

Wounded for Our Transgressions: His Feet

In Nomine Iesu

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St. Luke 23:26-33

And as they led [Jesus] away, they seized one Simon of Cyrene, who was coming in from the country, and laid on him the cross, to carry it behind Jesus. And there followed Him a great multitude of the people and of women who were mourning and lamenting for Him. But turning to them Jesus said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For behold, the days are coming when they will say, 'Blessed are the barren and the wombs that never bore and the breasts that never nursed!' Then they will begin to say to the mountains, 'Fall on us,' and to the hills, 'Cover us.' For if they do these things when the wood is green, what will happen when it is dry?" Two others, who were criminals, were led away to be put to death with Him. And when they came to the place that is called The Skull, there they crucified Him, and the criminals, one on His right and one on His left. (ESV)

O faithful Savior, who of Your infinite love condescended to walk the way of the cross and to atone for the sin of all mankind, we humbly ask You, give us grace to remember always in true faith what You have done for us; give us also willingness and strength to follow You upon the way that leads through the thorns of sufferings and grief to eternal happiness, and be our Guide through the dark valley of the shadow of death. Lord, have mercy upon us, who lives and reigns with the Father and the Holy Spirit, ever one God, now and forever. Amen. (*The Lutheran Liturgy*, p. 106)

In Christ Jesus, who advanced toward the cross in order to crush Satan under His feet, dear fellow redeemed:

On Palm Sunday, Jesus was welcomed by the people as a King: "*Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord!*" they shouted (Luk. 19:38). Jesus rode through the gates of Jerusalem on a donkey just as the prophet Zechariah said He would (Zec. 9:9).

But now just five days later, Jesus stumbled along, bleeding from wounds all over His body, too weak to carry His cross. He was pushed toward a different gate of the city from which He had come. The Roman soldiers were forcing Him toward a place beyond the city walls called "*Golgotha*," which means "*place of a skull*" (Mat. 27:33). It was there that Jesus would be crucified.

By now word had traveled about what was being done to Jesus – that great teacher and miracle-worker, the likes of which the people had never had seen. The people came running to see what would happen to Him. They followed after Jesus with His halting, anguished steps, and they could not hide their sorrow.

But they did not dare stand in the way of the Romans. To question them or oppose them would have meant death. The Romans were in charge; they did what they pleased. Jesus made reference to their brutal methods: "*For if they do these things when the wood is green, what will*

happen when it is dry?" He said. He was prophesying that violence would come upon all Jerusalem in the future like what the Romans were now doing to Him (Luk. 19:41-44).

The Romans had also taken hold of an innocent bystander, a man in the crowd named Simon of Cyrene, and they forced him to carry Jesus' cross after Him. Simon did not want to do this, but now he is remembered with honor. He was chosen to carry that rough piece of wood, which was nothing less than a holy altar. On that altar the Lamb of God would be slain as the all-sufficient sacrifice for the sins of the world.

Jesus calls us to take up the cross too, but not His wooden cross like Simon did. Jesus told His disciples: *"If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it"* (Luk. 9:23-24). He calls us to walk away from the selfish leanings of our nature, walk away from the riches and pleasures and glories of the world, walk away from the temptations of the devil and all his empty promises.

But it is not easy to walk away. The path is a hard one. The cross of suffering we must take up as bearers of Jesus' name is heavy. We strain under its weight, and our steps falter. At times we stumble and fall. This isn't what we want. We want a care-free journey. We want "easy street." But we need the cross. Without the cross of suffering and trial that Jesus lovingly places upon us to strengthen our faith, we become too attached to our broken life in this world.

The cross is necessary for us, and it was necessary for Him. Jesus had to take those painful steps to Golgotha. He had to have His feet and hands pinned to the cross by the ruthless blows of hammer on nail. He had to feel the terrible pain shooting through His body with every strike. He had to hang there, feet stuck in place, not trying to break free, not running away. They called out to Him: *"If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross"* (Mat. 27:40). But Jesus would not come down.

He stayed on the cross for you. He stayed on the cross because your feet have not always walked the narrow path. You have not always gone the way He called you to go. Sometimes you willingly walked into sin. You didn't turn away even when you knew you should.

The devil is constantly setting snares and traps to tangle us up in sin, and he has caught us many, many times. But as often as we have stepped into sin, the Lord has set us free again. He stayed on the cross to atone for all our wandering, all our missteps, all our trespassing. He let His feet be pierced for all of our transgressions, so that we could walk the way of righteousness and eternal life.

It was ironic that Jesus' feet were raised above the crowd while He hung on the cross. The psalmist David had recorded a prophecy of what the Savior would accomplish through His death and resurrection. God the Father said to His Son: *"Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool"* (Psa. 110:1). All of Jesus' enemies—the Jewish religious leaders, the Romans, and especially sin, death, and devil—thought they had prevailed. They thought Jesus would never take another step. They strutted around like they were the king. And now all of them are His footstool.

It looked like Jesus would not survive the cross. It looked like His beautiful work had finally come to an end. But that “end” was your beginning. His cross was your salvation. The blood He poured out won your forgiveness. By His sacrificial death, He walked over all His enemies and yours.

And He still beats them down under His feet. St. Paul writes that God the Father “*put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all*” (Eph. 1:22-23). Jesus still comes to you through His Word and Sacraments. He leads you away from the snares and pitfalls the devil has set. He comes to give you strength for the journey, and to help you bear the crosses you must take up in this life.

He comes not just to walk beside you, but to carry you each and every step of the way. “*He leads [you] in paths of righteousness for his name’s sake*” (Psa. 23:3), and He “*guide[s] [your] feet into the way of peace*” (Luk. 1:79). Thanks be to God. Amen.

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