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SA Lenten Devotions 2018 “The Beloved on the Cross” Week 5

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LEN⁺**TEN**
DEVOTIONS

THE
Fool
THE
Beloved

A CONCORDIA SEMINARY
STUDENT COLLABORATION
LENT 2018

Week 5

This week we take a turn in our meditations, returning again to the cross from our thoughts on discipleship last week. Instead of the foolishness of the cross, we see the beloved Son of God on the cross. We are invited to consider its foreshadowing in the Old Testament. We note the seemingly stark contrast between the beginning of His ministry when he had been called "my beloved Son" by the Father, and this day of his death.

We reflect on his suffering that is both because of us and for us, how His perfect submission in all this is beyond what we can do for ourselves, yet is something we still echo in our prayers when we say "Thy will be done." We are vividly shown to the undeniable reality of His death, which is overcome by the resurrection, from which we gain hope for our own resurrection even as we are made part of His beloved bride, the church, in our baptism.

“The Beloved on the Cross”

Monday

Seminarian Jared Townley, 2nd Year

March 12, 2018

Based on John 19:33-34

John 19:33-34 - But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. 34 But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water.

Devotional: With Jesus' body still on the cross, John brings to us a relevant and essential veracity, the ‘realness’ of his crucifixion. In crucifixion, the process of dying could take days — however long it would be until people stopped trying to prop themselves up to breathe and thus suffocated. In this case, Jesus is already dead so the soldiers pass up breaking his legs.

In what follows, it is as if John knew that some would eventually doubt the ‘death’ of this man. So, he adds the next verse — one of the soldiers pierced his side and immediately blood and water came out. This blood and water would have actually been a considerable amount of liquid. For this reason, there was no doubt that Jesus was truly dead, there was NO life left in him.

The importance of Jesus being proven dead should not be underestimated. For without a certain death, how could there be a certain resurrection? Without a certain death, then isn't our faith in vain? Without a certain death, what do we have to hope in? So as the resurrection is the point at which our faith stands or falls, without a real certain death to precede it, then we have nothing to cling to.

Lord Jesus Christ, we praise you for the death which you died on the cross at Calvary. We take hope in the fact that you who were dead have been raised to life and that we have been grafted into this same resurrection in our baptism. Grant us assurance that we may grasp and take hold of these real promises. In your name, amen.

“The Beloved on the Cross”

Tuesday

Seminarian Sam Handschke, 4th Year

March 13, 2018

Based on John 3:14-15

John 3:14-15 - “And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.”

A horrific sight. One that cannot be viewed and yet must be viewed. The crafty snakes slithered around the people, lashing out to bite them. The deadly venom of their poison infected the people to the core of their being. Their blood pulsed with an infection. The cure seemed ironic, even cruel. A bronze snake lifted high upon a pole. The people were at once confronted with both the cause of their death and with its cure. The snakes which seemed to overrun their community, wantonly causing death and destruction, became the only source of their relief.

So Moses, acting upon the word from God, lifted up the serpent in the wilderness. Those who looked to this bronze serpent lived. Yet Jesus appropriates this event, saying it speaks about him. In his crucifixion, humanity is at once confronted with both the cause of their death and with their cure. Jesus takes upon himself all sin, receiving the inevitable conclusion of sin: death. He dies as the curse of sin. Yet his body also shows the cure of sin. Those who look upon him see the remedy of that deadly Serpent’s ancient poison. A beloved sight. One that at the same time horrifies and comforts.

Prayer: I thank you, Almighty Father, that you have lifted up your only Son in horrible death for me. Having cured the poison of my sin, may I live in thankfulness and righteousness before you. Amen.

“The Beloved on the Cross”

Wednesday

Seminarian Brad Singer, 1st Year

March 14, 2018

Based on Luke 23:34

Luke 23:34: “And Jesus said, ‘Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.’ And they cast lots to divide his garments.”

As we stand before the Cross and Christ’s bitter passion in this solemn season of Lent, it is essential to realize our place in Christ’s crucifixion. While we certainly weep before the Cross and the innocent sufferings of our Savior, we must realize that it is our sins He bears, that it is our actions that drive in His nails. In our sinfulness, we are those in the crowd mocking Him.

We are those deserving of nothing, faced with the ugly consequences of our own fallen nature and the gracious actions of our Lord, and in those moments, it is Christ who begs for forgiveness – yet not forgiveness for His actions, for surely He is innocent, but forgiveness for those who are crucifying Him. He is begging for the forgiveness of sinful man; our forgiveness. We are entirely undeserving of mercy, but He grants it to us, and we receive His forgiveness through faith in Him.

He suffers for us.

And He dies for us.

Heavenly Father, may we never stray from the forgiveness and grace of Your Son, our Savior, Jesus Christ, and may we ever believe and trust in Him, thankful for the gift of His life-giving sacrifice, for He lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, One God, now and forever. Amen.

“The Beloved on the Cross”

Thursday

Seminarian Cameron Harms, 2nd Year

March 15, 2018

Based on Matt. 27:45-50

It was a bleak spring day and it seemed as though all of Jerusalem had come out to watch Jesus of Nazareth, the one called Christ, as He was being executed as an enemy of the state. Certainly some of those present could recall a day from three years earlier when they had seen Jesus baptized in the Jordan by the Prophet John.

On that comparatively pleasant day, the very voice of God Himself had declared that Jesus was His “Beloved Son.” Now this same Jesus was naked and beaten and hanging from a tree. Any who had been present at His baptism would have wondered how this beloved son of heaven could come to such a shameful end. After hours on the cross the man himself cried out “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” All those in earshot would have to agree. God had clearly abandoned Him.

What none of these spectators could understand, however, was that this moment was the reason that voice from heaven had declared this man to be beloved. Jesus Christ had been baptized for the very purpose of taking on all the sins of mankind in order to atone for them. By taking on the extreme punishment of being forsaken by God, He was fulfilling His Father’s will. That is why He was called Beloved.

He was obedient as a true son should be. He took our punishment on Himself, literally going through hell, and now we are redeemed and purchased from our slavery to sin, just as the Father willed. Through the death of Christ we are now the ones declared the beloved children of God and we will never have to know what it feels like to be forsaken by Him.

“The Beloved on the Cross”

Friday

Seminarian Kevin Scott, 2nd Year

March 16, 2018

Based on Luke 22 & 23

It’s easy to think of the perfect life that Jesus lived in terms of the “good things” that He did. To be sure, He perfectly kept every command given by God, never giving offense in thought or in deed to His Father in heaven. Yet the words of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane in Luke 22 reveal another dimension to this fact. Jesus did fully what none of us could do for ourselves:

“Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me. Yet, not my will but your will be done.” (Luke 22:42)

Jesus perfectly submitted to the will of His Father, never turning or running from the perfect will of God, even in the face of betrayal, rejection, torture, crucifixion, death, and hell. “Yet, it was the will of the Lord to crush Him...” (Isaiah 53:10). Jesus did fully what none of us could do for ourselves. After all, He came to earth to do His Father’s will for our sake.

And, upon the cross, Jesus prayed a prayer that all of us echo when we say “Into your hands I commit myself, my body, and soul, and all things...”

“Then Jesus, calling out with a loud voice, said, “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!” And having said this he breathed his last.” (Luke 23:46)

The perfect will of God required the death of His own son, that all who call upon His name and believe might be saved from the bondage of sin and death. This is the perfect will of God, to which Jesus submitted to perfectly. Let us echo the words of Jesus this Lenten season, as we pray “Not our will, but Yours be done.”