nations.**

We glory in your cross, O Lord,
and we praise your holy resurrection,
for by your cross, joy has come into the world.

May the peoples praise you, God;
may all the peoples praise you.

**May God bless us still,
so that all the ends of the earth will fear him.**

We glory in your cross, O Lord,
and we praise your holy resurrection,
for by your cross, joy has come into the world.

Brief silence

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

By your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Hymn: 538 Jesus, My Great High Priest

sts. 1-2



1 Je - sus, my great High Priest, of - fered his blood and
2 To Christ, my sub - sti - tute, will I com - mit my



died; my guilt - y con - science seeks no sac - ri -
cause; he an - swers and ful - fills his Fa - ther's



fi - ce be - side. His pow'r - ful blood did once a -
bro - ken laws. Be - hold my soul at free - dom



tone, and now it pleads be - fore the throne.
set - my Je - sus paid the dread - ful debt!

Text: Isaac Watts, 1674-1748, abr., alt.

Tune: Roger R. Ross, 1817-1899

Text and tune: Public domain

