

Matthew 27:24-26

I understand that Mel Gibson re-released his movie, “The Passion of the Christ,” and that it has been edited for violence. Some of the gorier scenes have been omitted. Now, parents can take their children to see it without the concern that it may be too shocking for them. We can watch the death of Christ with our families without becoming too offended at all the blood and gore.

And that’s fine. Mr. Gibson can choose which rating he wants to place on his movie. But that does not change the original rating. And I’m not referring to last year’s version. I mean the 2,000 year-old original. The Chief Priests, the mob, the Pharisees, and Scribes did not care if Jesus’ trial and crucifixion was rated G, PG, R, or X—they just wanted Him dead. They didn’t care about the fact that movies depicting their actions against Jesus may prove too intense for younger viewers. They did not care about how their violent actions might affect their children—they even said so. When Pilate made a mockery of Baptism by washing his hands of Jesus’ murder, the mob cried, “His blood be on us and on our children!”

What they were saying is that they had no problem whatsoever with being held responsible for Jesus’ death. And not just them, but their children as well. And yet, their children do not much like sharing that responsibility. For when the “Passion” movie came out last year, they were upset about having Jesus’ death connected to them. But how true those words are—“His blood be on us and on our children.” History cannot be changed. The Jews did deliver Jesus up to Pilate. They did demand His crucifixion. God’s Word tells it like it is. And even till the end of time, the Jews will have to accept that guilt.

But so do we. For “His blood is on us” as well. Your hands are covered with the blood of Jesus. You are His murderer. Every sinful thought, word, and deed you and I have ever done or ever will do nailed Him to the cross. If you don’t care to accept it—it’s still true. No, you weren’t there, but your sins were. And God accused His Son with your sins.

And that “children” part is just as true for us. Every child we bear shares in our guilt. Scripture says so. The father’s guilt and condemnation is passed on to the children. Not at some age we pull out of the air—at birth, yes, even at conception. “In sin, my mother conceived me,” writes the Psalmist. The blood of Jesus is on us and on our children. Our hands are covered with it. We, with the Jews, share in the guilt of murdering the Almighty God.

But listen, His blood does not just convict us, it also acquits us. It cleanses us and forgives us. “The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin.” The Apostle John writes these words for our comfort. Nothing, but the blood of God Himself, can cleanse sin. And so we cry out those words of the mob with passion: “Let His blood be on us!” For that is our only hope of salvation.

Years before Christ was born, the people of God would gather around blood. Not the blood of Christ—He had not yet come in the flesh—animal blood. Animals such as bulls and sheep would be sacrificed to God, and it was a bloody sacrifice. When a bull was sacrificed on the Day of Atonement, some of the blood was sprinkled on the people. The priest took a bowl of the blood and literally threw it out on the people who were gathered there. It was

an actual “blood bath.” It was done for the forgiveness of sins. Not that animal blood can cleanse sin—it was pointing to the cross, where God’s blood would be shed. For “the blood of Jesus Christ (does) cleanse us from all sin.”

Since only God’s blood can forgive sins—where do we find that blood today? Not at the cross. The cross is gone—it’s not there anymore. It was a “one-time” event in history. Not in a movie depicting the cross. We find Jesus’ blood where He has placed it—within the Sacraments of His Church.

Baptism is not a bath for the skin and body, it is an actual “blood bath.” For we are baptized, writes St. Paul, “into the death of Christ.” The cry, “His blood be on us and on our children,” comes true in Holy Baptism. Baptism forgives sins, Scripture tells us. Baptism saves us. Baptism is the door into heaven. For Christ is in the water of Baptism; and He who shed His blood for us, sprinkles us clean of our sins in that sacramental washing.

The Lord’s Supper, likewise, is not a meal for our stomach—it is the place where Christ has placed His blood for us. It is where we receive, again and again, the cleansing of our sins by the blood of God Himself. We don’t go to a cross on a hill to find the cleansing blood of Christ. Christ brings His cross to us, blood and all, within His Holy Sacraments.

Which is why we bring our children to Baptism—so that His blood may be on them, too. And it’s why we instruct them in the Christian Faith—so that they may come up with us to His Table and share in the blood of Christ which He pours out for them.

Christianity is a religion of blood—God’s blood. We confess that we are guilty of it—we are His murderers. And yet, we also plead His blood for our forgiveness, life, and salvation.

Now perhaps you came to church this morning looking for a gentler, milder, less violent sermon—one that focused less on blood and violence, and more on palms and hosannas. After all, today is Palm Sunday. It is the day we celebrate Jesus’ ride into Jerusalem on the donkey.

But as Lutheran Christians we always ask, “What does this mean?” He did not ride into the Holy City for a Sunday stroll. He rode in to die. He rode in to face their violence; to accept their beatings. He rode in to suffer their cruelty. As we just sang, “Ride On, Ride On, in majesty; In holy pomp, Ride On to die.”

And “Ride On” He does. He will not be deterred from the reason why He came. “Hosanna!” we shout and sing—“Lord, save us!” And for that reason He does ride on. He rides on so that His blood may be shed. He rides on so that His blood may cleanse us from every sin; so that we are saved by His blood poured out and given to in His Sacraments.

How ironic that the words of the mob that violent night, though cried in anger and ignorance, have become our cry of faith: “May His blood truly be on us and on our children!” Amen.

