

St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Muskego, Wisconsin
March 7, 2018

NO ONE IS EXEMPT (*Thank you, Jesus!*)

- 1. FROM BEING HUMAN**
 - 2. FROM BEING TEMPTED**
- Mark 14:32-42**

So, what think ye? St. Paul's Lutheran Church practically wrapped around a cemetery. Is THAT a good outreach strategy in the times in which we live? "Death alive and well here! Come and join us!"

Let's come at it from a different angle. Do "church planters" and church planting "planners" today EVER sit down at the drawing board and pencil in "Church Cemetery" as the Second Phase of a building project? I mean, church members die at a regular pace, don't we? Why wouldn't churches still plan for that? The only sure things in life are death and taxes! I see the Liberty Tax Service mascot out on Highway 100 all the time (don't worry, I will mention H&R Block just to be fair). They aren't afraid to advertise taxes! Are churches afraid to acknowledge that we kinda work closely with death? Hardly a service goes by that we don't reference death, am I right? And if people aren't listening closely, they might think we are a bit obsessed!

During our Lenten journey, we have been navigating the waters of temptation under the theme, "Lured". We have been reminded that temptation is a matter of the heart--the heart that betrays when sin's opportunities are before us. Temptation is a matter of the devil--the father of lies manipulating us to turn us from God with "delightful" morsels. And, temptation is a matter of lures tailor-made by Satan to pull at our pet sins and weaknesses to cause us to fall. Tonight, we see from the garden account that when it comes to temptation, to sin, and to death **NO ONE IS EXEMPT** (*Thank you, Jesus!*) – **FROM BEING HUMAN (What We See in the garden), and FROM BEING TEMPTED (What We Perceive in the garden).**

Transition My father was thoroughly German. Blood sausage? All in! Limburger cheese? Oh, man! One day I came home from school and opened the refrigerator of this German man...looking for something to drink...and "Wow! Leftover orange juice in a juice glass!" I eagerly grabbed the glass and tossed it back, only to get a mouthful of bacon grease that my dad had planned for a slice of bread! I know! It's what Germans do!

A "cup of suffering"? You better believe it! But nowhere near the suffering of our Savior's cup! And, HE saw it coming...and he drained the glass to its bitter dregs! For, what we SEE first in our Savior's ordeal in the garden is that NO ONE is EXEMPT From Being Human—"Thank you, Jesus!"

1 FROM BEING HUMAN

A. GOD DID NOT MAKE US FOR DEATH

He took Peter, James, John. He began to be deeply distressed...troubled. "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here; keep watch." Going a little farther, he fell to the ground and prayed that if possible the hour might pass from him. "Abba, Father, everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will."

The cup was his suffering and his death that his Father was about to place to his lips! And as surely as it is shocking that the created ground should receive its Creator in his distress, so it is shocking that the Son of Man should be preparing to suffer and to die!

My guess is we are aware that God did not make us for death and dying. WE are complete when our bodies and souls are together. God called it "life"! For the soul to be torn from the body is somewhat unsettling even for the Christian who gets to fall asleep into the arms of Jesus! And oh, how blessed to have a Christian brother or sister at our side in that moment praying with us and reminding us our Jesus! (more on THAT next week!)

But for Jesus to be facing his soul leaving his body—to die—the Creator himself—just makes our heads spin! How can this be? Is no one exempt from being human?!

But, Jesus cup also included major swallows of suffering beginning with the physical. Why should the God of heaven be whipped and beaten...and by his own creatures whose hearts ONLY beat because he wills it so? Nails through his wrists! Hung out to die like rubbish of the earth! Jeered at and sneered at! His last breaths used on our behalf to share and to complete his Father's plan—"Father, into your hands I commit my spirit, for no one takes it from me." Is no one exempt from the perils of being human?!

But there is more! "My God, WHY have you forsaken me?" Didn't Jesus know? Had he forgotten why he came? All humans deserve hell—separation from God—but him? Didn't he know that no one is exempt from the perils of being human?!

B. BUT GOD "MADE" HIS SON TO DIE

God did not make us to die...so that our deaths challenge even his children at first blush. True. But God DID make his Son to die. True! You gotta noodle on that! The Creator sent to die for his creatures and to fall upon the earth in anguish as his soul wrestled with the reality of being human for us and shouldering our curse! A son without the sin of you and me; a son who did not have a payment for sin coming in the form of death! Yet a Son born to die because his Father placed on his shoulders the sin of us all.

"My God, my God, why?!" because he IS God and "how could this happen?" "My God, my God, why?" because the sin wasn't his! Who came up with this plan? "My God, my God, why?" because his whole being as the God-man was repulsed by the suffering he was facing! "Father, can no one be exempt?" BITTER was his cup in the garden as his Father was extending it to his lips!

Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might break the power of him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death. No one exempt. HIS choice.

APPLICATION Isn't it profound that when you and I approach the Lord's Table...the cup that was death for Jesus is now LIFE for you and me and is called by the Spirit the "cup of blessing" and the "cup of thanksgiving"? Isn't it profound that the cup of his blood and the bread of his body sacrificed so terribly in our place, he gives to us with a smile... with love that we might live with him forever—free from death—the forgiveness of sin?!

No one exempt? Thank you, Jesus! For that meant you, too! And now we live!

Transition And that, my friends, is what we SEE transpiring in the garden? Have we missed anything? Has anything been moving in the shadows?

2 FROM BEING TEMPTED

A. THE TEMPTER WAS THERE!

Do you remember three Sundays ago accompanying Jesus to be tempted by the devil? Do you know how Luke closed out that account? "When the devil had finished all this tempting, he left Jesus until an opportune time."

Some scholars believe that the devil took physical form that night in the garden. "Why not pull every punch for someone who chose to be like Adam's children in every way and in all of their weakness...except for sin?! Why not display all the power I can—visual and verbal--all the vibrato I can make, to show him how small and weak he has become?"

"Better yet, why not make the LURE tailor-made for him and pick up where we left off in that desert? Do you remember how I plied his EGO and his HEART and then went for the JUGULAR?! Let's make the LURE HUGE! Let's make its pull strong!"

B. THE LURE WAS STRONG!

"NO mercy... You are the Son of God...your own Father doesn't love you? Is he going to turn his back on you? Is that what is happening here? Why don't you turn the tables, just like in the temple? Come my way! I WILL give you the kingdoms..."

"No pity.. Every lash will hurt. Every swing of the hammer will jolt. Every wiggle on the skewers will resonate through you! YOU have the power to stop it. Claim your destiny!"

"NO respect... You are a fool, Jesus. How can one love a Father who would run his own knife through his Son? How can one love a people who betray at every step? Your disciples abandon you in sleep even now when you need them most! They don't deserve you. They don't love you. But I will! And I will share my situation!"

APPROPRIATION NO ONE EXEMPT...from being human. NO one exempt from being tempted... Not even Jesus?! How are WE to cope? What are WE to do? What did HE do?

I think he had a plan. We see him take control. He surrounded himself with good people-- friends—weak, but good. He models for us what to do when all hope seems lost and we fear the sun will not shine again. He leaned on his Father. He took his anguish to the throne of grace! “Father, everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will.”

No one is exempt...so did you catch on how he prayed? AWARE that his Father can do anything—"everything is possible for you"—TRUSTING his love—"Father"--Jesus ASKED boldly: "Take this cup from me." And trusting still, his Father, he SUBMITTED his will to his Father's to make things right again in the Creation he and his Father had made.

NO one is exempt from being human. NO one is exempt from being tempted. Thank you, Jesus, that "no exemption" included you. To the cross you went. Through the grave was how it went down. To the throne of glory is the new reality—for you and for us who believe! No one exempt!

CONCLUSION Wrapped around a cemetery? What a blessed reminder that no one is exempt! Let's practice framing that message well. * And if you look and listen closely when you visit us week to week, you will see and hear of Jesus' throne of glory waiting for all who believe—NO ONE exempt. * And we are planted with our little cemetery, in the middle of life, with our message of hope that in Jesus all is good! What think ye? Amen.

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