

In Jesus' name. **Amen.**

Dear fellow redeemed in Christ,

Today we consider two different groups of people who witnessed part of Jesus' passion.

One of those groups, a crowd, or if you prefer something a little more accurate, a mob, actually brought about His suffering and influenced the judge to condemn Him.

The other group consisted of those responding to this unjust and pitiless action.

These were those who mourned and lamented Jesus' condemnation and crucifixion.

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*We read as follows in Jesus' name:*

But they all cried out together, "Away with this Man, and release to us Barabbas" ... "Crucify, crucify Him!" ... And their voices prevailed. So Pilate decided that their demand should be granted. He released the man who had been thrown into prison for insurrection and murder, for whom they asked, but he delivered Jesus over to their will.

And as they led Him away... there followed Him a great multitude of the people and of women who were mourning and lamenting for Him. But turning to them Jesus said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For behold, the days are coming when they will say, 'Blessed are the barren and the wombs that never bore and the breasts that never nursed!' Then they will begin to say to the mountains, 'Fall on us,' and to the hills, 'Cover us.' For if they do these things when the wood is green, what will happen when it is dry?" (ESV)

*This is Your Word, heavenly Father; sanctify us in the truth, Your Word is Truth. Amen.* (John 17:17)

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We meet both of these groups of witnesses early on Good Friday.

Jesus has already been unjustly condemned by the Jewish Counsel, the Sanhedrin.

Led by the High Priest, they brought Jesus before Pontius Pilate, accusing Him, not of blaspheme, which was what they condemned Him for in their own sham court, but of raising up an insurrection among the people, presumably against the Roman occupation.

It was at this trial before Pilate that the condemning mob is gathered.

What they witness is a power struggle between the Jewish leaders and Pilate.

Pilate was to be concerned for justice; not only for the sake of the falsely accused Jesus but also for the whole city: the citizens, the pilgrims, his soldiers, and even the Sanhedrin.

No less than three times he rightly declares Jesus innocent of all charges.

The Jewish leadership should have been concerned for justice too, according to God's law, but they twist and change the narrative to try to deceive both Pilate and the gathered crowd.

The witnessing crowd is then enlisted by the Jewish leaders to take action,

to be part of something much bigger than themselves,

to be part of their own mini-insurrection to intimidate the Roman governor.

When asked which they desired to be released, Barabbas, a condemned insurrectionist and murderer, or Jesus, a Man declared to be innocent (who encouraged proper honor and obedience to the gov't), blindly influenced by the high priests and without pity or concern for true justice, they cry out

**"Away with this Man, and release to us Barabbas... Crucify, crucify Him!"**

The urgency and loud cries of their demands intensify the situation, and Pilate grants their will.

Jesus' declaration of "woe" from last week applied to the Jewish leaders and even to the crowd:

**"Woe to you who laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep."**<sup>Luke6:25</sup>

The chief priests and Sanhedrin and even the crowd got what they wanted.

They laughed at and taunted Jesus as He hung on the cross paying for the injustice.

Those who did not repent, now mourn and weep in hell's anguish,

and when they rise from the dead on the last day, they will stand before their infinitely just Judge.

No amount of narrative spinning will help them on that day.

No pity will be shown to them, who had no pity upon their Lord and Savior.

And they will depart from before Him into the eternal fire

where there will be endless weeping and gnashing of teeth.

...

The other crowd is then also brought to action.

This crowd gathered around Jesus on His way to His execution.

They witnessed a Man who had done nothing but help and heal the people,

suffering from the beatings and scourging, too weak now to carry His own cross.

These would have been the followers of Jesus, the ones supposedly incited to insurrection,

and yet, all they do is mourn and lament, not raise up arms.

They cry out, too, but theirs is a cry of pity for this poor Soul.

They lament the injustice, but they are helpless to do anything other than cry and pray.

But even here, Jesus shows that His concern is not for Himself, but for them and the condemning crowd.

**"Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children."**

He sees and knows the coming judgment upon this city; it will be two-fold:

1. At the destruction to come as Rome utterly destroyed Jerusalem in 70 AD, and

2. When they stand before Him when He *comes again to judge the living and the dead*.

Even now, Jesus calls the city, these crowds, to repentance so that they might escape these horrors,

because in those days, not even the mountains and hills will be able to hide them.

Last week, we heard Jesus pronounce: **"Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh."**<sup>Luke6:21</sup>

**You who weep now** are you who mourn for your own sin that brought Jesus to earth to die.

You weep because of the pity that you have not had on your fellow sinners.

You mourn because you have not **loved your enemies, nor shown good to those that hate you,**

**nor prayed for those who have abused you,** as your forgiving Savior has commanded you. <sup>Luke6:27-28</sup>

You cry out on account of the grudges that you have held, rather than giving Christ's forgiveness.

You are those who lament the unjust acts and words that are perpetrated against your fellow man

and whose pity leads you to pray for the Lord's mercy and to acts of love.

Jesus speaks of these as blessed because in the time of the green wood, that is

when His life of love, pity, mercy and perfect obedience...

when His innocent suffering and death to take away your sins are presented before you,

you have sought His forgiveness... and received it.

You are blessed because you live at peace with God through Jesus' blood and merit.

Then regardless of the unjust and pitiless cries of a society that desires to cancel you,  
just as the Jewish leaders desired to cancel Jesus,  
you have boldness to stand before the eternal Judge,  
who has instead cancelled all your – and their – sins.  
You can then have confidence in sharing Christ's pity and love to your offenders,  
praying for them and doing good to them, that they may also repent and receive forgiveness.  
You can boldly pray for mercy on behalf of those unjustly condemned and pitilessly beaten down,  
or ruthlessly plunged into an unjust war.  
And just as boldly, you can pray for the Lord's mercy on those perpetrating such offenses.

Then, by those who witness and would judge rightly, Christ's Church would be known,  
not as a condemning mob, but as a merciful assembly that listens to her Savior,  
not blindly, but with earnest zeal and with pity and compassion for your fellow sinners,  
just as Jesus has done for you.

Thanks be to God. **Amen.**

*Soli Deo Gloria*