

## Lent 6

### THE SCRIPTURE READINGS

The Epistle Lesson  
1832

Colossians 1:24-28

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**24 Now I rejoice in what was suffered for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the church. 25 I have become its servant by the commission God gave me to present to you the word of God in its fullness--** 26 the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the saints. 27 To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. 28 We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ.

The Passion Reading

Matthew 27:45-66

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45 From the sixth hour until the ninth hour darkness came over all the land. 46 About the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?"-- which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" 47 When some of those standing there heard this, they said, "He's calling Elijah." 48 Immediately one of them ran and got a sponge. He filled it with wine vinegar, put it on a stick, and offered it to Jesus to drink. 49 The rest said, "Now leave him alone. Let's see if Elijah comes to save him." 50 And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit.

51 At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook and the rocks split. 52 The tombs broke open and the bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life. 53 They came out of the tombs, and after Jesus' resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many people.

54 When the centurion and those with him who were guarding Jesus saw the earthquake and all that had happened, they were terrified, and exclaimed, "Surely he was the Son of God!" 55 Many women were there, watching from a distance. They had followed Jesus from Galilee to care for his needs. 56 Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joses, and the mother of Zebedee's sons.

57 As evening approached, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who had himself become a disciple of Jesus. 58 Going to Pilate, he asked for Jesus' body, and Pilate ordered that it be given to him. 59 Joseph took the body, wrapped it in a clean linen cloth,

60 and placed it in his own new tomb that he had cut out of the rock. He rolled a big stone in front of the entrance to the tomb and went away. 61 Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were sitting there opposite the tomb.

62 The next day, the one after Preparation Day, the chief priests and the Pharisees went to Pilate. 63 "Sir," they said, "we remember that while he was still alive that deceiver said, 'After three days I will rise again.' 64 So give the order for the tomb to be made secure until the third day. Otherwise, his disciples may come and steal the body and tell the people that he has been raised from the dead. This last deception will be worse than the first." 65 "Take a guard," Pilate answered. "Go, make the tomb as secure as you know how." 66 So they went and made the tomb secure by putting a seal on the stone and posting the guard.

**THE MEDITATION “The Blessing of Witness through Suffering” Colossians 1**

(Fawn sitting at the table in the coffee shop, drinking coffee, reading a magazine. Malinda walks in.)

FAWN: Hi Malinda. Why don't you come join me?

MALINDA: Thanks, Fawn

FAWN: (Looking at Malinda) Is anything wrong?

MALINDA: I was just thinking about Damon.

FAWN: What about, Damon?

MALINDA: Well, his dad had a stroke and is living with Damon. It has caused some hardship for Damon and his dad. But, Damon says God will take care of him.

FAWN: Hmmmm. What kind of hardship?

MALINDA: Well, he and I met here last week. Since his dad's stroke, Damon has less time to get out, and less money. And, what if his dad gets worse and can't stay home alone? What will he do then?

FAWN: Maybe he believes God is bigger than his problems.

MALINDA: OOOOOOOO, That was tricky, Fawn. You're quoting to me what I told you. But, now when it comes to this friend of ours, I'm not sure I really *believe* what I say.

FAWN: You're really worried aren't you?

MALINDA: Yes, I am worried. But, Damon says everything will be alright. He says that with God's help and love he can face whatever difficulties or hardships life sends. But I'm not sure. Maybe my worry is hurting my faith.

Twenty years ago when I came to St. John there were some saints who attended St. John but are no longer with us. There were people like Al and Eleanor Brooks, Archie and Lillian Stamm, Rich and Shirley Kelpé, Armand and Roseanne Kolberg, not to mention many others who have moved away. A pastor doesn't always teach. Sometimes he learns from people of faith as he cares for them.

One day I visited Shirley Kelpé in her home. Shirley's son Ken and his family are still members here. Shirley suffered from breast cancer which metastasized to her bones. In this visit Shirley had been on the couch for over a week because of back pain, because her spine was compressing with her bone cancer. I came to read and pray with Shirley and bring communion. But, she had a gift wanted to give. She got up from the couch, maybe for the first time in a week, went to the other side of the room, reached down and picked up a pair of slippers. "Would you give these to Mary?" she asked. She ignored her own suffering to do something for someone else. If you knew Shirley, her love for others was an extension of her faith in God. No matter what happened, deep down she knew God was with her, saving her and helping her.

That day I left the Kelpé home with much more than a pair of slippers. I left strengthened by the faith and love of this child of God.

You see, when Jesus faced his crucifixion and his death he knew it was coming. He faced his suffering willingly, knowing that the heavenly Father loved him, into and through his suffering and His death for us. Jesus suffering and death not only offer us eternal life, they teach us and show us how much God loves us.

That is what Paul is saying in today's lesson. Paul says, **24 Now I rejoice in what was suffered for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the church. 25 I have become its servant by the commission God gave me to present to you the word of God in its fullness**-- Paul believed God would see him through the sin and suffering of this life. He believed God's word and promises. So, he was willing to suffer to bring the good news of Jesus to the Colossians. His willingness to suffer taught the Colossians that God's love was not just words, but real. What a witness Paul made through his suffering!

In our story, a continuation of the skit from last week, Damon is helping his dad. It is difficult. It takes time and effort and finances. But, Malinda isn't sure Damon can deal with these difficulties. Damon has an opportunity by facing his life struggles with faith in God and love for his dad. The opportunity is not just to put his faith into action, but also to witness to Malinda, and teach her about God's love in Jesus.

So, as you face life's trials, you Children of God *know* God's promises. You know "nothing can separate you from the love of God that is Christ Jesus our Lord." As you face life's suffering trusting God's love, to whom are you witnessing? Who will be telling stories to others about you, and how you taught them about the love of God and His word in all its fullness?

(Fawn sitting at the table, drinking coffee, reading a magazine. Malinda walks in.)

FAWN: O Malinda, I didn't see you as I was reading this magazine. How are you doing?

MALINDA: Much better, thank you.

FAWN: What do you mean?

MALINDA: Well, you know I was worried about Damon. Maybe my worry was affecting my faith. So, I made a meal and brought it to Him and his dad. I told him I was worried about the difficulties he was facing.

FAWN: What did Damon say?

MALINDA: He told me that he knew that he had made some choices that would create some new problems. This wasn't a surprise to him. The hardships were something he understood and was facing willingly. He said that if Jesus suffered and died to love and save him, why couldn't he do the same . . . trusting Jesus and loving his dad?

FAWN: Sounds like he really believes that God keeps His promises.

MALINDA: Yes, he told me God doesn't just speak empty promises about love, but He has really loved us eternally in Jesus. He told me that if God can take care of us and save us eternally, He can surely take care of us here.

FAWN: His faith sounds strong.

MALINDA: I said that, and he told me it wasn't his faith that was strong, but God's love is strong and His Word is sure. Damon said he doesn't just want to be someone who says he believes in God. He does believe God loves Him in Jesus, and he wants to LIVE it!

FAWN: Sounds like when Damon took on the difficulties of caring for His dad, he ended up witnessing to us and teaching us about the reality of God's love.

MALINDA: Yes, I know He used his difficulties to witness to me. I wonder what kind of witness I have been to others in difficult times?

FAWN: Yeah. Me too!