

ST. JOHN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH
COMPASS, PA

April 15, 2022 – GOOD FRIDAY, YR. C

The Rev. Dr. Nina George-Hacker

Homily: “*Healing and Hope through the Passion of Christ*”*

Isaiah 52:13—53:12	(God’s Servant suffered for our transgressions)
Psalm 22	(A prayer of repentance and for forgiveness)
Hebrews 4:14–16; 5:7–9	(There is no salvation without the blood of Jesus Christ)
St. John 18:1—19:42	(Jesus was crucified for us)

How can we hear St. John's account of Jesus' Passion and not be moved by it? Recently, I read that someone asked a teenager about the now-classic 2004 film, “The Passion of Christ.” The question was: “What would you think of someone who didn’t cry while watching the movie?” The young person responded, “He would be evil.” That youth was so moved by watching the movie that he could not understand how anyone could fail to be moved by watching it. The Passion of Jesus *does* move us. It moves us because Jesus suffered in a very real, graphic, and painful way.

In our first lesson from the prophet Isaiah (53:4-5,7) we heard a prophecy of Jesus’ passion, “Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities ... He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter”

Psalm 22, read on both Maundy Thursday and Good Friday, also foretells the suffering of Our Lord upon the Cross: “scorned by men, and despised by the people. All who see me mock at me ... they wag their heads; ‘He committed his cause to the Lord; let him deliver him, let him rescue him, for he delights in him!’ they have pierced my hands and feet—I can count all my bones—they stare and gloat over me; they divide my garments among them, and for my raiment they cast lots.”

The Passion of Jesus moves us because we know in our hearts that we are the ones who have inflicted this suffering on Our Lord. It was not just the chief priests and the cruel Roman soldiers who brought this suffering on Jesus—they were only the instruments of God’s will. It was our sins that inflicted this suffering on Christ.

Perhaps sadder still, whenever we sin, we crucify Jesus once more. We nail Him to the cross again, because Christ is outside of time, having no past, present, or future. As Hebrews 13:8 tells us, He is “the same yesterday, today and forever.” So then, St. John's account of the Passion of Jesus should move us to flee from sin, to leave sin behind.

This is why we need the Sacrament of Reconciliation—that is, Confession and Absolution—because the Passion of Jesus shows us who we truly are: sinners who have crucified Our Lord. In the Sacrament of Reconciliation, we turn to Jesus again and ask for His mercy.

And through the Passion of Jesus, we receive His forgiveness. As Isaiah (53:5) reminds us, “through his wounds we are healed.” Although it seems to make no sense to us, particularly with our postmodern sensibilities, it is nevertheless true that through the bloody stripes made by the whip upon Jesus’ back, through the bleeding holes in His hands and feet, we receive healing for our souls and bodies, even our *very lives*.

When things in our lives hurt us, and we are pained by what we see happening in the world around us, when we need healing and reassurance, even when it is not Holy Week, we can turn to meditating on the Passion of Jesus and find the answer there, “through his wounds we are healed.”

In fact, in Saint Luke’s account of the Passion of Christ, there are two instances of healing recorded: First, Jesus healed the ear of the high priest’s servant which Peter cut off with a sword, during Jesus’ arrest in Gethsemane (Luke 22:50-51). The second was when a longstanding enmity was healed between King Herod, a Jew, and Pilate, a Roman Procurator, as together they agreed that Jesus should be put to death (Luke 23:12).

The crowd that welcomed Christ with palm branches turned against Him just as quickly as they had hailed Him as their king, abandoning Jesus to a lonely death. Peter, too, turned from Jesus to save his own image. Do we hear our conscience crowing like that rooster when we sin?

May God give us grace to open our spiritual eyes and frankly see how we have offended Christ, and in fact, the ways in which we hurt Him daily. And then, may God grant us the courage to flee from sin and be restored, remembering that “through his wounds, we are healed.”¹

I would like to close with an adaptation of a traditional prayer—the “*Anima Christi*”—which I believe fits well our intentions of this night:

“Passion of Christ, strengthen us! Strengthen us under the pressure of temptation.

Strengthen us when principle is at stake. Strengthen us to do Your Will, Lord God.

Strengthen us in moments of suffering, in times of loneliness, in periods of depression.

Strengthen us that we may never swerve from You, dear Christ, nor weaken

... through a desire to be popular, or through hope of social distinction.

Strengthen us to accept our cross and carry it bravely to the end.

On the battlefield of life, stand by us that we may never prove traitors in the ranks.

Stand by us that we may not be dazzled by the glitter and glow of the enemy camp. Amen.”²

Even after Good Friday is past, I invite you to continue to meditate on the Passion of Christ. Allow it to become a source of inner healing for your soul. And do not waste the rest of this week. Spend the rest of the Great Triduum, that is, the Three Days of Our Lord’s Passion and Death—Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday—with Jesus, meditating on his Passion.

As you do, Christ will lead you into the peace, joy, and hope of Easter morning. *Amen.*

¹ Adapt. N. George-Hacker, 3 April 2015, St. Christopher’s Episcopal Church, Cobleskill NY. Used with permission.

² Adapt. Tommy Lane, “The Passion of Jesus Shows Us Up as Sinners and Heals Us,” 2007 <http://www.ftommylane.com/homilies/year_c/palm_sunday.htm> 1 April 2015.

³ Adapt. “Passion of Christ, Strengthen Me, Prayer,” © 2015, [Catholic Online](http://www.catholic.org/prayers/prayer.php?p=1687) <<http://www.catholic.org/prayers/prayer.php?p=1687>> 1 April 2015.