

But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. (Romans 3:21-26)

And Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." (Luke 23:34)

LSB 440 – Jesus, Will I Ponder Now

(Verse 3 of this week's hymn served as inspiration for today's devotion.)

As we read the Gospel accounts of the Passion narrative, it can be easy to pass the blame around to many different characters in the story. The religious leaders accuse Jesus of blasphemy, ultimately leading to his arrest and trial. His faithful followers abandon him. King Herod mistreats and ignores Jesus. Pontius Pilate ultimately caves to political pressure and sentences Jesus to death. The Roman guards mistreat him, beat him, and ultimately drive the nails through his body as they crucify Jesus on the cross.

But this stanza of the hymn reminds us that we are at the center of all of this. We share the guilt. We share the responsibility. Our sin, and the sin of all humanity, is both the cause and the termination of Jesus' passion. We want to explain it away. We want to pass the blame. But we can't. This realization makes us ponder the passion narrative with renewed and sharpened focus. We see ourselves in the conniving religious leaders, in the weak politicians, in the denying and deserting disciples, and in the hands of those who drive the nails through Jesus' flesh. It was our sin. It is our sin.

Yet our Savior does not leave us with our guilt, and neither does the hymn writer. *Let your cross my fear disarm; peace of conscience give me (stanza 5)*. Our Savior calls for our forgiveness, even as we don't know what we are doing (Luke 23:34). That forgiveness is complete and eternal. Thus, as we contemplate and ponder the passion of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, we do so with penitent remorse and praise-filled hope: Our sin is the cause and termination of the crucifixion; the crucifixion is the cause and fulfillment of our salvation.

Prayer

We give you thanks, Heavenly Father, for forgiveness through your Son, Jesus Christ, whose passion we ponder during this season of Lent. You forgive us even as we don't know what we are doing. You love us despite our consistent failures. Open our eyes anew, that we might see your Son's passion, its cause, its termination, and its purpose: our forgiveness, life, and salvation. Amen!

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