

Apostle Service
Good Friday
2nd April 2010

Text is Pastoral Letter for Good Friday 2010.

We are aware that today is the time when we come before the Almighty God in all humbleness and meekness, and we consider the great blessing that was given to mankind, a blessing that is deeper than we realise, a blessing that brought to an end the penalties of God's law and the law of Moses. If this did not happen and we did not have this new way of grace introduced into the world, the world today would have been a very different place.

All of us come from ancestries, from other countries, and all of those countries in their early history worshipped pagan gods and false gods. This would be continuing throughout the world. We would have no peace and reconciliation with God. On that we should give thanksgiving that a new way was allowed to be brought into the world, a new line was drawn in the sand we might say, and an opportunity was to be now given for all mankind.

Our Pastoral for today covers many things that happened and many of the great sacrifices that our Lord did, and the events that happened during that time. All of these events were foretold by the prophet 700 years beforehand so that the people would know what to expect to see.

The Prophet Isaiah in Chapter 53 verse 7 on, told the people at that time what to expect: *"He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? For he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken. And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death: because he had*

done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth. Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out of his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors."

If we follow that, and as we come this day, and we have sung, and we have heard the choir sing, and we have meditated, and we have heard of the great sacrifice of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and we have a mental picture of Him in the body sacrificing His body as that perfect Lamb, but the sacrifice of His body was only a symbol. We should meditate and dwell on what the prophet said. The prophet said that He was prepared to make a sacrifice of His soul for mankind. The body of man does not live on forever, but the soul of man lives on for eternity.

Herein we begin to see the great sacrifice that Christ was prepared to make for mankind, and in this knowledge that is where we should really fall to our knees and give thanksgiving to the Almighty God and to His Son our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. He had eternal life with His Father, that was His soul. We can imagine the glory that He had with His Father in the highest heavens, and that He could go to any of the realms of God's creation and receive of the respect and show His love, and enjoy God's blessings throughout all of that. He was prepared to have that soul placed into the body of a man and come into this earth for a purpose, to bring about and to show to God's chosen people that there was a way to

the Kingdom of God, that the law could be fulfilled by one who allowed themselves to be reconciled with God.

His spirit and His soul was with God the whole time. He proved and overcame everything in this earth so that He could show that the Messiah had come. Now the law was fulfilled and the opportunity was there now to accept this Messiah and be led into the Kingdom of God without partaking of death. We know mankind at that time had become so conceited and arrogant, and that they believed that they were the chosen people of God and they were automatically entitled to these blessings, that they did not see the sins they were committing. They felt they were upholding the law, and each part of the law that did not suit them they took away and changed the law so much that it had no meaning in the sight of God anymore.

Our Lord fulfilled the law of God which was to obey God and allow God to lead us in our life and to follow His ways, and the penalty for that was death if we broke it. If mankind broke it he had to go to an early grave and then his soul which is the eternal being within him had to then go to a place of waiting to be judged by God. The Mosaic law was introduced, and the 'thou shalt' and 'thou shalt not', and all the things were laid out clearly for the people. The penalties under those laws, were many penalties of punishment, and many penalties that led to the death of man. Even with the punishment and even with giving up one's life as a punishment for breaking parts of the law, the soul of man still did not have a hope at that point. It had to go to a place of waiting to be judged to see whether it was worthy to receive of the glory of God.

What a hopeless state the world was in. Now our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ was in the form of man. His soul was also within Him. His eternal being was now at risk. The prophet said that He was prepared to make a sacrifice of His soul for mankind, not His body for that was the symbol, that

was the fulfilment of the law. But Christ was prepared to sacrifice His soul for mankind. That is why in the garden He prayed and said to His Father, 'Father if it be possible that this cup pass from Me, not My will, but Thy will be done.' He knew what stood before Him. The greatest and ultimate sacrifice that could be made, the Son of God was prepared to give up His soul, His future life for mankind.

As He hung on the cross sinless, He had already taken away the penalties of the law by suffering them. An innocent man suffering these penalties so that the law could come to an end. As He hung on the cross He then knew what stood before Him. Darkness came over the earth, it is recorded in the Scripture. At that time He asked His Heavenly Father to allow those sins of darkness to now go upon Him. He then became a sinner, we might say the world's greatest sinner because He had every sin of the world now on His soul. What hope was there for His soul? The only hope for man was that He would lose His life and His soul would have to go into a place of waiting to be judged like any other man. How could He be judged worthy if He had every sin of the world upon Him? That is why He said, 'My God. My God. Why hast thou forsaken me?'

As the sins came upon Him, His Father had to turn away from Him because God cannot look upon sin. He was prepared to now give up His eternal life of glory with His Father for you and I, for all mankind, so that the sins of the world could be taken upon Him and be washed and cleansed through His great sacrifice of offering His soul unto His Heavenly Father. We should meditate on that, the enormity of this blessing goes beyond a natural death, and our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, that is why He said to His Father, 'Father into thy hands do I commend my spirit and soul.' He now was helpless. He now had to face the destiny of man. He now had to rely entirely on the love, the grace, the mercy, the compassion and the fulfilment of God's

word spoken on what would happen. He put Himself into God's hands.

We know that God rewarded that, for He had already spoken through the prophets and through the Psalms that He would not allow His holy one to see corruption. The victory was so great for mankind in offering His soul as a sacrifice for man that He descended into Hades and broke down the doors, and He was able to spread that message, firstly to those in Abraham's bosom that a Messiah had come. The ultimate sacrifice had been made, and they now could be redeemed unto their faith within the law, and secondly into the main part of hell where all mankind was waiting to be judged by God, and to give them also that great hope and that great message that now a new judge would judge them. They would not be judged with the harshness of His Heavenly Father who could not deviate from black to white. Now there would be one who had lived in the world, who had offered Himself, and been given the right now to judge them on judgment day.

What a relief it must have been for all of those. But what of the future world? That also was put into place with the malefactor as we have heard who was the first Christian, for he acknowledged he was a sinner. He asked and recognised Christ and declared Him to be The Christ, and he asked Him to remember him when he comes in His kingdom, the Kingdom of God, not when He went to heaven, the Kingdom of God which stands before mankind. Our Lord gave him that wonderful message which we have heard is a monument to us today that, 'Today shalt thou be with me in Paradise.'

A new way was now opened. He became a monument to those who were in the realms of hell for they saw one who had passed from this life and did not come in, but he was taken to Paradise. It gave them that hope that mankind now would have a new way. He became a monument to each and everyone of us that if we too follow what

was done on that day, we have that great hope that we can go to Paradise.

What was done for him on that day? We read the Scripture and we find that firstly Christ said the words on the cross, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.' He was referring to all mankind. That malefactor felt within him, he knew he had been forgiven for his sins, for he knew that this was God on the cross. Firstly we must confess and receive that wonderful gift of forgiveness. He then made that acknowledgement that we have heard, and he heard the wonderful words, 'It is finished.' The penalties of the law were finished and a new way now begins. He wished to be part of that new way and within his heart he was moved by the spirit to confess and acknowledge Christ, and ask Him to allow him to be part of this new way that would be coming into the world.

We have heard that wonderful promise and how our Lord passed away and the malefactor was still alive, for they had to come to break his legs. The soldier came and speared our Lord in the side and out came water and blood, flowing to the earth, representing the Baptism and the Holy Communion. There is no doubt that this also would have splashed on the malefactor, and he received those Sacraments direct from God. If we read the recording of that in the Scriptures we will find the Apostle John emphasises that it was done. He wanted to make sure that the world in the future knew that through this water and through this blood the malefactor was offered a place in the Kingdom of God, and we are offered the same today from that great blessing that was given unto us.

We must understand the enormity of what Christ did. He was prepared to offer His soul for mankind, His eternal life. He was prepared to give that up so that we could be saved. Let us be sincere and let us recognise this great sacrifice and hold it at all times within our hearts, hold Christ as the foundation of the church, the head of the

church, the only means to receive the Kingdom of God. Let us not be put off as we have heard in the Pastoral with strange doctrines, of being able to do this and that, and other things. Let us hold fast to this doctrine that Jesus Christ is the head of the church, and He alone has won that right, for none of us could ever hope to be sinless in this world and to offer our soul for the people. Let us strengthen our faith in Christ, resolve that we will work for Him into the future, and follow His ways.

Amen.

Apostle Service Easter Sunday 4th April 2010

Text is the Pastoral Letter for Easter 2010.

Today we should come before the Lord with thanksgiving and joy in our hearts for He was victorious. He was victorious in bringing about the goodness of God that was greater than the evil of Satan. In that victory He won forever for mankind the right to have a hope of salvation and be restored in the promises of God to the coming Kingdom of God and eternal life.

What was this victory? How did this victory occur? We have lived through the day our Lord was crucified and we all tend to think that was a great sacrifice for mankind. We have heard on Good Friday the enormity of that sacrifice in offering unto God His soul or His eternal being for the sake of mankind, but there was a victory to be obtained. The victory was obtained and foretold by the Prophet Isaiah on how it should come about, and today we should be so thankful for we will never understand the enormity of Christ's mission on this earth and what He did for us.

The Prophet Isaiah in Chapter 53 verses 10-11 tells us how that victory came about

and we read: *“Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities.”*

We see therein the mystery of God. It was only through His righteous servant that He was able to justify and overcome the enemies of God. The righteousness of God we know was earned or created in that period of time in two different ways. According to the Scripture righteousness could only be obtained by overcoming the temptation of sin. It could be obtained by doing a good deed without looking for a reward. That was Christ's mission when He came into this world. The angels proclaimed that mission to Him, ‘Glory to God in the highest, and on earth Peace, Goodwill towards all men.’ He had His mission. He had to build up through His mission on this earth sufficient righteousness to be called the righteous servant of God, that this righteousness would overwhelm the sins that were in the world. What a mission! If we follow the mission of Christ we will see how every minute of every day and into the night He had to be so conscious of doing only those things and not doing things that would rob this righteousness of God to be able to be given unto Him.

For the first thirty years He lived on this earth He overcame every temptation. He overcame the lusts of the flesh. He overcame the world. Each time He did that it was counted as a righteousness. It was stored up and built up, until He came to the final part of His mission which was to overcome the temptations of Satan and begin His labour to show that God loved mankind and had mercy on mankind. He had to build up this bank of righteousness, for He knew that it was the only way that hell could be

overcome, and the penalties of all this sin that was in the world could be overshadowed and wrapped into this righteousness of God and taken away for ever.

Every recording in the Scriptures and every memory the Apostle John said, there were many other things that our Lord did that if they were written down even the books of the world could not contain them. Every move that He made was seeking that righteousness. Every miracle from His first miracle when He converted the water to the wine, it was a good deed. It was a righteousness. Every time He healed, and He healed thousands of people the Scripture says, He did a good deed, and it was accumulating righteousness. He was tempted in every way possible. He did not fall into that temptation. He was accumulating righteousness. He was accused and spat upon, and yet He never rallied. He was accumulating righteousness for us, for this great battle. Every act He did through His life, even if He was to miss an opportunity or a chance to help somebody and He went past it the mission would have failed. He had to be sinless. What a mission!

He did this as a man guided by the power of the Holy Spirit. He did it for mankind's future. He did it believing that it was God's will. Even when He prayed in the garden, the fact that He prayed to His Father counted as a righteousness, 'If it be possible take this cup from me,' He said, but then He said, 'Not my will, but thy will be done.' Another righteousness accumulating in this storehouse of righteousness that He was building up for the final battle against sin, hell and death. As He hung on the cross He said, 'I thirst.' He must have been wondering – Had He done enough? Was there enough to win this victory for mankind? If there was not He said to His Father, 'Into thy hands do I commit my soul.' Take my soul if it is not enough. He had to win this battle for each and everyone

of us no matter what His own personal cost was.

We know that He went down to hell, the destiny of all mankind. On this day the world was shown that it was enough. The righteousness of Christ that He won for mankind was now enough to overshadow the s and bring to an end once and for all the sin and what it can do to mankind. The good news is that there was still sufficient left over for Him to bring back into the world and give unto us that free gift of righteousness each time we partake of the Blood of the Lamb, and there will be sufficient till the end of the world. He said that to His Apostles on the night when He instituted Holy Communion. He said that I will not drink of the fruit of the vine with you until I drink of it in my Father's kingdom, telling us that there was now sufficient for all mankind until the Kingdom of God.

The enemies of God were defeated. The enemies of man were defeated. There now was a Saviour. There now was a way for man to reconcile himself back unto God. There is a link again, a loving link, a link of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. What joy there must have been before the throne of God when our Lord came out of the grave as the firstfruits, and a new way could begin for mankind. Sin now could be taken away through the mission of Christ, and through the righteousness and through His sacrifice, hell's door could be locked and unlocked by one who had the key, and a new way was provided for those who follow Christ and partake and join in the mission of the church which is exactly the same as Christ's, where we too have to accumulate this righteousness.

Thankfully we are not dependant on our own deeds and actions. We have the free gift of grace and righteousness from Christ. This new way of Paradise has now been put into place to avoid the judgment day, a place where we have heard in the Scriptures has been placed the tree of life that came out of

the Garden of Eden. A tree that if the fruit is eaten thereof will grant eternal life.

Why should we worry about those who have departed from this world? They have access to the living tree of life, the same as we have access to Christ who can also take us to that tree of life. He is the only way, the only door. Death should no longer have any fear for us. By His victory, by His accumulating of that righteousness, by His sacrifice, by His trust in His Father's word He has proven to us that the grave cannot hold those. He came out of the grave victorious as a body, within was His soul and His spirit. He came out of the grave as the Son of God. The Apostle Paul wrote to the Romans that Christ was born of the seed of David. He was a man. He was the Son of man, no different than us on this earth. He went into the grave as the Son of man, and thanks be to the Almighty God by His resurrection He became truly the Son of God.

All of those who follow Christ can look forward to that same blessing. What a wonderful blessing this day should be for mankind! Goodness of God overcame the evils of this world and trampled them underfoot and a new way began. We have been called into that new way and we should be so thankful. We should ponder on what Christ has done for us and the church. We will never comprehend the great love, we will never comprehend the great mercy, but within our hearts, within our minds, if we set aside a little time we may understand the love of God in giving us this great blessing through His Son. That is sufficient for us to say – Thankyou, for thanksgiving opens the door so that abundant grace can be spread in the world. Each time we can thank God for this blessing the grace will be dispensed and somebody else somewhere in the world will be touched by that grace and they too will then join in thanksgiving to the Almighty God.

We now have a mission also. That mission was told unto us by the Prophet

Isaiah also when he foretold of Christ's great victory, and we find written in Isaiah Chapter 62 verse 10-12 as follows: *“Go through, go through the gates; prepare ye the way of the people; cast up, cast up the highway, gather out the stones; lift up a standard for the people. Behold, the Lord hath proclaimed unto the end of the world, Say ye to the daughter of Zion, Behold, thy salvation cometh; behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him. And they shall call them, The holy people, The redeemed of the Lord: and thou shalt be called, sought out, a city not forsaken.”*

We see a Saviour has now broken down the gates of hell. He has gone forth. He has set a highway for us. He has made everything straight for us, very clear. We now have a way, a link, a passage, and this was brought by the labour that was before Him the prophet said, and He has now received the reward of that labour. Today is the day we meditate – Are we a holy people? Are we holding up the end sign? Are we seen as this city that is being built by Christ within the world? Is the light shining from this city? Are we emulating the ways of our Lord? Are we indeed trying our best to bring forth this righteousness that is still needed by God for the final victory?

The final victory will be when Satan is bound in chains and the Kingdom of God begins. That chain will be a chain of righteousness. Christ has contributed His part. He has freely given us of His righteousness. What will we do to give back to Him a little righteousness, to bring about His final victory, and then He will be able to sit back as we would say and He would be able to witness God's goodwill to all mankind?

Amen.