

Lent VI
April 4-5, 2009

“What Jesus Wouldn’t Do”

Text: Mark 15:22-39

At lunch one day with her son Reggie and his new wife, Gloria, Alice Vanderbilt asked whether Gloria had received her pearls. Reggie replied that he had not yet bought any because the only pearls worthy of his bride were beyond his price. His mother calmly ordered that a pair of scissors be brought to her. When the scissors arrived, Mrs. Vanderbilt promptly cut off about one-third of her own \$70,000 pearl necklace and handed them to her new daughter-in-law. “There you are, Gloria,” she said. “All Vanderbilt women have pearls.”

Something of greater value than pearls has been given to us. As St. Mark records the crucifixion of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, we are reminded of the great price that was paid for our salvation. We also see that Jesus avoided all opportunity to take short cuts, or even listen to the taunts of the crowd that would have saved him and not us.

Jesus says in the Gospel of St. John: “For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord.” (John 10:17-18) Palm Sunday celebrates the final stages of this most important work of the salvation of the world. Jesus is proclaimed as the Son of David and their coming King. (Mark 11:10) In but a few days cheers would give way to jeers as he is taken to the cross for us. Jesus was resolved to carry out the mission his Father had given to him as he came into this world and nothing would stop him from accomplishing that for you!

WHAT JESUS WOULDN'T DO

- I. He didn't choose the way of convenience**
- II. He didn't yield to the challenges of others**

I.

A. It has become popular in the Christian culture of our day in years past to ask the question: "What would Jesus do?" Jewelry and other items have been marked with WWJD. It is an attempt to have Jesus and his teaching guide us in our lives. However before that is done the way must be cleared for us to follow Jesus. That comes by his death and resurrection on our behalf. Without his redeeming work, we will head off in our own direction.

Jesus conduct during these events recorded in our text give direction to us in our Lenten journey and our lives as God's children. First of all, Jesus does not take the easy way. The way of the cross is never easy. In the gospels Jesus spends quite a bit of time talking about that important work on our behalf. Verse 22 tells us: "And they brought him to the place called Golgotha (which means place of a skull). And they offered him wine mixed with myrrh, but he did not take it."

That concoction was a sedative. Jesus would be clear minded as he went to the cross for our sins. He could have escaped much pain with that drink, but he refused. There is a lesson in this for us, for many times we are tempted to take the easy out as Christians. We are encouraged to not speak our views, not be judgmental, and be like every one else. Living as Christians in a sinful world has become increasingly difficult as you know well. We can encounter ridicule as Jesus did.

B. So the people passed by the cross and taunted him and said: "Aha! You, who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save yourself and come down from

the cross!” What Jesus said at the clearing of the temple really stuck with them and it seems they couldn’t get past it. We know he is talking about his death and resurrection, but that is an affront to the world. We rejoice in what Jesus has done and the world does not. St. Paul says: “For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.” (I Corinthians 1:18)

This what your Lord endured for you! His love is so great that endured all the pain and the taunts of others in order to accomplish the salvation of you and me. Could Jesus have done what the people suggested to him on Good Friday? Of course he could have, but what would that have meant for us? There would be no salvation, nor forgiveness, no eternal life. Luther’s Small Catechism reminds us that in Jesus’ state of humiliation: “that as man He did not always fully use His divine powers.”

Jesus did not choose the way of convenience in accomplishing our salvation. As we live out our lives, we remember the greatest sacrifice of all that has been given freely for us. In this Lenten season we particularly focus upon that as we too take the way of the cross that we have been called to as disciples of Jesus.

II.

A. Not only did the people challenge Jesus, but the religious leaders as well. The chief priests and the scribes said: “He saved others; he cannot save himself.” Did they expect him to do that? After all they had led the charge to have him crucified. Perhaps they were still looking for a miracle from Jesus. If he had responded that would have been the end for sure. Certainly Satan was active in their work. Remember the Temptation which began our Lenten journey? Several times Satan tempted Jesus by saying, “If you are the Son of God.” (Matthew 4:3, 7 and Luke 4:3, 9)

During the reign of King William III of Prussia times were hard. Wars had taken their toll and he needed financing to build the nation. He called all women to bring in their jewelry of silver and gold to be melted down for the good of the country. In return they each received a decoration of iron which read: "I gave gold for iron, 1813" From then on it became fashionable to wear iron crosses instead of jewelry because of the gift from the king and what it meant to them. The cross is central in our lives as Christians. Jesus went there for us and it is the way we follow as well.

B. The second part of our text points us to gloomy view of the final events leading up to the death of Jesus. Darkness covered the land. Dark as dark can be, Jesus was forsaken by his own Father on the cross. How many times do we in a moment of trial, think that God has left us? Well, he doesn't and he hasn't. Because Jesus was forsaken, we never will be forsaken. Jesus endured the pain and separation for us on the cross.

Even at that the taunting still continued. Almost to the point of death they still continued. They interpreted his words to mean that he was calling for Elijah. They said: "Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to take him down." At this point, Jesus breathed his last. Of course, this was no ordinary death. The Temple curtain was split in two which ushers us into God's presence, no longer is the barrier up between man and God. The centurion said it all when he said: "Truly this man was the Son of God."

Your Savior has come for you! He willingly accomplished all that he was sent to do because of his love for you. As you go about your lives as God's children, there will indeed be challenges either personally or from others. As your Savior endured the cross for you, the way to follow has been cleared knowing that he always goes with you. Amen.