

### ***Blood Testifies***

In the name of him who instituted for us the new covenant in his blood, dear friends in Christ: On our Lenten pilgrimage to the cross this year we have heard a lot about the Scripture's treatment of blood and its many theological abilities and functions. And we're not done yet; we still have a way to go. So, to begin this evening's leg of the journey, I want to take you back to where we started on Ash Wednesday, when we investigated blood's ability to accuse. Then we heard the blood of murdered Abel crying to the Lord from the ground, charging his brother Cain with his terrible crime and pleading that justice be done. We learned that in the same way the blood of those we have sinned against accuses us before the Lord; not just those we have physically murdered (I doubt that any of us have) but also those whom we have hurt through our words and actions, those we have despised or thought evil of even if we didn't do or say anything against them, and also those we failed to help, support, or speak kindly to when we could have. That's all murder in the eyes of the Lord. And if you look at your hands with that understanding, you are bound to see a lot of blood on them. I've got news for you: the Lord sees even more. And he hears all of it is crying out against you, begging for justice, pleading that you be made to pay the just penalty of your sins.

Fortunately, you have an advocate with the Father: Jesus who to make propitiation for your sins shed his blood on your behalf. And the writer of Hebrews tells us that the blood of Jesus speaks a better word than that of Abel. What better word does it say? Before the Father, the blood of Jesus intercedes on your behalf. It demonstrates that justice has been done. It says, "I paid the penalty of the accused sins, the full price. Atonement has been made. There is no more debt of sin yet to pay. You must declare the accused innocent." That's what the blood of Jesus speaks to the Father. And he hears it.

But the blood of Jesus has a better word to speak to you too. It's good that it does because you have in your ears a whole cacophony of voices. Though your ears are not quite attuned to them as are the Lord's, you hear the cries of the blood of those you have sinned against. You know what you've done to them. And to these cries is added the voice of your own guilty conscience. It too convicts you. And part of you doubts that it can be that easy, that after all you've done wrong the court of divine justice is just letting you off the hook. And there are other voices even stronger: those of Satan and his hellish crew. They too are accusing you of your sins. They are also denying what Christ has done on your behalf to rescue you from them. More insidiously, they are saying, "Yes, Jesus came to save sinners. And indeed, some sinners may be saved. But not *you*. *Not you*. You're not worthy. You're not faithful enough. You haven't changed enough. Your crimes are – or your one sin in particular is – too great to be forgiven." Tell me that you haven't heard those voices. I know I have. I still do.

Speaking in opposition to all such voices is the blood of Jesus which testifies to you of the truth – the truth of his precious Gospel. It testifies first that Jesus fulfilled all that the Scriptures promised that the Savior would do for fallen mankind. That's what the Apostle John is stressing in the first reading we heard this evening: that when Jesus spoke from the cross "It is finished", it was. The mission he came to accomplish on this earth to take upon himself the sins of the entire world and to make full satisfaction for them by his suffering and death – that's done. And John wants you to know, "I was there. I saw it. I watched as the spear pierced his side. I saw the fountain of water and blood that issued forth which proves that he died and that

no less a person than the Son of God died for sins. And I want you to know that I am telling the truth that you also may believe and not doubt.”

But as a sinner, you do doubt – not because John’s testimony is unreliable, but because sin and the voice of Satan confuse your heart and mind and lead them astray. And that’s why Jesus has also arranged to have his blood testify directly to you to assure you that not only did he die for sinners in general, but that he also died for *you*.

That’s why Jesus gave us his Holy Supper. By eating the bread that by the power of his Word is his body, and by drinking the wine that he has sacramentally joined with his blood, you are proclaiming the Lord’s death until he comes – proclaiming his saving death to *yourself* as you receive his testimony: “This is my body *for you*. This is my blood shed for the forgiveness of *your sins*.”

Thus when doubting, you can ask yourself, “Is this the crucified body of Jesus I have in my mouth?” That’s what Jesus says. “Is this his poured-out blood that I am drinking?” Jesus cannot lie. Therefore you can be absolutely certain that whatever nonsense Satan or your troubled conscience have to say to the contrary, you have a more reliable witness in Jesus himself. The Holy Spirit that comes to you in his Word, the water in which you were baptized into his name, and the blood you drink in his Supper – all three testify to you. And all three agree: God gives *you* eternal life, and this life is in his Son. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

***Soli Deo Gloria!***