

DEVOTION FOR THE FIFTH FRIDAY OF EASTER

PSALM 107:10-16

Some sat in darkness and the deepest gloom, prisoners suffering in iron chains, for they had rebelled against the words of God and despised the counsel of the Most High.

So He subjected them to bitter labor; they stumbled, and there was no one to help.

Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble and He saved them from their distress.

He brought them out of darkness and the deepest gloom and broke away their chains.

Let them give thanks to the Lord for His unfailing love and His wonderful deeds for men, for He breaks down gates of bronze and cuts through bars of iron.

*Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit;
As it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen*

Old Testament Reading: Leviticus 25:1-55 *Sabbath, Jubilee, Redemption*

New Testament Reading: Hebrews 2:1-18 *Jesus the founder of our salvation*

“THE FEAR OF DEATH”

The author of Hebrews says Jesus shared in our humanity, so that He might set human beings free from the fear of death. People have a natural respect for death and generally try to avoid it, but not everyone fears death. Organizations throughout the world seek freer access to death for the chronically ill, those with terminal illnesses, the mentally ill and disabled. They believe governments should provide professional assistance for those seeking death. For some people, pain and unhappiness are feared more than death!

Warrior societies valued death in battle as the best outcome for a soldier. Warriors had a natural respect for death and tried to avoid it themselves, so they could inflict it on others. A warrior wanted to live to fight another day! Death was to be avoided for the sake of continued fighting, but when it came, death was to be embraced with honour. Death in battle was better than death from illness or age. When he couldn't fight, it was time to die! If death was denied in battle, a warrior would fall on his sword and bring death to himself.

Scripture teaches that death comes, because of sin. Death exposes human sin, God's anger at sin and His judgement on sinful human beings. Fear of death comes from the realization that sin has broken our relationship with God and caused His judgement, which is expressed in death. People who have no fear of death often have no sense of sin, or fear of God's judgement. People who have no sense of sin and judgement, feel no need for a Saviour from death. When they die, they will just go to sleep!

Many people honour Jesus as a teacher of morals and ethical behaviour. Jesus taught us to love our neighbour, but Jesus most important role is Saviour from fear of death through the forgiveness of sin. Jesus shared in our flesh and blood, so He would defeat death by His death and free those who believe from God's condemnation of human sin. Jesus defeated death, by taking away the guilt of human sin. The real problem for humanity is not suffering, illness, injury, misery and depression. Those are symptoms! The problem is sin! The solution is not death. The solution is Jesus, sharing in our humanity and taking away our sin through His cross. To all who believe, He gives freedom from sin and fear of death through the sacrifice of His cross!

“UPON THE CROSS EXTENDED” (Public Domain)

**Upon the cross extended, see world your Lord suspended.
Your Saviour yields His breath. The Prince of Life from heaven,
Himself has freely given, to shame and blows and bitter death**

**Who is it, Lord that bruised you? Who has so sore abused you?
And cause you all your woe? We all must make confession, of sin and dire transgression, while you no
ways of evil know.**

**Your cords of love my Saviour, bind me to you forever.
I am no longer mine. To you I gladly tender, all that my life can render.
And all I have to you resign.**

**Your cross I place before me. Its saving power restore me.
Sustain me in the test. It will when life is ending,
Be guiding and attending, my way to your eternal rest.**

PRAYER

Jesus our Saviour, bless us with your Holy Spirit that we may always pay attention to the salvation we have from sin and death, through you. Bless us to value human life as a gift and more than this, to value most highly the gift of life eternal, which we receive through you, for the sake of your life offered in the cross. You shared in our humanity and suffered on the cross, so that you would taste death for everyone. Because you tasted death for everyone, you offer forgiveness and life for all to receive as a gift of grace through faith in your name. Open the hearts of all people to believe. Continue to open our hearts that we may receive from you, freedom from the fear of death through the forgiveness of your cross. In your Name. Amen

THE 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**

THE CREED

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth. And in Jesus Christ, His 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 into hell. The third day He rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. From thence He will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen

BENEDICTION

Hebrews 2:18

“For because He Himself has suffered when tempted, He is able to help those who are being tempted.”