

The Cross and the Crown: Christs Final Hour

Bible Verses Referenced: Isaiah 52:13-53:12, John 18-19 Hebrews 4:14-16, Psalm 22, Luke 23:34, John 19:30

Blessed be our God. Let us pray. Almighty God, we pray you graciously to behold this your family for whom our Lord Jesus Christ was willing to be betrayed and given into the hands of sinners and to suffer death upon the cross who now lives and reigns with you in the Holy Spirit, one God forever and ever.

Amen. Please be seated. Isaiah, see, my servants shall prosper. He shall be exalted and lifted up and shall be very high. Just as there were many who were astonished at him, so marred was his appearance beyond human semblance and his form beyond that of mortals. So he shall startle many nations. Kings shall shut their mouths because of him.

For that which had been told them, they shall see, and that which they had not heard, they shall contemplate. Who has believed what we have heard, and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? For he grew up before him like a young plant and like a root out of dry ground. He had no form or majesty that we should look at him. Nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by others, a man of suffering, and acquainted with infirmity.

And as one from whom others hide their faces, he was despised, and we held him of no account. Surely he has borne our infirmities and carried our diseases, yet we accounted him stricken, struck down by God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities. Upon him was the punishment that made us whole, and by his bruises, we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray.

We have all turned on our own way, and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed and he was afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth, like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth. By a perversion of justice, he was taken away. Who could have imagined his future? For he was cut off from the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people.

They made his grave with the wicked and his tomb with the rich, although he had done no violence. There was no deceit in his mouth. Yet it was the will of the Lord to crush him with pain. When you make his life an offering for sin, he shall see his offspring and shall prolong his days. Through him, the will of the Lord shall prosper. Out of his anguish, he shall see light. He shall find satisfaction.

Through his knowledge, the righteous one, my servant, shall make many righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore, I will not allot him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he poured out himself to death and was numbered with the transgressors, yet he bore the sin of many and made intercession for the transgressors. The Word of the Lord.

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

And also far from my cry and from the words of my distress O my God, I cry in the daytime But you do not answer Thy night as well But I find no rest Yet You are the Holy One Enthroned Upon the praises of Israel Our forefathers put

their trust in you They trusted and you delivered them They cried out to you and were delivered They trusted in you and were not put to shame But as for me I am a worm and no man Scorned by all and despised by the people All who see me love me to scorn

They curl their lips and wag their heads saying He trusted in the Lord Let him deliver him Let him rescue him If He delights in Him Yet you are He who took me out of the womb And kept me safe upon my mother's breasts I have been entrusted to You ever since I was

born You were my God When I was still in my mother's womb He not far from me, for trouble is near And there is none to how Many young bowls encircle me Strong bowls of patience around me They open wide their jaws at me Like a ravening and a

roaring lion I am poured out like water All my bones are out of joy My heart within my breast is melting wax My mouth is dried out like a pocher My tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth And you have laid me in the dust of the grave Packs of dogs close me in And gangs

of evil do a circle around me They pierce my feet I can count all my bones They stare and gloat over me They divide my garments among them They cast lots for my clothing Be not far away, O Lord You are my strength hastened to help me

Save me from the sword My life from the power of the dog Save me from the lion's mouth My wretched body from the horns of wild bowls I will declare your name to my brethren In the midst of the congregation I will praise You Praise the Lord you that

fear Him Stand in awe of Him O offspring of Israel All you of Jacob's line give glory For he does not despise nor abhor the poor in their poverty Neither does he hide his faith from them But when they cry to Him He hears them My praises of Him in the Great Assembly

I will perform my vows In the presence of those who worship Him The poor shall eat and be satisfied And those who seek the Lord shall praise Him May your heart live forever All the ends of the earth shall remember And turn to the Lord And all the families of the nation shall bow before Him

For kingship belongs to the Lord He rules over the nations To Him alone, all who sleep in the earth bow down in worship All who go down to the dust fall before Him My soul shall live for Him My descendants shall serve Him They shall be known as the

laws forever They shall come and make known to a people yet unborn The saving deeds that He has done a reading from the Letter to the Hebrews.

Since then we have a great priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast to our confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who in every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sin.

Let us therefore approach the throne of grace with boldness so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. In the days of His flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications with loud cries and tears to the one who was able to save him from death. And he was heard because of his reverent submission.

Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered. And having been made perfect, he became the source of all eternal salvation for all who obey him. The Word of the Lord.

Please be seated. The Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ, according to John.

Jesus went out with His disciples across the Kidron Valley to a place where there was a garden, which he and his disciples entered. Now Judas, who betrayed him, also knew the place because Jesus often met there with His disciples. So Judas brought a detachment of soldiers together with police from the chief priests and the Pharisees, and they came there with lanterns and torches and weapons.

Then Jesus, knowing all that was to happen to him, came forward and asked them, "Who are you looking for?" They answered. "Jesus of Nazareth." Jesus replied, "I am he." Judas, who betrayed them, was standing with them. When Jesus said to them, "I am he," they stepped back and fell to the ground.

Again, he asked them, "Who are you looking for?" And they said, "Jesus of Nazareth." Jesus answered, "I told you that I am he, so if you are looking for me, let these men go." This was to fulfill the words that he had spoken. I did not lose a single one of those whom you gave me. Then Simon Peter, who had a sword, drew it, struck the high priest slave and cut off his right ear.

The slave's name was Malchus. Jesus said to Peter, "Put your sword back in its sheath. Am I not to drink the cup that the Father has given me?" So the soldiers, their officer, and the Jewish police arrested Jesus and bound him. First, they took him to Anas, who was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the high priest that year. Caiaphas was the one who had advised the Jews that it was better to have one person die for the people.

Simon Peter and another disciple followed Jesus. Since that disciple was known to the high priest, he went with Jesus into the courtyard of the high priest, but Peter was standing outside at the gate. So the other disciple who was known to the high priest went out, spoke to the woman who guarded the gate and brought Peter in. The woman said to Peter, "You are not also one of this man's disciples, are you?" He said, "I am not." "Now the slaves and the police had made a charcoal fire because of his cold.

They were standing around it and warming themselves. Peter was also standing with them and warming himself. Then the high priest questioned Jesus about his disciples and about his teaching. Jesus answered, "I have spoken openly to the world. I have always taught in synagogues and in the temple where all the Jews come together. I have said nothing in secret. Why do you ask me? Ask those who heard what I said to them.

They know what I said. When he had said this, one of the police standing nearby struck Jesus on the face, saying, "Is that how you answer the high priest?" Jesus answered, "If I have spoken wrongly, testifies the wrong. But if I have spoken rightly, why do you strike me?" Then Anna sent him bound to Caiaphas, the high priest. Now Simon Peter was standing and warming himself.

They asked him, "You are not also one of the disciples, are you?" He denied it and said, "I am not." One of the slaves of the High Priest, the relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, asked, "Did I not see you in the garden with him?" Again, Peter denied it. And at that moment, the cock crowed. Then they took Jesus from Caiaphas to Pilate's headquarters.

Early in the morning, they themselves did not enter the headquarters so as to avoid ritual defilement and to be able to eat the Passover. So Pilate went out to them and said, "What accusation do you bring against this man?" They answered, "If this man were not a criminal, he would not have handed him over to you." Pilate said to them, "Take him yourselves and judge him according to your law." The Jews replied, "We are not permitted to put anyone to death." This was to fulfill what Jesus had said when he indicated the kind of death he was to die.

Then Pilate entered the headquarters again, summoned Jesus, and asked him, "Are you the king of the Jews?" Jesus answered, "Do you ask this on your own, or did others tell you about me?" Pilate replied, "I am not a Jew, am I? Your own nation and the chief priests have handed you over to me. What have you done?" Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not from this world.

If my kingdom were from this world, my followers would be fighting to keep me from being handed over to the Jews. But as it is, my kingdom is not from here." Pilate asked him, "So you are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. For this I was born, and for this I came into the world to testify to the truth.

Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice." Pilate asked him, "What is truth?" After he had said this, he went out to the Jews again and told them, "I found no case against him, but you have accustomed that I release someone for you at the Passover. Do you want me to release for you the king of the Jews?" They shouted in reply. Not on this man, but Barabbas.

Now Barabbas was abandoned. Then Pilate took Jesus and had him logged. And the soldiers wove a crown of thorns and put it on his head. And they dressed him in a purple robe. They kept coming up to him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews." Striking him on the face, Pilate went out again and said to them, "Look, I am bringing him out to you to let you know that I find no case against him." So Jesus came out wearing the crown of thorns in a purple robe.

Pilate said to them, "Here is the man." When the chief priests and the police saw him, they shouted, "Crucify him! Crucify him!" Pilate said to them, "Take him yourselves and crucify him. I find no case against him." The Jews answered him, "We have a law, and according to that law, he ought to die because he has claimed to be the Son of God. Now when Pilate heard this, he was more afraid than ever.

He entered his headquarters again and asked Jesus, "Where are you from?" But Jesus gave him no answer. Pilate therefore said to him, "Do you refuse to speak to me? Do you not know that I have the

power to release you and the power to crucify you?" Jesus answered him. "You would have no power over me unless it had been given you from above.

Therefore, the one who handed me over to you is guilty of a greater sin." From then on, Pilate tried to release him, but the Jews cried out. If you release this man, you are no friend of the emperor. Everyone who claims to be a king says himself against the emperor. When Pilate heard these words, he brought Jesus outside and sat on the judge's bench at a place called the Stone Pavement, or in Hebrew, Gabbay.

Now it was the day of preparation for the Passover, and it was about noon. He said to the Jews, "Here is your king." They cried out. Pilate asked him, "Shall I crucify your king?" The chief priest answered. We have no king but the emperor. Then he handed him over to them to be crucified.

So they took Jesus and carrying the cross by himself. He went out to what is called the place of the skull, which in Hebrew is called Golgotha. There they crucified him, and with him two others, one on either side, with Jesus between them. Pilate also had an inscription written and put on the cross.

It read, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." Many of the Jews read this inscription because the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city, and it was written in Hebrew, in Latin, and in Greek. Then the chief priest of the Jews said to Pilate, "Do not write the king of Jews, but this man said, I am the king of Jews." Pilate answered, "What I have written, I have written." When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they took his clothes and divided them into four parts, one for each soldier.

They also took his tunic. Now the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece from the top. So they said to one another, "Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it to see who will get it." This was to fulfill what Scripture says, "They divided my clothes among themselves. And for my clothing, they cast lots, and that is what the soldiers did." Meanwhile, standing near the cross of Jesus were his mother and his mother's sister, Mary, the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene.

When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved, standing beside her, he said to his mother, "Woman, here is your son." And then he said to the disciple, "Here is your mother." And from that hour, the disciple took her into his home. After this, when Jesus knew that all was now finished, he said, in order to fulfill the Scripture, "I am thirsty." A jar full of sour wine was standing there, so they put a sponge full of the wine on a branch of hyssop and held it to his mouth.

When Jesus had received the wine, he said, "It is finished." Then he bowed his head and gave up his Spirit. Since it was the day of preparation, the Jews did not want the bodies left on the cross during the Sabbath, especially because that Sabbath was a day of great solemnity.

So they asked Pilate to have the legs of the crucified men broken and the bodies removed. Then the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first and of the other, who'd been crucified with him. But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. Instead, one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once, blood and water came out. He who saw this is testified so that you also may believe.

His testimony is truth, and he knows that he tells the truth. These things occurred so that the scripture might be fulfilled. None of his bones shall be broken. And again, another passage of Scripture that says, "They will look on the one whom they have pierced." After these things, Joseph of Arimathea, who was disciples Jesus through a secret one because of his fear of the Jews, asked Pilate to let him take away the body of Jesus.

Pilate gave him permission, so he came and removed his body. Nicodemus, who had at first come to Jesus by night, also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, weighing about 100 pounds. They took the body of Jesus and wrapped it with the spices of linen cloths according to the burial custom of the Jews. Now there was a garden in the place where he was crucified. And in the garden, there was a new tomb in which no one had ever been laid.

And so, because it was the Jewish day of preparation and the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there.

Heavenly Father, we ask that You would pour out Your Holy Spirit upon us and into our hearts, that we might place ourselves at the foot of the cross of Your Son, Jesus Christ, who is our Lord and Savior.

Gaze upon the one whom is pierced for our transgressions, upon whom you laid the judgment and penalty of us all. For by His wounds we are healed. Upon Him was laid our sin for our salvation. May the ministry and preaching of Your Word be Your Word for the sake and glory of Your Son, Jesus, in His name we pray. Amen.

I'd like to reflect with you on the last part of that Passion narrative that I just read. Since it was the day of preparation and the bodies would not remain on the cross on the Sabbath, for that Sabbath was a holy day, and the Jews asked Pilate that the legs might not be broken.

John finds, the gospel writer finds a lot of significance in that moment where the soldiers don't break the bones of Jesus. And then one of the soldiers, just to make sure that he was dead, stuck a spear in the side. Now, what's going on with all of that particular scene in the story of the Lord's Passion?

Well, first of all, the reason why there was an urgency in speeding the death of the men who were on the cross is given on the lips of the Jewish religious leaders. They pleaded with Pilate, and you kind of see this unholy collusion taking place between the Jewish religious establishment and Pilate who represents the power of the Roman Empire.

These were not people that normally got along with one another and worked together, but in this case, all the forces and powers were conspiring against the force and the power, the divine Son of God. They colluded with one another. They worked together in concert with one another, including with the crowds at the abandonment of the disciples of Jesus and the followers of Jesus to ensure that the Lord and Savior of the world would die on a cross that day.

And so the Jewish religious establishment, the leaders, come to Pilate with another request. And in this case, it was a request to, ironically, honor their sacred holy day of the Passover. And so what the request was is that they would go ahead and speed the death of all of those who had been crucified that day, and there were three of them.

And one of the ways that you could speed the death of somebody who is being crucified is by breaking their legs. Because the way that you die when you're crucified is you're putting all your weight on the nails and your arms, which is excruciatingly painful. And so you pull yourself up in order to get a breath, but then you're in such agony and pain as you're pulling yourself up that you fall back down and the weight of your body collapses your diaphragm to where you can't breathe because you don't want to push yourself up on your feet because that equally is as painful.

And so the death is actually a very slow death filled with anguish and pain by losing your breath, ultimately. It's an asphyxiation. You die because you can't get any more strength to give yourself the power to take another breath. And so the human body doesn't go down easy.

And it will endure that kind of painful torture for a very, very long time. And it could actually take 24 hours or even more for a person to die of crucifixion, which is why the Romans used it, actually. Nothing could say we are in charge more than taking an insurrectionist and torturing them publicly for all to see. And this is the death that was chosen for Jesus.

And yet, the mercy, it was actually a mercy to break their legs would prevent them from rising up and taking another breath, and they would collapse on their lungs after their legs were broken, and it would be over. And this is what the Jewish leaders were asking for, that you would just have mercy on these men that are dying on the cross.

Let's get this all wrapped up because tomorrow is a sacred day and we can't have this kind of gruesome torture taking place on the Passover because that's a holy day. And so Pilate yet again colludes with those leaders and they do their bidding and break the legs of the men. Except for Jesus, who when they got to him, they saw that he was already dead. As we said, he had breathed his last.

And just to make sure, however, the Scriptures describe that when they came to Jesus and saw Him already dead, they did not break His legs, but one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and at once, there came out blood and water. So, just think about what is happening there in the context of the timing of this religious and holy day.

What was the festival of the Passover? Well, this was the annual commemoration for the Jewish people. It was the high and holy day for Judaism. Maybe the day of the Atonement, Rosh Hashan might be the other one, where they would make that sacrifice for the sins of the people by the high priests going into the temple.

But this day commemorated the grand metanarrative and story of the people of Israel, who had sold themselves into bondage and slavery in Egypt, and had submitted themselves to a cruel tyrannical pharaoh who over time created more and more burdens and bondage upon the Jewish people to the point where he started killing their little ones.

And you know the story of Moses, the little baby in the basket, who was raised up as a deliverer for the nation of Israel. And Moses was told by the Lord, "You need to go to this tyrannical ruler, Pharaoh, and say, 'Let my people go.'" You remember that? And so Moses would go and he would speak to Pharaoh, "Let my people go." And Pharaoh would say, "No, I'm not going to do that." And so you know Moses would talk to God and say, "Go back in there, get back in." There was like a boxing match almost.

And every time Moses would go with a little more power from the Lord with some type of plague, and there was a series of plagues that happened with turning the river Nile to blood, or sending flies, or frogs, or boils upon the skins of the flesh of the Egyptians.

But every time Pharaoh would kind of cry uncle, but then after the plague would subside, he would say, "No, I'm not letting the people go." And so, the last and most powerful plague of those plagues was called the Passover. And it was when Moses was told that the people of Israel should prepare themselves for this particular plague.

Because what is going to happen is the angel of death is going to pass over the nation of Egypt. And he is going to strike down the firstborn sons of all of the Egyptian people and all of the firstborn of the livestock of the Egyptians.

And so you must prepare yourself for this, lest if you're not prepared, you will have your firstborn and your firstborn livestock struck down. A testimony that even the Jewish people, though the chosen people, were also under judgment and guilty of sin. And so what their preparation was, and this is celebrated on this particular day in our Gospel passage, you'll see from the text. This was the day of preparation.

And so the preparation was to prepare first a meal that would be eaten in haste, unleavened bread, bitter herbs, and so on, wine. But the signature component of the meal would be the killing of a lamb that is without spot or blemish.

And they were to take the blood of the lamb as part of the preparation rite and take it and spread the blood of the lamb upon the doorpost and the mantle of the home.

And so that when the angel of death would pass over the nation of Egypt and all of its people, the angel of death would see the blood of the lamb that was slain as a sign of redemption and be satisfied with that particular sacrifice and pass over those homes and the firstborn children of Israel and their livestock would be spared and saved.

And so any home that did not have the blood covering the entrance of that home would undergo the judgment. So, of course, the Egyptians didn't make the preparations for the Passover, but the Jewish people did. And the angel of death passed over that next day, which would have been a Sabbath.

And there was a great wailing that morning on that Sabbath day as the Egyptians rose to the death of their firstborns. But all of the Israelites had been spared. That final plague was the one that led to the

release in the freedom of the Israelites. They were no longer under the tyranny and bondage of Pharaoh.

They would pass through the waters of the Red Sea, unharmed, and the Pharaoh's chariot army would be drowned in the sea. This was the defining moment for the Jewish people. When the Jewish leaders said to Pilate, "This is a day of solemnity for us," they weren't, you know, talking about just any old holiday. This was the day, the holiday that they would separate, the holy day.

And so the day of preparation, ironically, is the day that not just a symbolic lamb, and on that day, there would have been lambs being killed all over Jerusalem. But not just any lamb was being killed that day on Jerusalem, but the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.

This is what John the Baptist said when he pointed at Jesus in the beginning of John's gospel. "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world." The interesting little line that is in the Gospel of John in this section where it says, you know, when he was pierced in his side and blood and water flowed out of the side.

And it has this little parentheses that he puts in here in chapter 19:35. He says, "He who saw it," he's talking about himself, the gospel writer. "He who saw it has borne witness, his testimony is true." And he knows that he's telling the truth, that you may also believe.

See, when John saw that moment, when he saw that the legs of Jesus were not broken and that water and blood pouring out of his side, for some reason, John said, "Oh my goodness, that's it." That's the moment. Something clicked for him in a very powerful way when he saw that. What was it?

Well, there is a Psalm that came to his mind, Psalm 34, which he quotes, "Not one of his bones will be broken." But I think John was also thinking about the day that it was, the day of preparation and the Passover. There was another Scripture passage that he was quoting when he was thinking about the fact that Jesus' legs were not broken.

You go back to Exodus chapter 12, when you read about the instructions for the preparation of the Passover, you read these words talking about the day of the Passover and the consuming of the lamb. "It shall be eaten in one house. You shall not take any of the flesh outside of the house," speaking of the flesh of the lamb that was slain.

And then you read this line, "And you shall not break any of its bones." Jesus was the perfectly prepared Passover sacrifice.

Not prepared by a family for their home, but prepared by God the Father in order to redeem the human family from their sins. John says this was the moment. What I'm telling you about this happened.

I'm bearing witness to it. I'm giving testimony to it so that you won't miss it. But recognize that Christ, our Passover, has been sacrificed for us. Therefore, let us keep the feast and believe. And in believing, have eternal life in His name. In that moment, John saw another passage of Scripture being fulfilled.

And this one was from Zechariah. John would say, "For these things took place that Scripture might be fulfilled. Not one of his bones will be broken. And again, another Scripture says, "They will look on Him whom they have pierced." Now, for us who don't often read the Old Testament prophets, the prophet Zechariah that is being quoted there is one that most of us probably don't spend a lot of time meditating on or reading.

But what I would encourage you to do, maybe in your devotional time today or tomorrow, is pull out the Old Testament and maybe use the table of contents and find the prophet Zechariah, and just go through it and read it. Because it is perhaps more than any other prophetic book.

Right up there with Isaiah chapter 53, which we read today in Psalm 22, these are prophecies that describe the coming of the Messiah and His role as a suffering servant who will bear the price and pay the price for the sins of the world. All of those passages that we just read that are the more familiar ones are always on our mind at this time of year.

But Zechariah is one that should be on our mind because and it's referenced a few times during Holy Week, Zechariah is the one that said there will be a great high priest, and his name will be Yeshua, Joshua, or Jesus. And he will be the one who will quickly atone for the sins of the people of the world. He will then go on to prophesy how there are a myriad of bad leaders in this world.

We see it displayed very profoundly on the day of Jesus' crucifixion, whether we're talking about the Roman leadership, or the Jewish leadership, or the priesthood, or even the leadership of the disciples in that moment. The shepherds are bad shepherds. They're like hired hands that don't care about the sheep. They're evil shepherds. And so what the Lord prophesied in Zechariah is that I'll just have to come down and be a shepherd for my own people.

And he describes this messianic shepherd king who will ride into Jerusalem not on a stallion or a war horse, but humbly, on a colt, on a donkey. And he describes the triumphal entry of this messianic shepherd king who sometimes sounds like a human being and sometimes sounds like it's God.

And he will come and he will lead the people of Israel. And they'll be so excited for this messianic king and yet he will be rejected by his people. He will be like a shepherd with two staves in his hand. One will be favor and one will be unity. And yet in the rejection of his leadership, he will break the staff of favor and he'll break the staff of unity.

And though there will be a seemingly great victory for the city of Jerusalem, they will gaze upon the one whom they have pierced. That's what the prophecy says. And they will recognize that whoops, that was God in the flesh that we just killed.

And on that day, the entire city of Jerusalem will send up a great wailing and mourning as they gaze upon the pierced one and recognize that they had just killed God in the flesh.

And yet, Zechariah will go on to say that on that day there shall be a fountain that is opened for the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. And what will this fountain do? It will cleanse them from their sin and their uncleanness.

As John was looking at that soldier piercing the side of Jesus, all of this Scripture came flooding into his brain. For he had watched Jesus orchestrate the fulfillment of the prophecies of Zechariah by making sure that they had a donkey and a colt and all of that and the triumphal entry into the city.

And then here it was. He was gazing upon the one that they had pierced and great wailing at the foot of the cross and outflowed the fountain of blood and water. Jesus or John would say in his first letter that these three things testify about Jesus, that He is the Son of God.

The blood, the water, and the Spirit. He said the blood, the water, and the Spirit. They all testify that Jesus was the Son of God. All throughout His Gospels, He would make reference after reference to living water flowing. That all who put their faith in Jesus would be cleansed by this living water and filled with satisfaction at the grace that is pouring out from the Lord Jesus.

In just a moment, we are going to have a cross that is brought into this church, a physical cross, and it will be placed before all of us. And it's a cross that will tangibly represent to us the one who was pierced for our transgression, the one who bore our sins as our Passover sacrifice and from whose side flows a fountain to cleanse us from all sin and unrighteousness.

All through this season of Lent, we have been reflecting on the crucifixion of Jesus and the crucified life. And maybe during this season of preparation, some things in your own life have been stirred up. Maybe it's someone you need to forgive, or maybe forgiveness of yourself and receiving the grace of God that was given to us, allowing the blood of Jesus to wash over you and cleanse you of some defilement or some embarrassment or shame that you have and have been carrying with you for your entire life.

Maybe it's some burden that you've been bearing that is not for you to carry, but you want to lay at the foot of the cross. Perhaps it is some fear or sadness that has been laid upon you or some anger that you have at another.

Whatever it is, I invite you to gaze upon the cross of Jesus Christ and at the end of this service to literally get out of your seats and come forward and place your hands upon that cross.

There are two boxes that are up here where you could actually write down on a piece of paper from one of these papers in the back of the pews what it is that you would like to give to Jesus today to allow that fountain of the pierced side to wash away whatever that is to allow the sacrificial blood of the Passover sacrificed for you to atone for whatever that sin is that would prevent you from being reconciled to God and enjoying His reconciling love and grace.

But put it at the foot of the cross and leave it there.

Our heavenly Father sent His Son into the world not to condemn the world, but that the world would through Him might be saved, that all who believe in Him might be delivered from the power of sin and death and become heirs with Him of everlasting life.

We pray therefore for people everywhere according to their needs. Let us pray for the Holy Catholic Church of Christ throughout the world, for its unity and witness and service, for all bishops and other ministers and the people whom they serve. For our standing committee and our assisting bishops and all the people of this diocese, for all Christians in this community, and for those who are to be baptized, that God would confirm His church in faith, increase it in love, and preserve it in peace.

Almighty, everlasting God, by whose spirit, the whole body of your faithful people, is governed and sanctified. Receive our supplications and prayers, which we offer before you for all members of Your Holy Church, that in their vocation and ministry, they may truly and devoutly serve you. Through our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Let us pray for all nations and peoples of the earth and for those in authority among them. For Donald, the President of the United States, for the Congress, and the Supreme Court, for the members and representatives of the United Nations, and for all who serve the common good, that by God's help, they may seek justice and truth and live in peace and Concord.

Almighty God, Kindle, we pray, in every heart, the true love of peace. And guide with your wisdom those who take counsel for the nations of the earth, that in tranquility your dominion may increase until the earth is filled with the knowledge of your love through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Let us pray for all who suffer and are afflicted in body or in mind. For the hungry and the homeless, the destitute and the oppressed, for the sick, the wounded, and the crippled, for those in loneliness, fear, and anguish, for those who face temptation, doubt, and despair. For the sorrowful and bereaved for prisoners and captives, and those in mortal danger, that God in His mercy will comfort and relieve them, and grant them the knowledge of His love, and stir up in us the will and patience to minister to their needs.

Gracious God, the comfort of all who sorrow, the strength of all who suffer. Let the cry of those in misery and need come to you, that they may find Your mercy present with them in all their afflictions, and give us, we pray, the strength to serve them for the sake of Him who suffered for us. Your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Let us pray for all who have not received the gospel of Christ, for those who have never heard the Word of salvation, for those who have lost their faith, for those hardened by sin or indifference, for the contemptuous and the scornful, for those who are enemies of the cross of Christ and persecutors of His disciples, for those who in the name of Christ have persecuted others, that God will open their hearts to the truth and lead them to faith and obedience.

Merciful God, Creator of all the peoples of the earth and lover of souls, have compassion on all who do not know you as you are revealed in your Son, Jesus Christ. Let your gospel be preached with grace and with power to those who have not heard it.

Turn the hearts of those who resist it and bring home to your fold those who have gone astray, that there may be one flock under one shepherd, Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen. Let us commit ourselves to

God and pray for the grace of a holy life, that with all who have departed this world and have died in the peace of Christ, and those whose faith is known to God alone, we may be accounted worthy to enter into the fullness of the joy of our Lord and receive the crown of life in the Day of Resurrection.

O God, of unchangeable power and eternal light, look favorably on your whole church, that wonderful and sacred mystery by the effectual working of your providence, carry out in tranquility the plan of your salvation. Let the whole world see and know things which were cast down are being raised up.

And things which had grown old are being made new. And that all things are being brought to their perfection by Him through whom all things were made. Your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God forever and ever. Amen.

We glory in Your cross, O Lord.

And praise and glorify Your holy resurrection. For by virtue of your cross, joy has come to the whole world. May God be merciful to us and bless us. Show us the light of His countenance and come to us. Let your saving ways be known upon Earth, Your saving health among all nations. Let the peoples praise You, O God. Let all the peoples praise You.

We glory in Your cross, O Lord, and praise and glorify Your holy resurrection, for by virtue of Your cross, joy has come to the whole world. We adore You, O Christ, and we bless You.

Because by Your Holy Cross, You have redeemed the world. If we have died with Him, we shall also live with Him. If we endure, we shall also reign with Him. We adore You, O Christ, and we bless You, because by Your Holy Cross, You have redeemed the world.

O Savior of the world, who by thy cross in precious blood has redeemed us. Save us and help us.

We humbly beseech thee, O Lord.

We are bold to say, "Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

Before I offer our concluding prayer, I would like to again invite you to take a moment here and come up, touch the cross, whatever would be helpful to you to bring the gravity and the reality of the cross of Jesus Christ to you personally. And again, there are these little boxes here.

If you want to write something that you want to leave at the foot of the cross, these things are not going to follow you later in life. They will be destroyed, and they're going to die with the cross. And so, I invite you to come as you would like and use this time and this space. Be here as long as you want. There are places to kneel up here, and of course you can remain in the seats, and then whenever you're ready, depart in silence and allow others to be in the moment.

Let us pray. Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the living God, we pray You to set Your passion, cross, and death between Your judgment and our souls, now and in the hour of our death. Give mercy and grace to the living, pardon and rest to the dead, to Your Holy Church, peace and Concord, and to us sinners, everlasting life and glory.

With the Father and the Holy Spirit, you live and reign, one God, now and forever. Amen. Amen.