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Palm Sunday A
March 20, 2005

His Blood is On Us and Our Children

TEXT: When Pilate saw that he was getting nowhere, but that instead an uproar was starting, he took water and washed his hands in front of the crowd. "I am innocent of this man's blood," he said. "It is your responsibility!" All the people answered, "Let his blood be on us and on our children!" (Matthew 27:24-25)

CHRIST'S BLOOD IS ON US AND OUR CHILDREN

I. Controversial Verse

When Mel Gibson's "Passion of the Christ" came out,
It came out minus a few scenes
One major omission
Was a scene featuring an angry crowd listening to Pilate
And as he argued with them about crucifying Jesus,
Their cry went up,
And out across the ages:

"Let his blood be on us and on our children!"

Why do you suppose this verse was excluded?
Because it is, and has, been misinterpreted for years
You see, people have understood this as the curse upon the Jews
The reason why they wandered for centuries
Were kicked out of Rome and Spain and the Holy Land
Finally gassed and executed en-masse just seventy years ago

So the scene was taken out,
Which only made the movie slightly less anti-Jewish

II. But for the Wrong Reasons

Is that what this verse is?
The curse the Jews brought down on themselves?
That Jesus' blood is forever on their hands?

That would be nice, if it were someone else's fault Jesus was crucified
Let it be the Jews fault
Or maybe expedient and efficient Pilate
Or even his disciples, for not sticking up for him
Let HIS BLOOD BE ONE SOMEONE ELSE,
AND SOMEONE ELSE'S CHILDREN

III. This Verse IS Controversial

But as you spoke those words this morning,
You were not playing Pilate's part,
Or the part of the Jews,
Or anyone but yourself

That's what makes this verse controversial:
It forces us to recognize that there's nowhere to hide
In the story of the Passion of the Christ

We can't push off the blame on somebody else,
Because we handed him over,
We fled from him at his time of need,
We passed judgment,
And washed our hands of the mess,
Drove in the nails,
And then walked away,
Wondering at the darkened sky and earthquakes

THAT'S WHY this verse is controversial:
Because Jesus WAS innocent,
And his blood is on our hands
AND IT'S PROFOUNDLY UNCOMFORTABLE

A) Our Cheating Culture
ILLUS: Who's responsible for our moral decay?

Even we devout, conservative, Christians
Play the BLAME GAME all too often
"Look at our society" we say:
Abortion, homosexuality, corruption, crime, war
It's all SOMEBODY ELSE'S fault
We complain at the symptoms of an immoral culture,
And fail to see the blood on our own hands:

Quote from "The Cheating Culture," (

"…the Christian right…mount(ed) sweeping attacks in the 1980s on those aspects of individualism that clashed with family values, mounting a cultural war against sexual promiscuity, drug use, feminism, (and) homosexuality… Conservatives had little to say – then or now – about the moral downsides of the money culture, such as greed, cheating, materialism, envy, and the ways in which careerism elbowed aside family and community."

If I had a dollar for the number of "Christians" I meet who say
they aren't involved with their church because they're too busy working…

And David Callahan goes on to write:

By the time most people grow up, they "tend to have ideas about right and wrong aimed at winning the approval of others and keeping themselves out of trouble."

That's why Jesus died
- because the crowd wanted to win the approval of their leaders, and
- wanted to keep out of trouble with Rome

Our three catechumens, Melissa, Taylar, and Jonathan,
Have been trained to follow a greater good:
A good that they and we have been called to choose
"EVEN WHEN NO ONE'S LOOKING"

<u>b) Our Catechumens</u>
Taylar and Jonathan are making some pretty heavy promises:
Promises to join us in building the Kingdom of God
To seek ways to use their talents in service of the Gospel
Perhaps they will be future Sunday School teachers,
Or evangelists, helping the Evangelism Team to spread the Gospel
Maybe they will train to be teachers or deaconesses

Of course, I'm assuming they mean the promises they'll be making
I don't have a good track record here
I've heard more than my fair share of people come up here
And make promises they never even started keeping

It breaks my heart, and I'll be honest, it's hard for me
To even look them in the eye when I run into them

But then I realize that there, but for the grace of God, go I
I am no different
And I am owed the same punishment
Those who reject their promises will receive at the last day

<u>IV. For the Right Reason</u>

And so I cry out to the Lord:
"Lord Jesus, may your blood be on me and my children"

That should be your cry too.
This terrible, controversial verse,
Is also the most life-saving verse in the Bible:

Like the High Priest,
The people of God were prophesying the words of the Lord
The blood of the New Covenant,
Shed for the forgiveness of sins,
Is over them, their children, and all people on earth

His blood is on us and our children
Cleansing, saving, life-giving blood
The Blood that washes away all our rebellion and impurity and evil
The blood that makes unholy people
Holy before God

That's why the Passion of the Christ
Is good news as well as bad
And why we call this Friday "Good" and not "Evil"

May Christ's blood be on us and our children,
May we not forsake that blood,
But count it the highest blessing
May we be willing to serve this crucified Christ
In our daily lives,

Knowing that he has given up everything for us,
And for our children.

Amen.