

*In Nomine Jesu*

## **The Eden Virus**

**Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ**

Hear again a selection from the Gospel of John:

*Then the Jews, because it was the day of preparation, so that the bodies would not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was an important day), asked Pilate that their legs could be broken and they could be taken away. So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first and of the other who had been crucified with him. But when they came to Jesus, after they saw he was already dead, they did not break his legs. But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and blood and water came out immediately.*

During this evening of Good Friday, we reflect upon the moments leading up to the death of Jesus. Jesus has breathed His last breath. The great climax of the passion narrative has come to its peak. In the afternoon service, we heard the narrative of Jesus actively suffering on the cross. There was a buzz of activity and words. After Jesus breathed His last breath, things went silent. The world went mute at the gravity of the situation.

We are told that the Jews did not want the bodies to remain on the cross on the Sabbath. You see, Jews believed that for bodies to remain hanging like this was against the Law and would desecrate the land. One has to keep in mind that crucifixion was not a means of execution per se. It was, first and foremost, a means of torture. People did not die from crucifixion. The Romans were expert engineers. The roads they built still exist and are used today. They were also engineers of death and torture. They knew exactly where to place the nails in such a way to extend agony. A person didn't die from crucifixion; they died from asphyxiation. A person typically spent days on a cross before dying. As they weakened, they could not support themselves on their legs and they would suffocate. In order to hasten death so that people would not remain on the cross on the Sabbath, the Romans would break the legs of the crucified. No longer able lift themselves up, they would quickly die of suffocation. But we are told that since Jesus was already dead, they did not break His legs. Rather, they stabbed His side, and blood and water ran out. It is curious that John gives us this detail. I think there are several reasons why he does this, which we will consider now.

You see, John is making a point. He is trying to clear up any confusion as to the physical and human nature of Christ. It is almost as if he knows that the church is going to deal with this problem. Early on in church history, there arose a belief that Jesus was not a real person, but only appeared so like a ghost or a phantom. Here John is showing us that Jesus is no ghost or phantom. So great was our need that God did not send a ghost or a phantom. So great was our plight, for mankind was ravaged by the worst virus known to man. I will name this virus after the place it originated, the Eden Virus. It is a virus that makes COVID-19 look small. It is a virus that has infected every person from the point of conception onward. This virus has an infection rate of 100 percent and a death rate of 100 percent. Now if every person alive has this virus, then it is truly a pandemic. This Eden Virus is also called sin. It is the worst crisis mankind has and will ever face.

Luckily for us, God is the worst at social distancing. He didn't tell us to stay put. He didn't say good luck with that thing called sin; I'm not touching that. God threw social distancing out the window. He didn't care one bit about limiting His contact with us, and sent His Son into the heart of the pandemic. He became a physical man, the only man never to be touched by the virus. Our faith is not a virtual one; it is not solo faith. The Christian faith revolves around God becoming a real physical man, who saved us with His real physical death. He delivers these things to us through real physical things. Jesus did not come to earth and live with us so that He could hold our hand while the virus killed everyone. No, rather He came to earth to cure us.

Today we remember that day in which Jesus died on the cross. Jesus took upon himself the virus for everyone on the cross. In so doing, He died the death that the virus demands.

We are then told that the spear is thrust into His side and out came water and blood. Out came the medicine of immortality. Out came the means that Christ uses to heal us. From His side came the water of baptism. From His side came His blood, given to us in the Lord's Supper. On Sunday, we will partake of that blood that we now hear of coming from His side. The Greeks believed that the gods bled a golden fluid called ichor, this blood was toxic to mortals. One cannot get away from the idea that John, with his account of the blood and water coming from Christ's side, is showing us Christ's humanity, but also proclaiming his divinity. The ichor of false Gods is toxic to man, but the ichor of the true God heal

humanity, makes humanity immortal, makes one with himself. Tomorrow, my son, Callum, will receive that water which Christ has purchased for us with His precious suffering and death. And on Sunday morning, we will feast upon the body and blood of Christ. The water and blood, the true ichor, that flows from his side

One can imagine that when Jesus died, when the spear pierced his side, Satan laughed with glee. He could not keep it in, for he thought he had won.

Since we know the rest of the story, we know that three days later his tune changed drastically. In similar fashion, one can imagine Satan laughing with glee over the events of the last month. People gripped in fear, people in hospital separated from friends and family, people struggling with depression, churches forced to close, and be silent on the most important celebration of the year. It can be overwhelming and feel as if Satan has won, that Satan has finally received the upper hand.

But just like 2,000 years ago, Satan is cocksure. If Christ has defeated the likes of the Eden Virus, how much more will His church and His people get through this trial. As we know Christ's story does not end dead hanging upon a cross, the rest of that story is taken up three days later in brightness and glory and victory. That will also be rest of the story for our current trials because our God is not a God of social distancing, but comes to us amidst our sickness to heal us.

**The peace which passes all understanding guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus**

Good Friday Tenebrae

Psalm 22:1-31; Psalm 27:1-14; John 19:1-42

April 10, 2020

Vicar Justin Clarke