



[Pastor Keith GeRue](#)

Sermon for Lent 4 Midweek

March 22, 2023

Our Ordinary Lenten Exodus: The Sanctus

Exodus 19:16-20; 20:18-21; Matthew 21:1-11

In the Name of the Father, and of the † Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

There are two things **God** is concerned with: your sin and your salvation. **Your sin**, which hurts both yourself and others, which separates you from God, and which robs you of the life God has for you, both your life now and your life forever . . . and **your salvation**, which is God dealing with the issue of sin, healing the damage inflicted by sin, which includes dealing with death, bringing you back together with Himself, and restoring you to life - a full and meaningful life now, and a life that will last forever.

There are two things **Satan** is concerned with: your sin and your salvation. **Your sin**, which he wants to keep you in and keep in you, so that it continue to hurt you and others, continue to separate you from God, and continue to rob you of life - though he would have you believe that your sin actually gives you life and makes your life better! . . . and **your salvation**, which he wants to keep far from you, keep God far from you, and convince you that - even if you care about these things - you can do it yourself. You can undo the damage. You can fix it.

But Satan's problem is that while he can keep you away from God with his lies, half-truths, deceptions, and temptations, he can't keep God away from you. God keeps coming into this world and ruining everything he worked so hard to do! But he doesn't give up. And neither does God.

So, God comes to us. In this world of sin and death. In many and various ways, depending on the situation, depending on what is needed. So He came to Adam and Eve, terrified by their sin and hiding from God, walking in the Garden in the cool of the day. We heard last week how He came to Moses in a wonderful way, in the bush that burned with fire but was not consumed. He came to the prophet Elijah in a still, small voice. And today we heard Him come in two different ways: (1.) on Mount Sinai, in such a fearsome display of power and might that not only the people, but the mountain itself **trembled greatly** . . . and then (2.) He comes into Jerusalem in the exact opposite way: **humbly**, and to the cheers and welcome of the people. Leading some to wonder: How should we think of God? Will the true God please stand up?

This is not two different Gods, of course, but one God with one goal: to deal with your sin and give you salvation. So when He comes down on Mount Sinai, He does both - He gives the Law and He gives the instructions for the building of the Tabernacle, the priesthood, and all the sacrifices to be offered there for the forgiveness of their sins, to give them His holiness. Or to put



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that in good Lutheran terminology, there is both Law and Gospel. God dealing with sin and giving salvation.

And so, Moses tells the people, ***“Do not fear, for God has come to test you, that the fear of him may be before you, that you may not sin.”*** . . . Do not fear. God is coming to save. But that sounded a bit odd, didn't it? What Moses said there . . . *Do not fear . . . that the fear of him may be before you . . .* Which is it? *To be or not to be* may have been Hamlet's question, but *to fear or not to fear* is ours. How do we think of God? How do we approach a holy God?

The people of Jerusalem we heard about today were not trembling in fear, or if they were, it was not because of Jesus but because of the Romans. Unlike the people at Mount Sinai, when God comes to them, when their King comes to them, the King of the universe, they take up palm branches and rejoice! They call out for salvation - ***Hosanna!*** which means, *save us*. They welcome Him with the words of Psalm 118 - a psalm of thanksgiving, a psalm of celebration. ***Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!*** The Lord who has come to save us, fulfilling this psalm. The Lord who is good. The Lord whose steadfast love endures forever.

But not many days later, they, too, were trembling. The one who came to save them, so they thought, was hanging on a cross. He was rejected, abused, mocked, humiliated, cursed, thrown out to the streets, hung between two criminals, was considered worse to have around than Barabbas. And then He was dead. Now what? They went home . . . trembling, questioning . . . *Who would save us now?*

Well, it is the prophet Isaiah who brings it all together for us today. A bridge, or sorts, from Mount Sinai to Jerusalem. Isaiah is sometimes called the fifth evangelist because his prophecy is so filled with Jesus, prophecies of who He was and what He would do. And in his vision, in the verses that we heard, there is trembling and fear, and there is also salvation and thanksgiving. First, as a filthy sinner in the presence of a holy God, he is filled with trembling and woe, like the people at Mount Sinai. And rightly so. But when ***a coal from the altar*** touches his lips, ***his guilt is taken away, his sin atoned for***, and he is a new man. A man made new, a sinner made righteous, a dead man given life. And as such he is filled with thanksgiving, he is able to stand before God and is ready to live this new life he has received. The life God always intended for him to have. Isaiah knew his sin and he knew his salvation. He both feared and loved God. Feared him as sinner. Loved him as a redeemed saint.

Which is our reality. When the Small Catechism teaches the Commandments, it includes in the explanation of each one: *we should fear and love God so that . . .* We fear Him as sinner, and so not do anything against these commandments, and we love Him as sinner made saint, and so gladly do what He commands. *We should fear and love God . . .* Mount Sinai and Jerusalem both. Isaiah before and after both. **Which is also the reality of the cross.** For the cross shows us the seriousness of our



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sin and the end result of our sin, that we tremble like the people at Mount Sinai and like Isaiah in the throne room of God. But the cross also shows us the forgiveness of our sin, so that we rejoice and give thanks like the people of Jerusalem and like Isaiah after the coal touched his lips. Because on that fearsome cross *is not us* - but Jesus. Jesus in our place. Jesus as our substitute. Jesus' *hosanna*-ing us. Jesus as the fulfillment of Psalm 118 and all the psalms and all the prophecies of Isaiah and all the Old Testament. Jesus atoning for the sin of the world. And if for the sin of the world, then for your sin and my sin.

And this truth has now been put into the liturgy for us in **the Sanctus**, the fourth ordinary, the fourth part of the liturgy that is ordinarily in every service, for us to sing in every service. For the Sanctus has these two parts: (1.) First is the song of the angels in the presence of God that Isaiah heard in the throne room of heaven that brought him to his knees and then flat on his face in trembling and fear, but then also (2.) second, the Sanctus is the song of the people of Jerusalem in welcoming their coming Savior. *We should fear and love God* . . . Here, like Isaiah, we are in the presence of the holy God, and so rightly fear His wrath against sin and repent, but we also love the one who comes now and touches our lips with the sacrifice from the altar of the cross, the Body and Blood of Jesus. And with that *our guilt is taken away; our sin that is atoned for*. And as God then sent Isaiah, sinner made saint, out to be His prophet, so He now sends us from this place, us sinners made saints, to live in the callings, the vocations, He has given us. A greater exodus, from a greater slavery, to a greater freedom.

We should fear and love God. Law and Gospel. Sin and salvation. But of the two, the greatest of these is love. The Lord's salvation is greater than our sin. The proclamation of the Gospel predominates over the Law. And love of God is more than the fear of Him. For while the cross shows us both, it is His love that shines most brightly. That your grand and glorious, all-powerful, and all-knowing God would do this for you. To make you His son, His daughter. And so, you are.

For there are two things God is concerned with: your sin and your salvation. So on the cross He takes your sin and provides for your salvation. Salvation that is given to us frightened, trembling sinners here, that we rejoice in Him. Take eat, take drink, He says. ***Your guilt is taken away, your sin atoned for***, He says. So ***Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!*** we say. ***Hosanna!*** Save us! It is the very thing He came to do.

In the Name of the Father, and of the † Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.