

✠ John 19:1-22 ✠

IN NOMINE IESU

“Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways” (Romans 11:33).

The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of Moses, Elijah, and Gideon, the God of Samson, King David, and John the Baptist, hangs upon a cross, bleeding and dying.

What marks the Christ, the Anointed One of God? Suffering. From the time He was a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes until He stood before Pilate, a beaten and bloodied man, Jesus' life is marked by suffering. Herod wanted Him murdered before He was weaned from His mother's milk, the Pharisees and teachers of the Law wanted to stone Him, throw Him off cliffs, and have Him crucified. Even Pilate who wanted to release Jesus, in the end, wanted to let Jesus die so that he might retain some semblance of peace among the people.

Jesus' life is marked by suffering. The king wears the royal robe of purple upon His bloodied back. He wears His crown, made not of gold and precious jewels, but of thorns atop His head. He holds His royal scepter, the very staff that was used to beat Him, in His own hand, and He carries His throne, the cross, to the place where He would die upon it.

This is not the picture of majestic glory that would befit the One who is God of God, very God of very God. Yet here it is in all of its bloody pomp and gory circumstance. The crowd welcomes the King into His throne room with shouts of hatred and murder. The court in session hails their King with lies and blaspheme. His subjects do not subject themselves to Him and they cry that He be removed from among them. Crucify Him!

Thus did God in His infinite wisdom and love reconcile you to Himself. In this masquerade of death and suffering the God of life and peace makes Himself known to you. This is not cliché or trite. This is not driven by emotion or passion. It is the plain simple truth that will set you free from sin and death.

Hidden in the suffering and death of Jesus is God's merciful work of redemption. Secreted away in the blows upon His head and the nails driven through His flesh is the gracious work of forgiveness. The world sees a beaten and broken man; a man condemned by men more powerful than He. But God sees the perfect sacrifice. God sees the Holy One loving His chosen and giving His life for His subjects.

For He has borne the world's grief of being under the judgment of God and He has carried the world's sorrow of being alienated from its Creator by sin. God has smote His Son and has wreaked His vengeance upon His Beloved so that you and I may know His love and compassion, mercy and divine Fatherhood.

Mercy that despite our sins and shortcomings, our failures and prejudices, continues to be lavished upon us in the name of Jesus. Mercy that counts no record of wrongs and does not visit upon us the punishment and wrath we deserve. For He was wounded for our transgressions and was crushed for our iniquities. Upon Him was the chastisement that

brought us peace with God.

And so our lives are hidden in Christ Jesus (Colossians 3:3). Our sin and shame is hidden from God in the cross of our Lord Jesus. Just as His righteousness and glory is hidden from the world in us.

The world sees you and thinks you weak because you do good to those who hate you and you love your enemies. The world sees you and thinks you pathetic and needful because you cry out to a God who did not even spare His own Son, Lord have mercy! The world sees you and thinks you weak because you confess your sins. But God sees in you His Son. God sees in you the holiness of His Son.

Thus when the world mocks you for taking care of your parents and raising your children in God's Word, for loving your wives and submitting to your husbands, for not participating in lies and gossip, God glories in you for doing the things of God.

For it is the way of God that the blind should see and those who see should be as though they are blind (John 9:39). The world sees the mundane things of bread and wine, water and word, a human preacher and a book about a Palestinian Jew. But God is hidden in them. The world sees an awkward liturgy with babies crying in the background and people yawning and fidgeting in their uncomfortable pews, but God is hidden there.

The God who created everything has hidden Himself behind the things created so that we may walk by faith and not by sight, for no one has ever seen the face of God, but the Son of God has made Him known (John 1:18). Thus do we see God in the suffering and death of Jesus.

Therefore seek God where He may be found. Do not go out into the desert to be a monk, or sit atop the tallest mountain like a guru, waiting for God to reveal Himself. Do not look within yourself to find God, and do not watch your works to see the hand of God. Rather look upon the One who, like the bronze serpent of Moses, has been lifted up for the healing of your soul.

Come to Him you who are weak with sin and heavy laden with shame and guilt. He will baptize you with saving water, feed you with the bread of His flesh and the wine of His veins, He will speak to you words of life and forgiveness from His Word, and He will wash your sins away.

In the name of the FATHER and of the ✠ SON and of the HOLY SPIRIT.

✠ AMEN ✠