

Sermon for the Chief Service of Good Friday

'They will look on him whom they have pierced.'

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The ancient historian Thucydides wrote that in war, everything is backwards. The father must bury his son.

Indeed, on this strangest of days, everything is, in fact, backwards.

The Creator of the world, who witnessed the making of all things has died with the world as His witness; the Lord who made the world in glory shall by the world be recognized in His pain. The Peace of heaven is betrayed by the kiss of deceit. The One who held all is held fast, the Bond of all is bound, the One who draws *all to Himself* is led forth before all.

He Who is Truth is accused by falsehood, and the One for whom all things stand at His service, to make an account to Him, is made to stand trial, to make an account to all.

The Jews, who have not dealings with strangers, hand Him over to gentiles; the gentiles, who have no agreement with Jews, return Him to the Chosen People.; Pilate sends Him to Herod, Herod sends him back to Pilate, that piety may be made the business of impiety, and holiness is brought to the market of cruelty.

Forgiveness is beaten, Pardon is condemned. Clemency is damned, and damnation

given clemency. Majesty is mocked, Virtue is ridiculed.

The Bestower of Rain is drenched in spittle, the Giver of milk and honey is fed with gall. The One who makes springs of living water flow is given vinegar to drink.

And when all this is over. When every punishment has been inflicted, death walks away, for death does not notice anything left there to be taken, for all is death, for everything is backwards: death has overtaken life.

'And he was crucified under Pontius Pilate.'

It is difficult to understand why this must have happened. Some refuse to believe that there was any meaning to the crucifixion at all, besides pure human malevolence. Some modern theologians have even equated the fact that God would allow Jesus to be killed to 'divine child abuse.' They accuse the Father of unspeakable cruelty, torture, malice, for the mere satisfaction of His own seemingly petty code of goodness.

They know nothing of what they speak. We are a captive people, an occupied nation, an oppressed race, conquered in Adam by Satan and left to be guarded by our infernal torturers.

As captives bound in chains in a procession, waiting to be funneled into our prison cell, so are we as slaves being marched down the road to hell, there to spend our eternity, for we have been vanquished.

Yet the Lord Christ would not allow this to come to pass. In loving kindness towards His lost sheep, this broken humanity, He cannot let the devil plunder our world and drive us into His hellish death camps.

Therefore, He chose to liberate us. It was not enough that He merely become man. He must become *sin for us*, that He too might march into Hell, yet not as a captive, but as a conqueror. He must descend into *the strong man's house* there to bind him, in his own citadel. In his own camp. In his own Hell. That Hell *prepared before all time for the devil and all his angels*.

For this reason, He dies, that He might *finish* the war which He began, the invasion which the Christ alone has led. That He might *descend into hell*.

This confuses many, and seems like foolishness to the unbeliever, but we who are lost should not question it too closely; for if anything is to be reversed, it is the fate of the sinful with the fate of the righteous. If we are to trade our destiny with anyone, let us trade our Hell for His Heaven, that in Christ taking on what was not His by right, we might enjoy what was not by right our own.

Yet, even if we benefit from the death of Christ, we, *who are evil*, it does not answer the question, How could have God allowed Christ to die in this way, for us, who must *look upon him whom they have pierced*? How could He have allowed such agony to overtake His Messiah?

But be quiet, Christian. This is a war, and in war, everything is backwards:

‘The Father must bury His Son.’

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Preached by Pastor Fields

Sermon Texts: Isaiah

52:13-53:12; Hebrews 4:14-16, 5:7-9; John 18:1-42.