

Summary of September 16

This week we covered chapter 19 of St. John's Gospel. This chapter focused on our Lord's Passion, Trial and Crucifixion. Because of the singular importance of this passage, we spent a little time contemplating the reason our Lord died for us and a reflection was shared with the class.

Reflection: Why did Jesus Christ have to die?

Sin is what separates us from God. Because of our first parent's sin -and because of all of our sins- we are separated from God and need to be restored. Every sin needs to be atoned for and forgiven, in order for us to be reconciled with God. Sin divided us from God and brought a curse of death upon us because we chose to reject God and chose the very thing that God said would bring us death. We were separated from God and separation from God IS death.

So Jesus came to restore this lost unity. In order to destroy the power of death, which was the central fact of our existence (that we all die), in order to bring a solution to this problem of death and our being divided from God, the Son of God became man. He became man, ultimately, in order to deify our humanity, to heal it through His divinity, and to actually taste death for us. He experienced death in order to break the power of death so that it no longer has power over humanity.

Just as through one man's sin (i.e. Adam's), sin and death had power over all of mankind, likewise through the incarnation of the Only-begotten Son & Word of God, Jesus, who is divine, experienced death for all of us, in order to break the power of death by being resurrected through His divinity. He ended the reign of death over mankind, and destroyed the power of death. This is why St. Paul can say, "Where O Death is your victory, where O Death is your sting?" This is why Jesus Christ died.

Therefore when people act or imply that sin doesn't matter, they couldn't be more wrong. Every sin matters because every sin has to be atoned for, every sin is a separation and a moving away from God. This is why St. Paul says, when Christians go back and return to a life of sin, they are, in a sense, "re-crucifying" the Son of God (Heb 6:6). This is because Jesus took every sin upon Himself on the Holy Cross.

As we read through this Scriptural passage we have to remember one thing: the passage will describe Jesus' human sufferings but what remains indescribable is the cosmic effect of sin that He takes on Himself. This produces a spiritual suffering far worse than His human sufferings. In other words, as horrible as our Lord's human suffering was, many people have suffered physically more than our Lord. But what our Lord endures spiritually by taking on the sin of the world, produces the greatest spiritual suffering any person could ever know or experience. This is far beyond any human suffering.

NO ONE has endured the spiritual suffering that our Lord endured because He suffered for every one of our sins in order to heal them. In order to take them on Himself and offer Himself for our healing. Therefore, movies like the Passion which only show or focus on the physical suffering, can tempt us to miss the real depth of Jesus' suffering and redemption which He accomplished for us.

Conclusion:

As a result of our Lord's death for us, how ought we to live? We should live like those who have been rescued or saved from death -like those who have a new lease on life- because in Christ, we truly do. In Christ we have a new lease on eternal life! Glory to Jesus Christ! Glory to Him forever!

**Here are some other examples of what we covered:
Read 19:34-37**

ICBS v.34 blood and water: In Num 20 Moses is directed by God to take a rod and strike a rock and out of it would come water for the people of Israel to drink because they were thirsty in the desert. But in an important variation of this story, as read in Jewish tradition, in the Aramaic rendition both blood and water gushed forth from the rock struck by Moses (Palestinian Targum on Num 20:11). St. Paul in his epistles interprets this rock as a symbol or type of Christ, from which flows the spiritual drink of the Eucharist (1 Cor 10:4) and the Spirit (1 Cor 12:13). Just as the Israelites were dying of thirst in the desert, the entire world is dying for thirst of God and the Divine Life that only He can give. Jesus Christ, like the rock, was struck and pierced, and out of Him came blood and water for our salvation.

ICBS v.34 According to St. John Chrysostom the water and blood streaming from the side of Christ are symbolic of the new life we received in Baptism (3:5) and the nourishment we receive in the Eucharist (6:53) (CCC 1225). It indicates, moreover, that the Church which is made by these Mysteries, is the bride of Christ that issues from His side, just as Eve came forth from the side of Adam Gen (2:21-23).

ICBS v.35 He tells the truth: The evangelist St. John verifies the historical facts of the Crucifixion as an eyewitness (19:26).

ICBS v.36 Not a bone shall be broken: This restriction was a part of Israel's Passover legislation that disqualified lambs with blemishes and broken bones from being offered for Passover (Num 9:11-12). Remember Jesus is our Passover Lamb who takes away the sins of the world. This is why the bread used in the Divine Liturgy is referred to in Eastern tradition as "the lamb" and why we refer to the feast of our Lord's Resurrection as "Pascha" rather than Easter.

ICBS v.37 They shall look: A ref. to Zech 12:10. Zechariah describes a day of mourning for Jerusalem, which will weep with remorse that its sins have pierced the Messiah. It is also a day of compassion, when God opens a fountain to cleanse the city of its iniquities (Zech 13:1). Jesus fulfills this, and many prophesies in the Psalms, by His death on the Cross.

ICBS v.42 Day of Preparation: The Sabbath was fast approaching (sundown on Friday), and by sundown of Friday all labor must cease (Lk 23:56), and so corpses must be quickly buried (Deut 21:22-23).

**Glory to Him forever!
Your brother, Sub-Dn. Lazarus**