

29 March 2018
Holy and Good Friday

St. Athanasius Lutheran Church

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“Mine!”

Text: Isaiah 52:13-53:12; John 18-19

In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

There is a children’s game, most of you have probably heard of it, called Hot Potato. Everyone sits in a circle and an object is passed around - the hot potato. You don’t want to be caught with it. If you are, then you’re out of the game. And so the action gets pretty fast and furious, as the object is passed on as quickly as possible.

To my knowledge, there is no opposite game - where the one who is caught with the object wins. Probably because it wouldn’t be much of a game. Whoever had the object wouldn’t pass it on. They would just hold onto it and keep it.

For you and I, the hot potato we don’t want to be caught with is our sin.

The good news for us tonight is that Jesus wants it. He takes the hot potato of your sin and says MINE. He does not pass it on. He will not let it go.

But it’s not just that, but holding onto your sin and saying MINE, He is taking much more than that. He is saying MINE to your condemnation, MINE to your chastisement, MINE to your death. He is cut off for you. He is crushed for you. He is wounded and oppressed for you.

Because when Jesus says MINE to your sin, it isn’t just your sin that He is holding onto. **It’s you.** He’s really grabbing hold of you and saying MINE. Because your sin isn’t just something out there, floating around, separate from you, that He can grab and take. Your sin is in your flesh. And so He takes your flesh upon Himself. The Son of God became man, and said MINE. Your flesh, and all that comes with it, is MINE. He wants it and He will not let it go. Even though holding onto you means going to the cross.

We sit in the darkness tonight and try to imagine the darkness of that day, when Jesus hung on the cross, when Jesus hung there in the darkness, when the sun stopped shining.

But really, if you would know that, do this instead: put whatever sin you are most ashamed of, whatever sin - that if known - would make your family and friends distance themselves from you, whatever sin - that if known - would ruin your life, and put it in large print on a large sign around your neck and walk around your neighborhood. Don’t

write it in Aramaic, Latin, and Greek, but write it in English, Spanish, and whatever other languages are spoken by your neighbors - and make sure all your neighbors see it and know. Know who you are. What kind of person you really are. And even then, you would be getting just a small, small taste of what Jesus did for you. In taking the sin of the world and saying MINE.

Judas, actually, got a taste of this. After he betrayed Jesus and saw that Jesus had been condemned, he went to the Temple, he went to the priests, and confessed. But the priests said: YOURS. Your sin is yours. That's your hot potato. What is that to us? You deal with it. And he did. The only way he knew how.

But it doesn't have to be that way. For Judas or anyone else. And tonight, it's NOT that way. Because tonight, Jesus says MINE. Your sins are mine. Your sins are hung around His neck. And He will take them to the grave.

And because He does, you now get to say MINE, too. For children, there is no corresponding game to Hot Potato to hold onto the object, but for us, there is. Jesus flips everything around tonight. And so tonight, we get to hold onto Him and say MINE. We get His forgiveness and say MINE. We get His life and say MINE. That's called faith. Faith is the hand that takes hold of Jesus and says MINE.

So now what of your sins? Do you want to embrace them and say MINE and keep doing them? And what of the sins of others committed against you? Do you want to take them and say MINE so that you can hold onto them and use them against him? Or her? Do you know what you're doing when you do that? You are wrestling with Jesus who has already taken those sins and said MINE! And this too. If you're trying to grab hold of those sins and say MINE, are your hands holding onto Jesus and saying MINE? Do you see? Why would we do that?

No. Tonight, we hear the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. He grabs us and our sin and says MINE. He dies our death. He is buried in our tomb.

But we know that is not the end. For we know that His third day is coming, when He rises from the tomb, still holding onto us and saying MINE - but the sin is gone, the condemnation is gone, and the death is gone. But that's for another day.

Tonight, we hear how strong His love-grip on us. Peter couldn't do it; his grip was weak. The crowds *wouldn't* do it; they shouted crucify instead. How often do we fail, too. How good, then, that our salvation doesn't depend on *our* grip, but on His. Jesus holding onto us and not letting go. Sin, satan, death - you cannot have them, Jesus says. They are MINE.

So tonight is Jesus' night. Holding onto you and your sin He looks "out of the game" on

the cross. The others thought they had won. But no. Jesus did. He won you. Not much of a prize, some would say. But Jesus would disagree. For tonight, Jesus has changed the game. He holds onto you and says MINE, that you hold onto Him and say MINE!

In the Name of the Father and of the (+) Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.