



[Pastor Keith GeRue](#)

Sermon for Good Friday

April 3, 2026

Unbroken Life, Broken Death

John 18-19

In the ✠ Name of Jesus. Amen.

Since the last time we gathered on Good Friday, about one year ago, there have been many deaths in our world. Deaths in our own congregation. Deaths of family members. Deaths in our world due to war or other violence or crime. Deaths that came at the end of a long life, and deaths that came when life had just begun. I think it fair to say that no one in the world went unaffected by death this past year. Or any year. And so it has been since sin entered the world. For the wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23).

That truth itself should belie the popular (and I would say demonic) belief that some sins aren't so bad; I'm not hurting anyone. It is simply not so. **Every sin breaks life and brings death.** Either that's how fragile life is, or how deadly sin is - or both. And we cannot change that or fix it.

But there is one who can.

And that is why we have gathered this night. That in this world of fragile and broken life and strong and pervasive death, we have and proclaim hope. That there was someone whose life was not broken by sin, so that when He entered death, **He broke death.** He undid what had been done in the beginning when death came into this world of life, and so brought life into this world of death. A life that death in all its rage and fury cannot end.

And that one was the one who created life in the beginning, the very Son of God Himself, Jesus of Nazareth.

When death came looking for Him, He did not deny; He confessed ***I am He.*** And death ***fell to the ground.*** *Every knee shall bow to Him,* after all (Philippians 2:10), even if they don't want to. And He would not fight off death, for He came to break it by dying. So, ***put your sword into its sheath,*** He said. He will drink this cup.

Those who thought they had power over Him, the power of life and death, to save Him or crucify Him, questioned Him. But Jesus does not answer as one subject to their authority, but as the one in authority. For indeed He is. *No one takes His life from Him. He lays it down of his own accord. This is the charge He received from His Father* (John 10:18): to



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die and break death. So He speaks the truth. Truth they don't want to hear. Truth that is inconvenient. Truth they do not know, as Pilate himself confessed. He speaks truth for He is truth.

But this light of truth shining in the darkness of our world of sin and death they cannot stand. ***Give us Barabbas*** instead. A man like us. A man of death. And what to do with the one who is unbroken life? Snuff Him out. ***Crucify Him***.

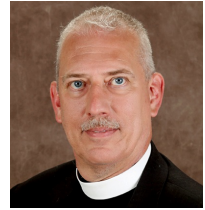
And as Cain lifted his hand against his brother, so they then lifted their hands against their brother, Jesus. Impaling His head with thorns, striking Him with their fists, trying to break this unbroken life. Pilate tries to save his own life and career by crucifying Him. It's another of the ironies of this story. That's the only way Pilate's life really *could* be saved . . . *and* the life of the soldiers, and the Jews, and ours. So Pilate ***delivered Him over to them to be crucified***. To *them*, the chief priests. For they were the ones, after all, who had to kill the Passover Lamb.

So the one who is unbroken life goes to the place of death. He had been there before. In the room of a dead little girl (Mark 5). At a funeral procession in the city of Nain (Luke 7). At the grave of His friend Lazarus (John 11). And each time, every time, life won. Should this time be any different? Granted, it looks different. But the one who is unbroken life is in control and winning, even when dying. For the truth is that here, the real funeral will be for death, not Jesus.

So death nails Him down, mocks His kingship, and robs Him of His clothes. He knew they would. He said they would. And Scripture must be fulfilled. And then He leaves His mother to the care of another. The love of a dying man, OR . . . is that not what a man does when he goes to create life? *A man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh* (Genesis 2:24). Jesus is dying to break death and re-create life.

And when He dies, ***it is finished***, He says. His life? No. Death. Death is finished. *Tetelestai*, the word He speaks which means ***it is finished***, is the word that means all has been paid in full. What has been paid in full? The wages of sin. It is paid, finished, completed, and therefore so is death. Unbroken life enters death, and death will be forced to yield its prey.

And not just Jesus - but ALL its prey! For Jesus breaks death not just for Himself, but for us all. ***He bows His head and gives up His Spirit*** - that is, He *hands over* His Spirit, the Holy Spirit, the Lord and giver of life (Nicene Creed) - to His Bride, to His Church, that we, too, have life. Life again. Life in the forgiveness of our sins. Life that triumphs over death.



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And when this unbroken life enters into death, still He confesses life! When His side is pierced, ***out flow blood and water***. The blood and water that still give life and cleanse us from our sins today. The water of the Font, the Blood of the Altar, the Body of the Cross, the unbroken life giving us life through these means.

Joseph and Nicodemus end this part of the story in the same place it had begun - ***in a garden***. That where death arose, there life might also rise again. And that's exactly what will happen three days hence. The unbroken life remains unbroken, and death dies. *Neither the gates of hell, the tomb's dark portal, the watchers, nor the seal could hold Him* (LSB #487 v. 4).

This we know. So even though we sit in the darkness, we will pray to the Light. Even though we know the victory, we will hear the Reproaches. For this is a night of opposites, with opposing forces, arrayed in battle. Light and dark. Life and death. Scorn and love. Sadness and joy. Punishment and salvation. Condemnation and forgiveness. But the battle has been won. Life won. This we know.

So we can die unfearing. The angels will bear us home, to Abraham's bosom. Our bodies will be kept safe in peaceful sleep until our own third day. And then our graves will be broken, broken open in Life, at the Life's reappearing. And then our eyes with joy will see what faith has believed all along - our Saviour and our fount of grace and Life, our Lord Jesus Christ. And we will praise Him without end (LSB #708 v. 3). The Unbroken Life, unbroken still. And unbroken forever.

In the ✠ Name of Jesus. Amen.