

31 March 2021
Holy Wednesday

Saint Athanasius Lutheran Church
Vienna, VA

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Holy Wednesday Meditation
Text: Romans 5:6-11

Who would you die for?

The first answer that might come to mind is your family. For your children, your spouse, your parents. Those closest and dearest to you.

Police and firefighters put their lives on the line and sometimes die protecting people. When they do, they're often honored with memorials or other tributes.

Military members die for their country, defending their fellow citizens, even those who disagree with them.

But would you die for the person who broke into your house and stole your stuff? Would you die for the criminal who mugged you and gave you a good beating? Would you die for the person who took the life of one of your loved ones? Why would you, right? It's their life that deserves snuffing out, not yours.

But we know, and we hear again this Holy Week, that's exactly what Jesus did for us. He didn't die for the righteous, He didn't die for the good, He died for sinners. And not just sinners, but really bad sinners. The worst of the worst.

He died for Judas who betrayed Him.

He died for Pontius Pilate who condemned Him.

He died for the soldiers who beat Him and nailed Him to the cross.

He died for the Chief Priests and Elders who got Pilate to sentence Him to death.

He died for Peter who denied Him.

He died for the person who broke into your house and stole your stuff.

He died for the criminal who mugged you and gave you a good beating.

He died for the person who took the life of one of your loved ones.

And, oh yes, He died **for you**.

That's an objective fact. Earlier I asked you who you might die for, which was speculation. This is not that. This is what happened on the cross. Isaiah tells us that God laid on our Messiah, on Jesus, the iniquity of us all (Isaiah 53:6b). And all means all. Jesus died for you. To reconcile you to God. To remove what was separating you from God. To bring you back together what sin had rent asunder. To give you peace with God. That's

done. Objective fact. It is what we are remembering and rejoicing in this week. That tremendous sacrifice Jesus made for us - while we were not good, not righteous, but sinners, enemies of His.

But on Sunday we're also going to remember and rejoice in His resurrection. That is, His life from the dead. That is, that the one who died for us is not just alive again, but still saving us! His work is not just past tense, but present tense and future tense as well, continuing still today. He didn't die for us and then leave us on our own. A kind of divine second chance. *OK. You screwed up. I took care of that. Now you better take advantage of your second chance!* No, the reconciliation of the cross, the justification of the cross, continues, as Jesus continues to forgive. When we repent, He speaks to us His Absolution through the mouth of the man He put there to speak on His behalf. He continues to feed us with His Body and Blood to strengthen us through the struggles of this life and our struggles with sin. And on the Last Day, He will stand with us. He will not say: *I died for you and this is how you repay me? This is what you did with your life?* In that case, we're all lost. No, Paul says. He who died for us, who justified us, who reconciled us, will also save us.

Why God would do all that for us, we must admit, is a mystery. Though we know the reason - love - it is still a mystery. A love like that. Beyond anything *in* this world or *of* this world. Or as we just sang, *My Song Is Love Unknown* (LSB #430).

It is a love given to us that we may now, in turn, give it to others. Not because they're righteous, good, or deserving, and not just because it's been given to us, but because Christ is working this mind and this love in us. Or as Paul says in Philippians, words that we heard this past Sunday: *Have this mind among yourself, which is yours in Christ Jesus* . . . (Philippians 2:5).

Perhaps one way to think about that is this: How will you react, what will you think, if you meet one of those people who hurt you in heaven? That person who broke into your house and stole something very dear to you? That person who mugged you and gave you a good beating? That person who took the life of a loved one? Will you be filled with anger and hate and thirst for revenge? No, not in heaven. There is none of that there. Rather, risen from the dead and glorified, you have the mind of Christ. *That loves even enemies*. That rejoices in the justification and reconciliation of all people. Christ healed you from your past and your sins. So there is only a glorious future.

You have that mind now. You've been baptized into Christ. He lives in you, though you still struggle against sin and sinful urges. But this week, we see something different. Completely different. What love looks like *without* sin and sinful urges. Pure, divine love. And it runs deeper and shines brighter than anything we could imagine. Even to dying for enemies.

We rejoice to see such love. We rejoice to receive such love. And we rejoice to give such love. And because of Jesus, one day we will rejoice to live in the fullness of that love, with Him, forever.

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