**Matthew 27:45-46 April 5,6, 2022**

**The Wound of Abandonment**

Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

We have heard about so many wounds that were inflicted by us in our sin and rebellion against God, our sin which led Jesus to cross and is the reason he went through this pain. These wound we’ve seen in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke of Jesus suffering, and death! We have pondered together these last few weeks the wounds of betrayal, apathy, denial, and mockery. We have seen our own lives reflected in Judas, in those three sleepy disciples, in Peter, and in the Roman soldiers. Yet of all the wounds our Lord received, none so struck and terrorized and weighed on Him as the one we ponder this evening. And while in the Passion of Jesus Christ we could ponder the abandonment of His disciples, who ran in the Garden when they came to arrest Jesus in order to save themselves. We could ponder the abandonment of the crowds and hordes of people who cheer for Christ at His triumphal entry into Jerusalem, and prepare the way for him with palm branches and cloaks, only to shout and cheer for his crucifixion a few days later. Those would be applicable pictures of the abandonment that Jesus was wounded with in His Passion, we instead look to something worse. This particular wound is special, it’s unique, it’s different and it’s the most telling. It’s the worst of the wounds that Christ has to endure because of who did it and what it would be like to experience it. We did not inflict this wound, though we were the cause of it. It came from His Father: the wound of abandonment.

Why does a child get so upset when they are lost in a supermarket or a mall or at a park? Unfamiliar surroundings and strangers are certainly scary in themselves, but they didn’t just arrive there by accident. They were brought there usually by their parents, the ones who protect them, love them, care for them, and provide for them. For their parents to be gone can plant the false assumption into their mind that their parents have abandoned them, that they don’t love them or that they don’t want them to be around. That thought, as wrong as it may be, can lead a child to break down and cry, be frantic and desperate and scared and look for their parents wildly in order to be found again. But it’s that fear, that their parents don’t love them and have abandoned them that is the scariest notion for a child to wrestle with when they are left alone in a strange place.

This fear is unfounded when the child is found by their parents and see that they would never abandon them, but love them and are happy to be with them again. But tonight we must ponder the love that God has for us children, by sacrificing His most beloved Son for us. God did abandon His Son on the cross. It happened. We heard Jesus words tonight. “My God, My God, why have You forsaken me?” God cannot have fellowship with sin and as Jesus has taken upon himself the sin of the entire world and all sin of all time, God must abandon him to the pains and horrors of hell for us. The child in this case is not assuming that the parent has abandoned them, something unthinkable for a loving parent to do. For any parent in this room to think that you would ever, under any circumstance, abandon your child is madness, but there was no other way for God, Our Heavenly Father, to save His children, and so God shows His love for us in forsaking His own beloved Son on the cross. To wound him with abandonment and for Jesus to experience hell for us in our place.

From out of the depth of His agony on the cross, our Lord cried out the words of Psalm 22: *“My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?”* As all the sin of the world is laid upon the Lamb of God, as He takes all of it as His very own, He experiences in Himself what every one of those sins demands. He will drink from the cup that was spoken of in the Garden, the cup that he prayed would be taken from him, but there was no other way. He will taste it all for us. He will know for us the loneliness so profound that its pain is unimaginable. How can we even begin to understand what it was like for Him in that moment? We have never lived outside of the presence of God. We have never lived separated from the warmth and love of God even if we deny Him, hate Him and forsake Him, He still remains with us while we are here on Earth. Jesus is the Eternal Son, who took on human flesh without ever leaving the presence of His Father. He is the Word made flesh, who lived among us as all men were meant to live, conscious of His Father’s never-failing love and the presence of His hand that provides all we need and all we have. All of this is now withdrawn, and Jesus is all alone, abandoned with only our sin upon himself as he hangs in agony.

It is a huge pet peeve of mine whenever secular sources like movies, television, or even people who have no understanding of theological concepts start talking about Hell. One of the most popular misconceptions about Hell is that it’s some kind of rad and awesome party. Hell is where the cool people go, heaven is for nerds, losers, boring goody two shoes. People joke about hell, saying, “Well, at least I will have a lot of company there.” What fools….what poor misguided fools. One of the greatest lies Satan has ever sold to our world is that sin is good and hell isn’t so bad. For some it’s willful ignorance, but for others it’s denial and fear of facing the truth of hell. But the Scriptures accurately describe what hell is actually like. Think of the story of Lazarus and the rich man. In that story, the rich man is all alone. Lazarus has angels for company as well as Abraham, to whom he is so close that he lays his head on him for comfort. The rich man hungers and thirsts for a human touch. *“Send Lazarus to dip the end of His finger in water to cool my tongue, for I am in anguish in this flame.”* He is alone—all alone—and he will be alone forever. Hell’s pain is abandonment, but self abandonment, it’s not God’s abandonment of you, it’s You’re abandonment from God. It’s like the sadness a child realizes if they run away from home and abandon their parents. It doesn’t take long for a child to realize, without Mom and Dad they have no room, no stuff, no home, no food, no one to take care of them, provide for them, and help them. It’s why it doesn’t take a child long to return home, but with hell that isn’t an option. It’s an eternal self abandonment of God. Ponder that, and you will begin to understand the reality of hell. Ponder that, and you will see its true terror. Ponder that, and you will recognize the love that your Savior Jesus Christ has for you and how it was so great that He chose to enter that loneliness Himself and to endure it in your place that you might be set free from it forever. That you will be in God’s house for all eternity, never alone, never abandoned, and never experiencing any of the realities of hell.

Death still brings anguish though, and reminders of our mortal life can bring the fear of hell, the fear of being abandoned by God on our last day here on Earth. But because Jesus endured the wound of abandonment that our every sin demands of God, because He drank all of that cup of suffering, you can look to your Savior and pray with the confidence of being heard the words of the final verse that we will look at so closely, our theme hymn, O Sacred Head Now Wounded, verse 6: **My Savior, be Thou near me when death is at my door;**  
**Then let Thy presence cheer me, forsake me nevermore!**  
**When soul and body languish, O leave me not alone,**  
**But take away mine anguish by virtue of Thine own!**

Lord, take our anguish, our fears, our frantic and mad cries like a child who is seemingly abandoned in a public place, and remind us of Your Love and the love of our Savior Jesus Christ, who was abandoned by His beloved Father, so that we would never have to experience that pain in our lives.

Do you see it now? You will never have to know what Jesus went through in those darkest hours. You will never have to face life or suffering or even death alone. He has made sure of that. He will be with you. He will walk with you every step of the way. For you hell itself is undone, sin forgiven, death destroyed. Your Savior, Your Shepherd, attends you through the valley of the shadow of death so that you fear no evil, for He is with you. His rod and His staff, they comfort you. He feeds you in green pastures with His own body and blood. He brings you out from the valley of darkness into the glorious light of the never-ending day in the kingdom of our Father.

Wounds hurt, but they heal and soon, on a day not far away, when the horrors of hell are put to rest, when the garments stained with blood are a brilliant white, we will see the restored body of our Savior and know that His wounds and His pain and His suffering both physical and mental were all but stages of His Passion and a greater joy was to come. He does not stay dead, He is not on the cross, he is not in the tomb, soon we will see and say with confidence. He…is Risen!

Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding will keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus always. Amen.