**“Made Himself Nothing”**

Deuteronomy 32:36-39

Philippians 2:5-11

Luke 23:1-56

 Palm Sunday, April 9/10, 2022

“Though He was in the form of God, Christ Jesus did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but **made Himself nothing**, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.”

Grace to you and peace from God, our Father, and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

**Bridge**

Death is always before us. But it is seldom of **our own choice**. It **shouldn’t be of our choice**. In one sense we are, **indeed,** **victims** of our demise since it **occurs to us** and not by **decision** yet, sometimes by heroic **sacrifice**. How we respond to the circumstances of our death defines us. We have all heard of heroism and likely have seen (each of us) a heroic **peace in death**. In war, adrenaline-filled selflessness is the stuff of recognition and medals. No one would ever prefer to be **in a deadly situation**, but **firmly entrenched** **morality and civility** can, often, give rise to wonderful human actions that **decisions** could never imagine.

Not long after Mel Gibson’s movie “The Passion of the Christ” came out, I remember receiving a postcard from a local church starting with the sentence “What a horrible thing it was **that happened** to such a nice Man”. The “**point**” was missed … and, even, the “**process**” was. Today’s Scripture readings (the historical account, the forecast of it and commentary) make it clear that, both, the “point” and the “process” of Jesus’ death **weren’t** **happenstance**. He was **not a victim**. Cruelty (while it happened in spades) wasn’t perpetrated **upon Him** but **given into by Him**. Jesus wasn’t “**murdered**”. By a **decision** that was over 4,000 years in the **doing of it**, **His will delivered Him** to be arrested and tried and whipped and crucified. It was the **decision of the Godhead (the Son in that)** to **make possible and do what had to be done (what had to happen which the divinity could only do)** and, through it, forgive sin and reinstate repentant sinners into grace, changing the course of created beings from a necessary damnation that lasts for forever to a commitment of Paradise bought and paid for with God’s own incarnate flesh and blood.

**Text**

Jesus **“made Himself nothing” for that**. He **did that** and then **delivered that “nothingness” to be destroyed (to be killed)**. He forecasted it through Moses in Deuteronomy (after having so many times before that through what Moses recorded in Genesis) as “**The Lord** will **vindicate** His people” (correct their wrong and pay their debt) … **He will do** what people can’t. **He will** “have compassion on His servants. **I** kill and **I** make alive” He says; “**I** wound and **I** heal, and there is none that can deliver out of **My hand**”.

**His “hand”** was there upon the Palm Sunday donkey ride, as everything was **prepared by Him** (**He knew** where the colt would be tied and how to borrow it), **He arrived** at just the right time that first morning of that week in Jerusalem. The parade wasn’t, technically, joyous … but of **delivery**. **He (God’s Son having accepted the 33-year-old body grown into since birth) turned Himself over to the crucifying authorities**. **That’s** what Palm Sunday was all about.

Then Thursday evening came and the Passover lamb for slaughter would be (this time, and finally) **Him (by His decision)**. **He offered it** **up** **at table** **(His plan / His serving of it)** to be **repeatedly offered by Him at other tables then for the rest of this world’s existence**. **Happenstance and Him as a victim weren’t these events**. They were **pieces of God’s process in Christ … which He carried out according to script and without flaw**.

Prayer in the garden was one last conversation of Father and Son, then the **forsakenness began**, prepared for arrest. Endless trials were shams, and every question **Jesus expected before asked**. Many times He could have gotten Himself off (you heard how often that was offered) and yet **He didn’t**. This was **His exercise** aimed at **His result**. People played roles, yet roles **He wrote for them** … “their hour” as He called it and yet all **His really** giving them “theirs”.

Then Pilate “delivered Jesus over to the people’s will”, the text says. And it **wasn’t that at all really**. “They led Him away” and **He followed**. “And when they came to the place that is called The Skull, there **they** crucified Him, and criminals, one on His right and one on His left.”

Jesus spoke throughout His process of dying. He said, “Father, forgive **them**, for **they know not what they do**.” But **He knew**. He granted one dying criminal “Paradise” day, and He committed His Spirit willingly into the hands of His Father, **dying**: “Father, into Your hands **I COMMIT MY SPIRIT**”.

Humans **He let** bury His body … and plan for its care after the Sabbath, yet **HE AND HIS FATHER HAD BIGGER PLANS FOR IT**.

## Application

As of what happened remembered this week (**according to plan**) 2,000 years ago now, **“servants of His who recognize that they’re own power is gone without Him”** **were “vindicated”**. Steadfast in Him, we’ve forever gained the “compassion” of God that **He freely promises us** bought and purchased by **His completely-accomplished and perfectly executed plan**. What “**is finished**” is all that was **necessary** (and **really necessary**) to **save the souls of “we (us) poor sinners”**.

If you ever wonder **your worth to God Who’d created you desiring your salvation**, then **be reminded of His plan for that (to make that happen), carried out with precision and (though excruciating in pain) steadfast dedication and commitment and will by decision**.

In +Jesus’ name. Amen.