



April 10, 2020

**TRINITY LUTHERAN CHURCH
FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH**

Good Friday

Opening Prayer

Song

Were you there when they crucified my Lord?

Were you there when they crucified my Lord?

Oh, sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.

Were you there when they crucified my Lord?

First Reading: Genesis 2:4b-9

In the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens, when no plant of the field was yet in the earth and no herb of the field had yet sprung up—for the Lord God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was no one to till the ground; but a stream would rise from the earth, and water the whole face of the ground—then the Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being. And the Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the east; and there he put the man whom he had formed. Out of the ground the Lord God made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Word of God, Word of Life.

Reflection:

In the beginning, there was a tree, the tree of life. God put that tree in the garden so that humanity could eat of the tree and be connected to the life of God.

But, as you know, that is not the way the story worked out. Instead of eating from the tree of life, Adam and Eve ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Instead of connecting with the source of life, we started down the path of separation from God, the path of evil and violence. But God did not give up. The story does not end there. Another tree entered the story. It was another tree of life. Jesus was taken outside the city of Jerusalem and crucified. He was hung on a tree so that we could know God's love, so that we could have true life again.

Song:

Were you there when they hung him on the tree?

Were you there when they hung him on the tree?

Oh, sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.

Were you there when they hung him on the tree?

Second Reading: Genesis 6:11-21

Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight, and the earth was filled with violence. And God saw that the earth was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted its ways upon the earth. And God said to Noah, "I have determined to make an end of all flesh, for the earth is filled with violence because of them; now I am going to destroy them along with the earth. Make yourself an ark of cypress wood; make rooms in the ark, and cover it inside and out with pitch. This is how you are to make it: the length of the ark three hundred cubits, its width fifty cubits, and its height thirty cubits. Make a roof for the ark, and finish it to a cubit above; and put the door of the ark in its side; make it with lower, second, and third decks. For my part, I am going to bring a flood of waters on the earth, to destroy from under heaven all flesh in which is the breath of life; everything that is on the earth shall die. But I will establish my covenant with you; and you shall come into the ark, you, your sons, your wife, and your sons' wives with you. And of every living thing, of all flesh, you shall bring two of every kind into the ark, to keep them alive with you; they shall be male and female. Of the birds according to their kinds, and of the animals according to their kinds, of every creeping thing of the ground according to its kind, two of every kind shall come in to you, to keep them alive. Also take with you every kind of food that is eaten, and store it up; and it shall serve as food for you and for them." Noah did this; he did all that God commanded him.

Word of God, Word of Life.

Reflection:

Noah built an ark. He built a huge ark to save himself, his family and many animals. God commanded Noah to do this so that life would not be extinguished from the earth, despite all the evil that humans brought into the world. Noah must have used a lot of nails.

Building an ark that was 450 feet x 75 feet x 45 feet would take an enormous amount of wood, and an enormous amount of nails to hold it all together. That's what nails do. They hold things together. How many nails are in your home or in the chair you are sitting on? We don't think about nails much. They are a small, unobtrusive part of our lives. They hold things together. Even Noah probably didn't think much about nails. He was concerned about all that wood, all that pitch to make things waterproof and especially about all those animals. Nails? They are necessary, but not high-visibility. However, they held the ark together and saved those who were on it from the raging flood.

It's easy to miss the nails, except during a crucifixion. One could not miss the spikes that were driven through the hands and feet of someone being crucified. They would evoke dread from everyone in the crowd. Jesus' hands and feet were nailed to the cross. The nails held him there until it was finished, until it was clear that God's love for every person was everlasting. No matter what flood we face, we know that Jesus is for us, that Jesus will not abandon us, that Jesus even went to the cross for us. As the old saying goes, in the end, it was not the nails that held Jesus there on the cross. His love for us did.

Song:

Were you there when they nailed his hands and feet?
Were you there when they nailed his hands and feet?
Oh, sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.
Were you there when they nailed his hands and feet?

Third Reading: Genesis 9:1-6

God blessed Noah and his sons, and said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth. The fear and dread of you shall rest on every animal of the earth, and on every bird of the air, on everything that creeps on the ground, and on all the fish of the sea; into your hand they are delivered. Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you; and just as I gave you the green plants, I give you everything. Only, you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood. For your own lifeblood I will surely require a reckoning: from every animal I will require it and from human beings, each one for the blood of another, I will require a reckoning for human life.

Whoever sheds the blood of a human, by a human shall that person’s blood be shed; for in his own image God made humankind.

Word of God, Word of Life.

Reflection:

Blood. For many people blood is uncomfortable, even scary. There are plenty of us who don’t like blood tests or seeing blood. But, just like air and food, blood is necessary for life. Our blood carries oxygen and food to all parts of our bodies. It is what provides the nourishment that our cells need to live. Perhaps that is why many ancient peoples saw blood as the carrier of life. The life was in the blood. God gave Noah and his family every animal on earth as food, but they were not to eat the blood. Out of respect for the animals that had given their lives to sustain humans, the blood, the essence of life, would not be consumed. Blood -- life -- flowed out of Jesus’ side on the cross. The life of the Son of God, the life of God, flowed so that all of humanity could live. When we share Holy Communion we are invited to share the Body and Blood of Christ. An ancient prohibition is transformed so that we can take in the true life that God offers us.

Song:

Were you there when the blood flowed from his side?
Were you there when the blood flowed from his side?
Oh, sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.
Were you there when the blood flowed from his side?

Fourth Reading: Psalm 136:3-9

O give thanks to the Lord of lords,
for his steadfast love endures forever;
who alone does great wonders,
for his steadfast love endures forever;
who by understanding made the heavens,
for his steadfast love endures forever;
who spread out the earth on the waters,
for his steadfast love endures forever;
who made the great lights,
for his steadfast love endures forever;
the sun to rule over the day,
for his steadfast love endures forever;
the moon and stars to rule over the night,
for his steadfast love endures forever.

Word of God, Word of Life.

Reflection:

“Far out in the uncharted backwaters of the unfashionable end of the western spiral arm of the Galaxy lies a small unregarded yellow sun.” From one point of view, the sun is just one of billions and billions of stars. It’s not very remarkable or very significant. However, for us, the sun is not merely a ball of super-hot gases. The sun gives us light and warmth. Without the sun, the earth would be barren and empty. The sun enables plants to grow and flourish. If there were no sun, there would be no life on the earth.

We all love the sun. Some people like going to the beach, others enjoy walks in the warmth of summer, and many delight in the colors of sunrise and sunset. Most of us just enjoy the warmth on our faces, especially after a long winter.

The sun gives us life. The sun reveals the beauty in the world..

When the Son of God was dying on the cross, the sun was eclipsed. As life ebbed from the body of Jesus, the earth was cast into darkness. As the true life of the world was extinguished, even the sun hid its face.

Song:

Were you there when the sun refused to shine?
Were you there when the sun refused to shine?
Oh, sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.
Were you there when the sun refused to shine?

Fifth Reading: John 20:1-11

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb. So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him." Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the tomb. The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, and the cloth that had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; for as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead. Then the disciples returned to their homes. But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb.

Word of God, Word of Life.

Reflection:

Cemeteries can be unfriendly places. They can be barren, even scary. But they can also be places of remembrance, even if those memories bring forth tears.

Jesus was laid in a tomb. It was the tragic end of a beautiful life. He taught, he healed, and he blessed. He fed thousands of people, challenged the highest authorities, and still had time to welcome children. The people thought that he was the savior, that he would set them free from Roman oppression and usher in a new day for Israel.

Instead of leading a revolution that kicked the Romans out of the land, Jesus died on a cross and was placed in a tomb that belonged to someone else. Just as we weep at the tombs of our loved ones, Mary wept at Jesus' tomb.

Song:

Were you there when they laid him in the tomb?

Were you there when they laid him in the tomb?

Oh, sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.

Were you there when they laid him in the tomb?