

PALM SUNDAY  
APRIL 13, 2025



OUR SAVIOR'S LUTHERAN CHURCH  
EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA  
2589 – 190<sup>TH</sup> AVENUE CALAMUS, IA 52729

# **SERVICE OF HOLY COMMUNION**

## ***EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN WORSHIP, SETTING 3***

*The liturgy is in the front of the ELW with numbers at the bottom of the pages.  
The hymns begin in the middle of the ELW with numbers at the top of the pages.*

### **PRELUDE**

### **RINGING OF THE BELL**

### **WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS**

### **LITURGY OF THE PALMS**

P: Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord

**C: Hosanna in the highest.**

### **PROCESSIONAL GOSPEL (LUKE 19:28-40)**

P: The Holy Gospel according to Luke, the 19<sup>th</sup> chapter.

**C: Glory to you, O Lord.**

P: The Gospel of the Lord.

**C: Praise to you, O Christ.**

### **BLESSING OF THE PALMS**

P: The Lord be with you.

**C: And also with you.**

P: Let us pray. (*concluding...now and forever.*)

**C: Amen**

### **PROCESSION**

P: Let us go forth in peace,

**C: in the name of Christ. Amen.**

### **HYMN #344 “ALL GLORY, LAUD, AND HONOR”**

### **LITURGY OF THE PASSION**

P: Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.

**C: Hosanna in the highest.**

### **PRAYER OF THE DAY**

P: The Lord be with you.

**C: And also with you.**

P: As we now enter...(*concluding...now and forever.*)

**C: Amen**

### **READINGS**

L: The Word of the Lord.

**C: Thanks be to God.**

**HYMN #627 “O DAY FULL OF GRACE”**

**STANZA 1, ALTERNATE TEXT, STANZAS 2-4**

**YOUTH SERMON** – Rev. Leah Holloway-Nilsen

**SERMON** – Rev. Leah Holloway-Nilsen

**HYMN #349 “AH, HOLY JESUS”**

**CONFESSION OF FAITH: APOSTLES’ CREED**

P: Living together in trust and hope, we confess our faith.

**I believe in God, the Father Almighty,  
creator of heaven and earth.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ, God’s only Son, our Lord,  
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,  
born of the virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died, and was buried;  
he descended to the dead.**

**On the third day he rose again;  
he ascended into heaven,  
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,  
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy catholic church,  
the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and the life everlasting. Amen.**

**PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION**

P: Let by the Spirit, let us turn to God in prayer for the church, the world, and all those in need.

*(Each petition ends: P: God, in your mercy, C: receive our prayer.)*

P: Receive the prayers of your people and draw all things together in your love, in the name of Jesus, who leads us from death to life.

**C: Amen.**

**PEACE**

P: The peace of Christ be with you always.

**C: And also with you.**

## OFFERING

### OFFERTORY PRAYER

P: Let us pray. (*concluding ...our Savior and Lord.*)

**C: Amen.**

### ♩ GREAT THANKSGIVING [ PAGE 144]

P: The Lord be with you.

**C: And also with you.**

P: Lift up your hearts.

**C: We lift them to the Lord.**

P: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

**C: It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

P: It is indeed right....and join their unending hymn:

♩ **Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of pow'r and might,  
Heaven and earth are full of your glory.  
Hosanna, Hosanna. Hosanna in the highest.  
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.  
Hosanna in the highest.**

## WORDS OF INSTITUTION

### LORD'S PRAYER

**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.**

## COMMUNION

*All are welcome at the Lord's Table.  
Gluten-free wafers and white grape juice are available.*

♪ **Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world;  
have mercy on us.**  
**Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world;  
have mercy on us.**  
**Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world;  
grant us peace.**

## HYMN #353 “WERE YOU THERE”

### POST COMMUNION BLESSING

P: The body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen you and keep you in his grace.

**C: Amen**

### POST-COMMUNION HYMN (HYMN #811)

♪ **On my heart imprint your image,  
blessed Jesus, king of grace,  
that life's troubles nor its pleasures  
ever may your work erase.  
Let the clear inscription be:  
Jesus, crucified for me,  
is my life, my hope's foundation,  
all my glory and salvation!**

### POST COMMUNION PRAYER

P: Let us pray. (*concluding...Jesus Christ our Lord.*)

**C: Amen.**

### BLESSING

P: Almighty God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,  
bless you now and forever.

**C: Amen.**

## HYMN #338 “BENEATH THE CROSS OF JESUS”

### DISMISSAL

P: Go in peace. Care for others as God cares for you.

**C: Thanks be to God!**

### RINGING OF THE BELL

### POSTLUDE

**Pastor:** Rev. Leah Holloway-Nilsen

**Organist:** Jason Boussetot or Linda Whitman

**Acolyte:** Wyatt Easterday

**Lector:** Deb Detlefs; **Next Week:** Neil Holmquist

**Communion Assistant:** Cindy Burke

**Usher:** David Burke

**Cleaners:** Deb and Ray Detlefs

**Those to keep in prayer:** Carter Henning, Mallory Boussetot, Cathy Goddard, Larry Schau, Diane Sievers, Margaret Travaille; the homebound: Carol Christensen, Ron Gasper, Delores Lahann, Myrna Kay Peterson, Vera St. John, and Bus Seastrand; and those serving in the military.

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## **This Week At A Glance**

- Monday,  
April 14<sup>th</sup> **May newsletter items** are due.
- Wednesday,  
April 16<sup>th</sup> 6:00 pm **God Squad**  
Prep for Easter breakfast at Our Savior's
- Thursday,  
April 17<sup>th</sup> 7:00 pm **Maundy Thursday** Service  
at Our Savior's
- Friday,  
April 18<sup>th</sup> 7:00 pm **Good Friday** Service at Faith
- Sunday,  
April 20<sup>th</sup> 8:00 am **Easter Worship** Service  
at Our Savior's  
9:25 am Easter breakfast at Faith  
9:45 am Easter Egg Hunt  
10:30 am **Easter Worship** Service at Faith

***You're invited to CLP Easter Breakfast + Easter Egg Hunt,  
hosted by God Squad – Sunday, April 20<sup>th</sup> at Our Savior's.  
Breakfast follows Early Worship at 9:00 am. Easter Egg Hunt  
at 9:45 am.***

## Announcements

### Upcoming Activities for God Squad

Wednesday, April 16<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 pm at Our Savior's youth will be stuffing Easter Eggs and Decorating the church for Easter breakfast. Need youth (and parents if they want) to help! Please make sure you bring a bag of candy or treats that fit in plastic eggs.

### God Squad

God Squad is **requesting candy donations** for the Easter Egg Hunt on Easter Sunday. If you would like to donate candy for the Easter Egg Hunt, please leave the candy in the kitchen at Faith.

### Stations of the Cross

Presentation is from 2:00 to 3:00 pm on April 18<sup>th</sup> at Our Lady of the Prairie Retreat, south of Wheatland.

### Collecting Peanut butter

The Calamus Lutheran Parish is gathering **peanut butter** for the Carroll Assistance Center during the 40 days of Lent. The jars of peanut butter can be any size and any brand; smooth or chunky.

### Wednesday Bible School

Bible School is scheduled for Wednesday, May 21<sup>st</sup>, 2025 from 3:30 pm to 5:00 pm at Faith Lutheran Church. For children in Kindergarten through 5<sup>th</sup> Grade. Registration forms must be turned into the church office by May 13<sup>th</sup>, 2025. Please make sure to make arrangements with the school to have children ride the bus to the church.



**Trial Before Pilate And Silence Before Herod &  
The Jew's Blackmail of Pilate  
The Road to Calvary  
There They Crucified Him  
The Promise of Paradise  
The Long Day Closes**

*Luke 23:1-49*

*23:1-12 The whole assembly rose up and brought Jesus to Pilate. They began to accuse him. "We found this man," they said, "perverting our nation and trying to stop men paying taxes to Caesar, and saying that he himself is the anointed one, a king." Pilate asked him, "Are you the king of the Jews?" He answered, "You say so." Pilate said to the chief priests and to the crowds, "I find nothing to condemn in this man." They were the more urgent. "He is setting the people in turmoil," they said, "throughout all Judaea, beginning from Galilee to this place." When Pilate heard this, he asked if the man was a Galilaean. When he realised that he was under Herod's jurisdiction, he referred him to Herod, who was himself in Jerusalem in these days. When Herod saw Jesus he was very glad, because for a long time he had been wishing to see him, because he had heard about him; and he was hoping to see some sign done by him. He questioned him in many words; but he answered him nothing. The chief priests and the scribes stood by vehemently hurling their accusations against him. Herod with his soldiers treated Jesus contemptuously, and after he had mocked him and arrayed him in a gorgeous dress, he referred him back again to Pilate. And Herod and Pilate became friends with each other that same day, for previously they had been at enmity with each other.*

The Jews in the time of Jesus had no power to carry out the death sentence. Such sentence had to be passed by the Roman governor and carried out by the Roman authorities. It was for that reason that the Jews brought Jesus before Pilate. Nothing better shows their conscienceless malignity than the crime with which they charged him. In the Sanhedrin the charge had been one of blasphemy, that he had dared to call himself the Son of God. Before Pilate that charge was never even mentioned. They knew well that it would have carried no weight with him, and that he

would never have proceeded on a charge which would have seemed to him a matter of Jewish religion and superstition. The charge they levelled against Jesus was entirely political, and it has all the marks of the minds and ingenuity of the Sadducees. It was really the aristocratic, collaborationist Sadducees who achieved the crucifixion of Jesus, in their terror lest he should prove a disturbing element and produce a situation in which they would lose their wealth, their comfort and their power.

Their charge before Pilate was really threefold. They charged Jesus (a) with seditious agitation; (b) with encouraging men not to pay tribute to Caesar; (c) with assuming the title king. Every single item of the charge was a lie, and they knew it. They resorted to the most calculated and malicious lies in their well-nigh insane desire to eliminate Jesus.

Pilate was not an experienced Roman official for nothing; he saw through them; and he had no desire to gratify their wishes. But neither did he wish to offend them. They had dropped the information that Jesus came from Galilee; this they had intended as further fuel for their accusations, for Galilee was notoriously "the nurse of seditious men." But to Pilate it seemed a way out. Galilee was under the jurisdiction of Herod Antipas, who at that very time was in Jerusalem to keep the Passover. So to Herod Pilate referred the case. Herod was one of the very few people to whom Jesus had absolutely nothing to say. Why did he believe there was nothing to be said to Herod?

(i) Herod regarded Jesus as a sight to be gazed at. To Herod, he was simply a spectacle. But Jesus was not a sight to be stared at; he was a king to be submitted to. Epictetus, the famous Greek Stoic teacher, used to complain that people came from all over the world to his lectures to stare at him, as if he had been a famous statue, but not to accept and to obey his teaching. Jesus is not a figure to be gazed at but a master to be obeyed.

(ii) Herod regarded Jesus as a joke. He jested at him; he clothed him in a king's robe as an imitation king. To put it in another way-- he refused to take Jesus seriously. He would show him off to his court as an amusing curiosity but there his interest stopped. The plain fact is that the vast majority of men still refuse to take Jesus

seriously. If they did, they would pay more attention than they do to his words and his claims.

(iii) There is another possible translation of Luke 23:11. "Herod with his soldiers treated Jesus contemptuously." That could be translated, "Herod, with his soldiers behind him, thought that Jesus was of no importance." Herod, secure in his position as king, strong with the power of his bodyguard behind him, believed that this Galilean carpenter did not matter. There are still those who, consciously or unconsciously, have come to the conclusion that Jesus does not matter, that he is a factor which can well be omitted from life. They gave him no room in their hearts and no influence in their lives and believe they can easily do without him. To the Christian, so far from being of no importance, Jesus is the most important person in all the universe.

*23:13-25 Pilate summoned the chief priests and the rulers and the people, and said to them, "You brought me this man as one who was seducing the people from their allegiance; and--look you--I have examined him in your presence, and of the accusations with which you charge him, I have found nothing in this man to condemn; and neither has Herod; for he sent him back to us. Look you--nothing deserving death has been done by him. I will therefore scourge him and release him." All together they shouted out, "Take this man away! And release Barabbas for us." Barabbas had been thrown into prison because a certain disorder had arisen in the city, and because of murder. Again Pilate addressed them, because he wished to release Jesus. But they kept shouting, "Crucify, crucify him!" The third time he said to them, "Why? What evil has he done? I have found nothing in him which merits sentence of death. I will chastise him and release him." But they insisted with shouts, demanding that he should be crucified; and their voices prevailed. So Pilate gave sentence that their demand should be granted. He released the man who had been thrown into prison for disorder and murder, the man they asked for, and Jesus he delivered to their will.*

This is an amazing passage. One thing is crystal clear--Pilate did not want to condemn Jesus. He was well aware that to do so would be to betray that impartial justice which was the glory of Rome. He made no fewer than four attempts to avoid passing sentence of

condemnation. He told the Jews to settle the matter themselves ( John 19:6-7 ). He tried to refer the whole case to Herod. He tried to persuade the Jews to receive Jesus as the prisoner granted release at Passover time ( Mark 15:6 ). He tried to effect a compromise, saying he would scourge Jesus and then release him. It is plain that Pilate was coerced into sentencing Jesus to death.

How could a Jewish mob coerce an experienced Roman governor into sentencing Jesus to death? It is literally true that the Jews blackmailed Pilate into sentencing Jesus to death. The basic fact is that, under impartial Roman justice, any province had the right to report a governor to Rome for misgovernment, and such a governor would be severely dealt with. Pilate had made two grave mistakes in his government of Palestine.

In Judaea the Roman headquarters were not at Jerusalem but at Caesarea. But in Jerusalem a certain number of troops were quartered. Roman troops carried standards which were topped by a little bust of the reigning emperor. The emperor was at this time officially a god. The Jewish law forbade any graven image and, in deference to Jewish principles, previous governors had always removed the imperial images before they marched their troops into Jerusalem. Pilate refused to do so; he marched his soldiers in by night with the imperial image on their standards. The Jews came in crowds to Caesarea to request Pilate to remove the images. He refused. They persisted in their entreaties for days. On the sixth day he agreed to meet them in an open space surrounded by his troops. He informed them that unless they stopped disturbing him with their continuous requests the penalty would be immediate death. "They threw themselves on the ground, and laid their necks bare, and said they would take death very willingly rather than that the wisdom of their laws should be transgressed." Not even Pilate could slaughter men in cold blood like that, and he had to yield. Josephus tells the whole story in *The Antiquities of the Jews*, Book 18, chapter 3. Pilate followed this up by bringing into the city a new water supply and financing the scheme with money taken from the Temple treasury, a story which we have already told in the commentary on Luke 13:1-4.

The one thing the Roman government could not afford to tolerate in their far-flung empire was civil disorder. Had the Jews officially

reported either of these incidents there is little doubt that Pilate would have been summarily dismissed. It is John who tells us of the ominous hint the Jewish officials gave Pilate when they said, "If you release this man you are not Caesar's friend." ( John 19:12.) They compelled Pilate to sentence Jesus to death by holding the threat of an official report to Rome over his head.

Here we have the grim truth that a man's past can rise up and confront him and paralyse him. If a man has been guilty of certain actions there are certain things which he has no longer the right to say, otherwise his past will be flung in his face. We must have a care not to allow ourselves any conduct which will some day despoil us of the right to take the stand we know we ought to take and will entitle people to say, "You of all men have no right to speak like that."

But if such a situation should arise, there is only one thing to do--to have the courage to face it and its consequences. That is precisely what Pilate did not possess. He sacrificed justice rather than lose his post; he sentenced Jesus to death in order that he might remain the governor of Palestine. Had he been a man of real courage he would have done the right and taken the consequences, but his past made him a coward.

*23:26-31 As they led Jesus away, they took Simon, a Cyrenian, who was coming in from the country, and on him they laid the cross to carry it behind Jesus.*

*There followed him a great crowd of the people and of women who bewailed and lamented him. Jesus turned to them. "Daughters of Jerusalem," he said, "do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children, because--look you--days are on the way in which they will say, 'Happy are those who are barren, and the wombs that never bore, and the breasts which never fed a child.' Then they will begin to say to the mountains, 'Fall upon us!' and to the hills, 'Cover us!' For if they do these things when the sap is in the wood, what will they do when the tree is dry?"*

When a criminal was condemned to be crucified, he was taken from the judgment hall and set in the middle of a hollow square of four Roman soldiers. His own cross was then laid upon his

shoulders. And he was marched to the place of crucifixion by the longest possible route, while before him marched another soldier bearing a placard with his crime inscribed upon it, so that he might be a terrible warning to anyone else who was contemplating such a crime. That is what they did with Jesus.

He began by carrying his own Cross ( [John 19:17](#) ); but under its weight his strength gave out and he could carry it no farther. Palestine was an occupied country and any citizen could be immediately impressed into the service of the Roman government. The sign of such impressment was a tap on the shoulder with the flat of the blade of a Roman spear. When Jesus sank beneath the weight of his Cross, the Roman centurion in charge looked round for someone to carry it. Out of the country into the city there came Simon from far off Cyrene, which is modern Tripoli. No doubt he was a Jew who all his life had scraped and saved so that he might be able to eat one Passover at Jerusalem. The flat of the Roman spear touched him on the shoulder and he found himself, willy-nilly, carrying a criminal's cross.

Try to imagine the feelings of Simon. He had come to Jerusalem to realise the cherished ambition of a lifetime, and he found himself walking to Calvary carrying a cross. His heart was filled with bitterness towards the Romans and towards this criminal who had involved him in his crime.

But if we can read between the lines the story does not end there. J. A. Robertson saw in it one of the hidden romances of the New Testament. Mark describes Simon as the father of Alexander and Rufus. ( [Mark 15:21](#) .) Now you do not identify a man by the name of his sons unless these sons are well-known people in the community to which you write. There is general agreement that Mark wrote his gospel to the Church at Rome. Turn to Paul's letter to the Church at Rome. Amongst the greetings at the end he writes, "Greet Rufus, eminent in the Lord, also his mother and mine." ( [Romans 16:13](#) .) So in the Roman church there was Rufus, so choice a Christian that he could be called one of God's chosen ones, with a mother so dear to Paul that he could call her his mother in the faith. It may well be that this was the same Rufus who was the son of Simon of Cyrene, and his mother was Simon's wife.

It may well be that as he looked on Jesus Simon's bitterness turned to wondering amazement and finally to faith; that he became a Christian; and that his family became some of the choicest souls in the Roman church. It may well be that Simon from Tripoli thought he was going to realize a life's ambition, to celebrate the Passover in Jerusalem at last; that he found himself sorely against his will carrying a criminal's cross; that, as he looked, his bitterness turned to wonder and to faith; and that in the thing that seemed to be his shame he found a Saviour.

Behind Jesus there came a band of women weeping for him. He turned and bade them weep, not for him, but for themselves. Days of terror were coming. In Judaea there was no tragedy like a childless marriage; in fact childlessness was a valid ground for divorce. But the day would come when the woman who had no child would be glad that it was so. Once again Jesus was seeing ahead the destruction of that city which had so often before, and which had now so finally, refused the invitation of God. Luke 23:31 is a proverbial phrase which could be used in many connections. Here it means, if they do this to one who is innocent, what will they some day do to those who are guilty?

*23:32-38 Two others who were criminals were brought to be put to death with Jesus. When they came to the place which is called the place of a skull, there they crucified him, and the two criminals, one on his right hand, and one on his left. And Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." And, as they divided his garments, they cast lots for them. The people stood watching, and the rulers giped at him. "He saved others," they said. "Let him save himself if he really is the anointed one of God, the chosen one." The soldiers also mocked him, coming and offering vinegar to him, and saying, "If you are the King of the Jews save yourself." There was also an inscription over him, "This is the King of the Jews."*

When a criminal reached the place of crucifixion, his cross was laid flat upon the ground. Usually it was a cross shaped like a T with no top piece against which the head could rest. It was quite low, so that the criminal's feet were only two or three feet above the ground. There was a company of pious women in Jerusalem who made it their practice always to go to crucifixions and to give

the victim a drink of drugged wine which would deaden the terrible pain. That drink was offered to Jesus and he refused it. (Matthew 27:34.) He was determined to face death at its worst, with a clear mind and senses unclouded. The victim's arms were stretched out upon the cross bar, and the nails were driven through his hands. The feet were not nailed, but only loosely bound to the cross. Half way up the cross there was a projecting piece of wood, called the saddle, which took the weight of the criminal, for otherwise the nails would have torn through his hands. Then the cross was lifted and set upright in its socket. The terror of crucifixion was this--the pain of that process was terrible but it was not enough to kill, and the victim was left to die of hunger and thirst beneath the blazing noontide sun and the frosts of the night. Many a criminal was known to have hung for a week upon his cross until he died raving mad.

The clothes of the criminal were the perquisites of the four soldiers among whom he marched to the cross. Every Jew wore five articles of apparel--the inner tunic, the outer robe, the girdle, the sandals and the turban. Four were divided among the four soldiers. There remained the great outer robe. It was woven in one piece without a seam. (John 19:23-24.) To have cut it up and divided it would have ruined it; and so the soldiers gambled for it in the shadow of the cross. It was nothing to them that another criminal was slowly dying in agony.

The inscription set upon the cross was the same placard as was carried before a man as he marched through the streets to the place of crucifixion.

Jesus said many wonderful things, but rarely anything more wonderful than, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Christian forgiveness is an amazing thing. When Stephen was being stoned to death he too prayed, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." (Acts 7:60.) There is nothing so lovely and nothing so rare as Christian forgiveness. When the unforgiving spirit is threatening to turn our hearts to bitterness, let us hear again our Lord asking forgiveness for those who crucified him and his servant Paul saying to his friends, "Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you." (Ephesians 4:32.)



The idea that this terrible thing was done in ignorance runs through the New Testament. Peter said to the people in after days, "I know that you acted in ignorance." ( Acts 3:17.) Paul said that they crucified Jesus because they did not know him. ( Acts 13:27.) Marcus Aurelius, the great Roman Emperor and Stoic saint, used to say to himself every morning, "Today you will meet all kinds of unpleasant people; they will hurt you, and injure you, and insult you; but you cannot live like that; you know better, for you are a man in whom the spirit of God dwells." Others may have in their hearts the unforgiving spirit, others may sin in ignorance; but we know better. We are Christ's men and women; and we must forgive as he forgave.

*23:39-43 One of the criminals who were hanged kept hurling insults at Jesus. "Are you not the anointed one?" he said. "Save yourself and us." The other rebuked him. "Do you not even fear God?" he said. "For we too are under the same sentence and justly so, for we have done things which deserve the reward that we are reaping; but this man has done nothing unseemly." And he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." He said to him, "This is the truth--I tell you--today you will be with me in Paradise."*

It was of set and deliberate purpose that the authorities crucified Jesus between two known criminals. It was deliberately so staged to humiliate Jesus in front of the crowd and to rank him with robbers.

Legend has been busy with the penitent thief. He is called variously Dismas, Demas and Dumachus. One legend makes him a Judaeen Robin Hood who robbed the rich to give to the poor. The loveliest legend tells how the holy family were attacked by robbers when they fled with the child Jesus from Bethlehem to Egypt. Jesus was saved by the son of the captain of the robber band. The baby was so lovely that the young brigand could not bear to lay hands on him but set him free, saying, "O most blessed of children, if ever there come a time for having mercy on me, then remember me and forget not this hour." That robber youth who had saved Jesus as a baby met him again on Calvary; and this time Jesus saved him.

The word Paradise is a Persian word meaning a walled garden. When a Persian king wished to do one of his subjects a very special honour he made him a companion of the garden which meant he was chosen to walk in the garden with the king. It was more than immortality that Jesus promised the penitent thief. He promised him the honoured place of a companion of the garden in the courts of heaven.

Surely this story tells us above all that it is never too late to turn to Christ. There are other things of which we must say, "The time for that is past. I am grown too old now." But we can never say that of turning to Jesus Christ. So long as a man's heart beats, the invitation of Christ still stands. As the poet wrote of the man who was killed as he was thrown from his galloping horse,

"Betwixt the stirrup and the ground, Mercy I asked, mercy I found." It is literally true that while there is life there is hope.

*23:44-49 By this time it was about midday, and there was darkness over the whole land until 3 o'clock in the afternoon, and the light of the sun failed. And the veil of the Temple was rent in the midst. When Jesus had cried with a great voice, he said, "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit." When he had said this he breathed his last. When the centurion saw what had happened, he glorified God. "Truly," he said, "this was a good man." All the crowds, who had come together to see the spectacle, when they saw the things that had happened, went home beating their breasts. And all his acquaintances, and the women who had accompanied him from Galilee, stood far off and saw these things. Every sentence of this passage is rich in meaning.*

(i) There was a great darkness as Jesus died. It was as if the sun itself could not bear to look upon the deed men's hands had done. The world is ever dark in the day when men seek to banish Christ.

(ii) The Temple veil was rent in two. This was the veil which hid the Holy of Holies, the place where dwelt the very presence of God, the place where no man might ever enter except the High Priest, and he only once a year, on the great day of Atonement. It was as if the way to God's presence, hitherto barred to man, was thrown open to all. It was as if the heart of God, hitherto hidden,

was laid bare. The birth, life and death of Jesus tore apart the veil which had concealed God from man. "He who has seen me," said Jesus, "has seen the Father." ( John 14:9 .) On the cross, as never before and never again, men saw the love of God.

(iii) Jesus cried with a great voice. Three of the gospels tell us of this great cry. (compare Matthew 27:50 ; Mark 15:37 .) John, on the other hand, does not mention the great cry but tells us that Jesus died saying, "It is finished." ( John 19:30 .) In Greek and Aramaic "It is finished" is one word. It is finished and the great cry are, in fact, one and the same thing. Jesus died with a shout of triumph on his lips. He did not whisper, "It is finished," as one who is battered to his knees and forced to admit defeat. He shouted it like a victor who has won his last engagement with the enemy and brought a tremendous task to triumphant conclusion. "Finished!" was the cry of the Christ, crucified yet victorious.

(iv) Jesus died with a prayer on his lips. "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit." That is Psalms 31:5 with one word added-- Father. That verse was the prayer every Jewish mother taught her child to say last thing at night. Just as we were taught, maybe, to say, "This night I lay me down to sleep," so the Jewish mother taught her child to say, before the threatening dark came down, "Into thy hands I commit my spirit." Jesus made it even more lovely for he began it with the word Father. Even on a cross Jesus died like a child falling asleep in his father's arms.

(v) The centurion and the crowd were deeply moved as Jesus died. His death did what even his life could not do; it broke the hard hearts of men. Already Jesus' saying was coming true--"I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw an men to myself." The magnet of the cross had begun its work, even as he breathed his last.