

In Jesus' name. Amen.

Dear Fellow Redeemed,

We have finally come to Jesus' exodus.

The Passover Lamb had been selected 4 days prior, as Jesus rode into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday.

Jesus has been condemned by the Jewish Sanhedrin for righteously confessing to be the Christ.

He had been declared innocent by Pilate and Herod multiple times, but to no avail.

Interesting to note: Pilate never condemned Jesus; he just turned him over to the will of the mob.

But the idea of the Passover Lamb was its sacrifice to save the life of those that slaughtered it.

Consider this as we read the continuation of the passion of Jesus Christ from the Gospel of St. Luke:

*As follows in Jesus' name:*

Two others, who were criminals, were led away to be put to death with Him. And when they came to the place that is called The Skull, there they crucified Him, and the criminals, one on His right and one on His left. And Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." And they cast lots to divide His garments. And the people stood by, watching, but the rulers scoffed at Him, saying, "**He saved others; let Him save Himself**, if He is the Christ of God, His Chosen One!" The soldiers also mocked Him, coming up and offering Him sour wine and saying, "If You are the King of the Jews, **save Yourself!**" There was also an inscription over Him, "This is the King of the Jews."

One of the criminals who were hanged railed at Him, saying, "Are You not the Christ? **Save Yourself and us!**" But the other rebuked Him, saying, "Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we are receiving the due reward of our deeds; but this Man has done nothing wrong." And he said, "Jesus, remember me when You come into Your kingdom." And He said to him, "Truly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in paradise."

It was now about the sixth hour, and there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour, while the sun's light failed. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two. Then Jesus, calling out with a loud voice, said, "Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit!" And having said this He breathed His last. Now when the centurion saw what had taken place, he praised God, saying, "Certainly this Man was innocent!" And all the crowds that had assembled for this spectacle, when they saw what had taken place, returned home beating their breasts. And all His acquaintances and the women who had followed Him from Galilee stood at a distance watching these things.<sup>(ESV)</sup>

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

Jesus was surrounded by those who were guilty of His crucifixion.

**Criminals** railing at him; Roman **soldiers** mocking Him; **Jewish rulers** scoffing at Him.

They taunted Him, each latching onto the accusation written above His head, **King of the Jews**.

But even more biting is the ridicule He received as the Christ, as the Savior.

"**He saved others, let Him save Himself, if He is the Christ of God.**" - the rulers

"**If You are the King of the Jews, save Yourself!**" - the soldiers

"**Are You not the Christ? Save Yourself and us!**" - the criminal

Do you hear the devil's temptation in them? "**If you are the Son of God, turn the stone into bread.**"

...a temptation for Jesus to doubt who He is, to doubt why He is suffering all this torment/shame.

...a temptation for Jesus to use His powers for His own welfare.

...a temptation to stop His suffering for these, and all us ingrates,

whose hearts turn cold to His suffering for them, while we indulge in yet the same pet sins.  
How easy it would have been to remove Himself from the cross.

Yet Jesus is not as fickle as we are. **His steadfast love endures forever.**

He remained on the cross, suffering for and saving the world.

And He continued His steadfast love, even for those who stripped Him of His clothes and dignity,  
nailed Him to the cross, and cast lots for the only earthly possessions He had in the world.

His first words were for them, "**Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.**"

...

Nor does He despise the last minute convert.

— when the criminal petitioned Him, "**Jesus, remember me when You come into Your kingdom.**"

Here we see the miracle of faith worked by the Spirit as this criminal, who previously railed at Jesus,  
took the proverbial "step back" and analyzed the situation, probably recalling his earlier instruction.

"Who prays to God for forgiveness for His executioners?"

"Who patiently endures as a suffering Servant while His own people disown Him?"

"Is it not the Christ, the Son of David; the one to sit on David's throne forever?"

Even this criminal can see, and so declares, that "**this Man has done nothing wrong.**"

He acknowledges and confesses his own sins and the appropriateness of the punishment,  
and then expresses his faith in the resurrection and Jesus' kingship over *the living and the dead*.

And Jesus, whose blood at that very moment soaked into the post and the lintel of the cross,  
passed over him in judgment and declared the criminal pardoned and offered him peace:

"**Truly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in paradise.**"

This man, that very day, was baptized in the baptism that Jesus was baptized with.

He would, as it were, pass through the Red Sea and the Jordan River at the same time  
and enter into paradise, the Promised Land, free from the bondage and burden of sin and Satan.

...

The darkness of the sun failing to give its light was nothing in comparison to the darkness  
cast over Jesus' soul as His Father forsook Him.

?How could creation not mourn its Master's affliction?

And yet, Jesus does not forsake His faith, His trust in the Lord's promises.

He knows who He is: the Christ of God.

He knows that He is the only One who can save the world from sin, and that this is the only way.

He knows the prophecies, that He must suffer... and be forsaken... and die.

Ps. 16:10

And so He trusts that though He cannot now feel any of God's mercy or love,  
and though His Father has forsaken Him to suffer hell,

**His soul will not be abandoned to Sheol, nor will His body see corruption.**

And so in St. Luke's account, Jesus' final words on the cross begin just as He started them —  
in a prayer to His heavenly Father — "**Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit!**"

And thus did Jesus expire, He breathed the last breath of His state of humiliation.

Death did not take it from Him, but He gave it up of His own will;  
a true sacrifice from a willing victim.

...

After the exodus from Egypt, at the foot of Mt. Sinai, Moses and Israel set up the Tabernacle.

It was an earthly picture of the heavenly reality.

A heavy curtain separated the Lord's Ark of the Covenant in the Holy of Holies from the world.

Only the appointed High Priest, and only once a year, and only with the blood of atonement,

could enter this sacred, holy place.

That curtain hung as the symbol of separation between sinful man and the Holy God.

But at Jesus' crucifixion, as He made the atonement for all sin,

and all the work of redemption was accomplished,

the Father listened to the prayer of His Son and your sins were forgiven.

The Father tore the curtain from top to bottom as peace between you and Him was made.

You now have complete access to His holy throne *through Jesus Christ, His Son our Lord...*

While paradise is still something that we look forward to while we wander this earth,

it is already yours, as surely as the Children of Israel entered the Promised Land.

...

But this is not the end of the story.

St. Luke has one more declaration of innocence to pronounce on Jesus.

Not just **the people** who **stood by/all the crowds that had assembled for this spectacle**,

who in guilt and sorrow **returned home beating their breasts**,

nor only the **women who had followed Him** who were **watching these things at a distance**.

but even the centurion, the hardened, earthy, gentile, Roman centurion,

one of those who had so recently jeered Him as he oversaw His execution

now could not help himself but exclaim the truth as he saw it, "**Certainly this Man was innocent!**"

And what a comfort that is for you:

That this Passover Lamb, as innocent as the eternal day He was begotten of His heavenly Father,

as guiltless as the day He was miraculously conceived,

willingly, blamelessly, laid down His life to save us who crucified Him.

So now, it is not a Roman governor, a tetrarch, a criminal, nor a centurion,

but your heavenly Father and your divine Brother and King, Jesus Christ, who declares you innocent

and grants you true pardon and peace from all your sins.

In Jesus' name. **Amen.**

*Soli Deo Gloria*