

21 March 2008  
Great and Holy Friday Tenebrae

St. Athanasius Lutheran Church  
Vienna, VA

## Jesu Juva

“Reconciled”

Text: John 19:17-30 (Isaiah 53; 2 Corinthians 5:14-21)

*All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.*

Why would the Lord do such a thing? Lay our wickedness, our guilt, our sin, our evil, onto not just another, but onto His only-begotten Son? Why would the Father crush Him, put Him to grief, and make Him an offering for sin? Why would He have His Son stricken, smitten, and afflicted? Why?

Because He loves you. Yes, you who have gone astray. You who have turned to your own way. You who think so little of Him who thinks so much of you. Is this not a love beyond our understanding? But that is what makes it God’s love. It is greater than our love. His love so far above our love as far as heaven is from hell. And no where do we see that love so great as tonight. When as St. Paul said, “*in Christ, God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting [our] trespasses against [us].*” Not counting our selfishness against us; not counting the coldness of our love against us; not counting our laziness against us; not counting all the lusts of our lives against us; not counting our pride against us; not even counting our rebellion against us.

He could have. Surely. *The soul who sins shall die.* (Ezekiel 18:4, 20) But God did not create us to die, but live. And so that our trespasses might not be counted against us, our Lord counts them against Himself, in Christ. This is not the Holy Trinity divided against itself, the Father against the Son. This is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, *all* working for the reconciliation of the world! One in heart, mind, will, and love. The Father sends His Son and the Son is pleased to come. When Jesus associates with sinners and is even baptized like a sinner with us, the Father is well pleased. The Spirit descends in the form of a dove and anoints Jesus for this work. And then Jesus willingly lays down His life for you. No one can take His life from Him – He lays it down of His own accord. (John 10:18) For you. For you He suffers the forsakenness of the condemned. For you He suffers the pangs of death and hell. For you *He is made sin, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.*

And now, we who were separated from God by sin, are forgiven, reconciled. We who were on the outside of Heaven looking in, are given a seat at the Table. We who had no hope, now have the promise of everlasting life. In Christ.

We should not be surprised at this, this love of God which has done all things for us, for this has always been God's way. His love creating all things, and His love now reconciling all things to Himself. All of creation made and given to us as a gift, His redemption now procured for us and given as a gift. From the beginning of the world to its ending, gift upon gift, grace upon grace. For this is not just what our God *does*, but who our God *is*. A giving God. A gracious God. A generous God. A good God. Who is the beginning made all things good, and on Good Friday, in His Son, made all things good again.

And so at the ninth hour of the day, *knowing that all was now finished . . . [Jesus] bowed his head and gave up his spirit*. All that needed to be done was done. Jesus enters the sleep and rest of death not in despair, but in confidence and joy. For the sin of the world has been atoned for. But not just the sin of the world – your sin, and mine. And now, with His descent into hell and His resurrection on the third day, all our enemies are defeated! Sin, death, and devil now have no more power over us! For *it is finished* means *they* are finished!

And so with God there are no irreconcilable differences. The great divorce orchestrated by satan in the Garden has been undone in Christ. The hatred of satan is overcome by the love of God. What joy then is not only Christ's, but ours! Even on this somber and serious day. For while yes, we look at the cross and see the deadly serious and sobering reality of our sin – even more we look and see His love. The unfathomable love of God for sinners like us. A love that clung to the cross because He clings to you.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ: *Behold, the Lamb of God who takest away the sin of the world!*

In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.