

Good Friday  
Epworth Chapel on the Green  
April 6, 2012  
Rev. Brook Thelander

Isaiah 52:13-53:12  
Psalm 22:1-11  
Hebrews 10:1-25  
John 19:1-37

Near the end of passion narrative which we've read from John's Gospel tonight, John tells us that one of the soldiers "pierced Jesus' side with a spear, and blood and water came out" (v. 34).

Not only would this have been an emotional thing to witness firsthand for those who were originally there, but it would also have been very emotional to those in the faith community to whom John wrote these words later. For the people to whom John writes were people who had lost friends and family to the bloody Roman persecution. And these were people who had also met at the Lord's table and tasted the blood of salvation.

Blood. Primal and elemental. Blood is *life*. Spilled blood is *death*. If you have ever witnessed a severe accident, or a shooting, or have been in the front lines of battle, then you have seen blood, and you have known the terror of it: the vital fluid splattered and darkening on the ground, the sidewalk, the street. You have experienced the horror at the way the breath is taken away, and you have understood the violence in the human heart that explodes and destroys other human

beings.

How do we face such terror? How can we have hope that we will *ever* find the grace to overcome the forces that drive us to spill one another's blood? Human beings like us have been asking this question ever since Abel's blood was heard crying from the ground in the early chapters of Genesis. And since not much time had elapsed since Jesus' bloody death, surely the members of John's faith community were asking it as well.

To hear that blood and water flowed from Jesus' pierced side gave them their answer, however. It showed them that *the One through whom all things were made has known the terror of our bloody ways*. Blood has flowed from his side, a human carcass pierced open by a spear. Yet along with his blood there also flowed water. Water, the sign of baptism, the sign of entrance into a community of peace.

Blood and water. Communion and baptism. When John's community heard about the blood and water flowing from Christ's side, they were filled with the memory of their own baptisms, and with all the times they had drunk the cup of salvation. And they would have realized with renewed power the meaning of these sacraments: God is with us, with us in our terror, in our blood-bathed world, with us to redeem us from this madness.

The water of baptism marks us, marks us as Christ's forever. This water reminds us that our most essential identity is not with the cruel and hateful fury of

this world, but with the One who is here among us to give us the grace and strength to transform this world.

So on this Holy Friday, *remember the water. Remember the blood.* See them flowing from Jesus' side as vividly as John's community did. And find in that vision not simply terror and revulsion at how the world responds to love, but find there the presence of God with us in order that we will courageously stop the spilling of blood and be the community God intends.

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