

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

BETHANY LUTHERAN CHURCH
ELKHORN, NEBRASKA
MARCH 18, 2007
PASTOR WENDA FRY

1 PASTOR FRY: There were many witnesses to that
2 execution that happened well over two thousand years ago.

3 There were members of an angry crowd that were
4 witnesses to that execution.

5 They were angry because they wanted the verdict of
6 guilty to be carried through. They wanted to see justice.

7 They were angry and so there were some that were
8 cursing Jesus as he was carrying the cross to Mt. Calvary.

9 There were some that were swearing at him and
10 mocking him and spitting at him.

11 They were angry. They wanted to see some justice of
12 some kind.

13 And then there were other witnesses that were there
14 as well.

15 They were called the disciples, and the disciples,
16 they're like you and me, they were there, they were trying to
17 follow what Jesus had asked them to do.

18 They were trying to do the things that he asked them
19 to do, and they ate with him, and then one of them betrayed
20 him with a kiss.

21 And then when the rest of them got to the garden,
22 they ran as soon as they saw all the guards come and the
23 cohort of the Jewish and temple officials and they thought to
24 themselves, if that's what is going to happen to Jesus, I
25 don't want that. So in the end none of his followers were

1 there.

2 And then there were people that had to be there,
3 people that were going to carry out the crucifixion.

4 The Roman officials and guards were there because
5 they needed to carry out the task of the crucifixion.

6 But then there were other witnesses as well, and we
7 have been talking about those, those ones we are referring to
8 as silent witnesses

9 And they have had some stirring testimonies. Many
10 of you have commented to me how much you appreciate the
11 testimonies of the things, if they could speak.

12 And last Wednesday we heard an unusual take through
13 the spear, and I will read a part of his testimony to you.

14 "In order to make sure that he was dead, I was
15 forced into his side with a thrust that felt as though all of
16 humankind was pushing me in, not just one lone guard.

17 "And as I was pulled from that lifeless side, both
18 blood and water flowed out with me.

19 "The blood and water flowed forth with power to
20 cleanse, to purify, to restore and renew.

21 "Isn't it interesting that a painful wound was used
22 by God to allow his love and forgiveness to flow out for the
23 entire world? Do you get the point?"

24 Of course, at that point Karl touched the point of
25 the spear.

1 I'm not sure that we do get the point. There are
2 many of us who deny that we even have any wounds.

3 I'm good. It happened, so.

4 Then there are those of us who get sick at the sight
5 of blood.

6 I'm one of those. I was going to be a doctor, a
7 medical doctor.

8 I had read books, like from ten to fifteen, and a
9 story, and I can't remember the name of it right now, the
10 story of a young girl who had wanted to be a medical doctor
11 all her life and travel overseas and help people in remote
12 places.

13 And I thought that sounds awesome. I would love to
14 do that myself.

15 Then at fifteen I had my wisdom teeth out and I saw
16 my own blood and I fainted and I thought I better make a
17 change of course here. I don't think that's going to work.

18 Maybe some of you are like that, just the smell or
19 the sight of blood makes you sick, makes you faint.

20 So there are those who are denying any wounds.

21 There are those that get sick at the sight of blood.

22 And then there are those that the rip tides of life
23 have just picked them up and just slammed them down, as it
24 were, against the ocean floor.

25 Has that ever happened to you?

1 I just love the ocean, but I'll never forget that
2 day that I was in, I didn't see the warnings for rip tides, I
3 was doing some body surfing and a rip tide picked me up,
4 turned me around, slammed me down against that sand, and I
5 was so discombobulated and I got out and I thought to myself,
6 I'm never going in the water again.

7 And I sat on the beach that day just thankful in the
8 first five minutes that my neck was not broken, because
9 that's how powerful a rip tide can be.

10 I don't know if you had that experience, but many
11 people have had that experience in the waters and the
12 turbulence of life.

13 The rip tides of life just pick them up and slam
14 them down and they don't want to get back in the water. They
15 don't want to keep going.

16 So water and blood? Ugghh. No thank you.

17 Many of us say no thank you to the water and the
18 blood.

19 But in the letter of First John, John tells us that
20 the water and the blood are God's testimony. So let's go to
21 that and look at that today.

22 We usually say no thank you, but we have to look at
23 John's words in First John, Chapter 5, Verses 6 to 13.

24 I invite you to turn to that. If you didn't bring
25 your Bible, we do encourage you to bring your Bible so you

1 can open it up and write in it and make notes.

2 We were just with our son Adrian in Portland last
3 week and we went to church with him where Donald Miller, the
4 author of "Blue Like Jazz" is a member.

5 And Mark and I were really excited to go there and
6 they meet in a high school.

7 They take a plastic sign and put it over the high
8 school sign and then they bring in a whole bunch of signage
9 and of course there's coffee as soon as you get there.

10 And I was so impressed, young people in their 20s
11 and 30s streaming into church with their Bibles under their
12 hand, Adrian included.

13 And I normally carry my Bible in my purse and I had
14 forgotten it at the hotel room.

15 So when they said does anyone need a Bible and I
16 raised my hand, Adrian laughed at me.

17 So bring your Bibles. And I looked down the row of
18 Adrian's brothers there and they were all writing.

19 Some of them had brought notebooks and they were
20 writing, nearly writing the message down verbatim, so that
21 they could talk about it later, review it later.

22 I thought it was awesome, so bring your Bibles and
23 make some notes if you want, because God is teaching us
24 through his word each and every week we gather.

25 Verse 6, 1 John 5. "This is the one who came by

1 water and blood, Jesus Christ, not with the water only, but
2 with the water and the blood. And the Spirit is the one that
3 testifies, for the Spirit is the truth.

4 "There are three that testify; the Spirit and the
5 water and the blood, and these three agree.

6 "If we receive human testimony, the testimony of God
7 is greater; for this is the testimony of God that he has
8 testified to his Son.

9 "Those who believe in the Son of God have the
10 testimony in their hearts.

11 "Those who do not believe in God have made him a
12 liar by not believing in the testimony that God has given
13 concerning his Son.

14 "And this is the testimony: God gave us eternal
15 life and this life is in his Son.

16 "Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have
17 the Son of God does not have life.

18 I write these things to you who believe in the name
19 of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal
20 life."

21 Now it is supposed that the writer of 1st John is
22 John the beloved disciple, who is probably the last apostle
23 to be alive of Jesus' disciples.

24 He died at about 98, 99, 100, an old man, but he was
25 the last one, the last living apostle, and wrote the Gospel

1 of John. Most scholars agree to this.

2 Sometimes in other Bible books you'll get
3 discrepancy, like, no, we don't think that.

4 But most scholars believe that John wrote this and
5 then he wrote the letters, one, two and three.

6 And he wrote the Gospel of John so that people might
7 believe.

8 But he wrote the letters to those who said they
9 already believe.

10 And so he was writing the letters to Christians and
11 his main concern is how their faith affects their life, their
12 living.

13 And sometimes he's very pastoral and very gentle
14 with them and calls them little children.

15 Little children, let us love one another, for love
16 comes from God.

17 He talks like that to them, and sometimes he has
18 some really stern language, so we understand why he was
19 nicknamed Son of Thunder.

20 And in the letters he's really passionate about if
21 people say they believe, then act like it.

22 In 1st John he says God is light, and because he's
23 light, then walk in his light.

24 If you want to look at that 1st John, Chapter 1,
25 Verses 8 and 9, we just did this at the 7:45 service, this is

1 part of the Lutheran liturgy in the Lutheran Book of Worship.

2 "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves
3 and the truth is not in us. But if we confess our sins, he
4 who is faithful and just will forgive our sins and cleanse
5 us."

6 So we say that at the 7:45 service every week and
7 that's how John talks.

8 It's sort of, come on, if God is light, and he wants
9 you to walk in the light, then walk in it.

10 If you confess your sins, God will forgive you, but
11 don't say you have no sin. Everyone has sin. You're lying
12 then.

13 Then mostly what he says in the letters is God is
14 love, and he told us to love one another.

15 So if God is love, and he tells us to love one
16 another, then show it.

17 That's how he talks to them. Son of Thunder.

18 That's how it is here in this section in Chapter 5.
19 John is pointing to the earthy evidence of the blood and the
20 water that was a part of Jesus' life

21 And the word testimony is in there quite a lot and
22 he's saying that that's God's testimony.

23 Now, we have been hearing things speak. We have
24 been hearing that testimony.

25 And we have been hearing humans testify on Sunday

1 mornings, and we are going to hear from a couple in just a
2 few moments, testify to the power of God's love and his light
3 and life in their lives.

4 We have been doing that, but what John is saying is
5 that's good and everything, and we definitely need to testify
6 to God's power in our life and talk about it, but God's
7 testimony is greater.

8 That's what Verse 9 says. "If we receive human
9 testimony, the testimony of God is greater, for this is the
10 testimony of God that he has testified to his Son."

11 There's a not of testifies in there, isn't there?
12 But the Son of Thunder wants us to be clear; that blood and
13 water are signs that God is present.

14 So let's just take a look at that. We don't like to
15 think about blood and water so much, but it was a part of his
16 birth.

17 I want to play a sound bite for you right now and
18 when I first heard this song I shuddered, got chills up and
19 down my spine, because I had never thought about the
20 Christmas story this way.

21 This is Jill Phillips. She sang it right here on
22 this stage.

23
24 "It was not a silent night

25 There was blood on the ground

1 You could hear a woman cry
2 In the alleyway that night
3 On the streets of David's town
4 And the stable was not clean
5 And the cobblestones were cold
6 And little Mary full of grace
7 With the tears upon her face
8 And the mother's hands cold
9 It was a labor of pain
10 It was a cold sky above
11 For the girl on the ground in the dark
12 Every beat of her beautiful heart
13 Was labor of love"

14

15 Tears on her face. Blood on the ground. I just
16 never thought about it. The water and the blood.

17 That's how Jesus came to us, through water and
18 blood, there is no labor and delivery without it.

19 There's always water and there's always blood.
20 There's usually a lot of tears.

21 I don't like to think about that very much, but
22 that's how Jesus came to us, through water and blood.

23 And the Apostle John says that this is the earthy
24 evidence, this is the proof, this is God's testimony, the
25 water and the blood is his testimony that God wants to be in

1 our lives and in our blood and in our hearts, present with
2 us.

3 Water and blood is part of the Christmas story in
4 Luke 2. Let's flip to that really quickly.

5 Luke, Chapter 2, we forget about this. We have
6 sweetened the Christmas story so much, but Luke 2, after the
7 birth Mary and Joseph take Jesus to Jerusalem, like all good
8 Jewish parents, to dedicate and present the child in the
9 temple.

10 And when they get there there is an old man named
11 Simeon who has been waiting for his salvation.

12 So when he sees Jesus he bursts forth with a song of
13 praise and he says now I can die. I now have seen Jesus.

14 I have seen the salvation which you have prepared
15 for all people, he says.

16 And then he turns to Mary, little Mary with the
17 beautiful heart and says, Verse 34:

18 "Then he blessed them and said to Mary, "This child
19 is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel
20 and to be a sign that will be opposed to that the inner
21 thoughts of many will be revealed and a sword will pierce
22 through your own soul, too."

23 Thank you, Simeon. They were dressed up. This is
24 after the birth. This is like the baptismal celebration.

25 How would you like to hear that? Oh, by the way,

1 your baby is going to be a problem for a lot of people.

2 A lot of people are not going to like what he has to
3 say, and it's going to hurt you, too.

4 I imagine she probably shed a few tears at that, and
5 what would it mean that a sword would pierce through her own
6 soul also.

7 When we think of a sword piercing, we think of water
8 and blood. There it is again.

9 It has always been a part of the proof of God's love
10 for his people, so there it is in Luke, Chapter 2.

11 And then in John 1 we read that Jesus is baptized in
12 the murky Jordan River.

13 We don't use water that looks like that picture when
14 we baptize babies.

15 I would love to go to the Holy Land. I'm planning
16 that one of these days. I would love to see all these
17 places.

18 But that picture looks like the Missouri River in
19 northeast Montana.

20 When we would come back from playing by the banks of
21 the Missouri River grandma would make all of us cousins take
22 baths and showers, because the Missouri is so muddy. Look at
23 the Jordan River.

24 So the stable wasn't clean, and then his baptismal
25 water was dirty, murky, muddy. Water and blood.

1 Then the spear testifies there was blood spilled on
2 the cross from his head and his hands and his feet.

3 Remember that? He was watching from the place where
4 the spear was in the guard's holder.

5 He said, "I watched the man on the way to Calvary.
6 He didn't look like he was in any shape to be carrying a
7 cross, because there was blood bleeding from his head from
8 the crown of thorns."

9 So that was the other part of the spear's testimony,
10 was the blood from the head and then the blood from the hands
11 and the blood from the feet, blood everywhere.

12 If you can't stand the sight of blood, you probably
13 don't want me talking about it today.

14 But it's always been the proof. It has always been
15 God's testimony to his presence, to his desire to be with us
16 in the worst of our times, through our times of water and
17 blood, whatever that might be.

18 And John makes it clear that the two, water and
19 blood, cannot be separated.

20 The third witness he says in Verse 2, "And the
21 Spirit is the one that testifies, for the Spirit is truth."

22 That's the third witness. It's the Holy Spirit that
23 allows us to see that the blood and the water at the birth of
24 Jesus, the water at his baptism, the blood on the cross, it's
25 the Holy Spirit that allows us to say, yes, I see that that's

1 God saying I bled and died for you, I lived and died for you,
2 I was born for you.

3 So the Spirit is the one that gives us testimony.
4 He is the witness bearer of that.

5 And those three witnesses, water, blood and Spirit,
6 they work together to open our eyes, disciples, to see what
7 the kids sang about, the living sacrifice, to see what that
8 means for our lives.

9 The writer of John wants us to not just read the
10 scripture; he wants us to live it.

11 And to see in the water and the blood of our lives
12 his presence, his power, to transform us, to bring us through
13 the turbulent waters, or the throes of grief, or the pangs of
14 suffering.

15 He wants us to know that and so they bear witness to
16 that.

17 Remember what the spear said? "Isn't it interesting
18 that a painful wound was used by God to allow his love and
19 forgiveness to flow out to the entire world?"

20 That is a great question.

21 "Isn't it interesting that a painful wound was used
22 by God to allow his love and forgiveness to flow out to the
23 entire world?"

24 We avoid wounds. I'm good.

25 We avoid pain. That's okay.

1 We avoid suffering at all costs.

2 It is interesting that a painful wound was used by
3 God, and he still uses pain and suffering.

4 In fact, there are people in our faith family that
5 believe that out of that pain and suffering they've now come
6 to believe in a God; that they couldn't have come to that
7 belief in any other way, except for through pain and
8 suffering, and they are here to testify today.

9 Daren and Jamie, come on up. Daren and Jamie are
10 bringing little Ayla up.

11 They have been married a year and a half and wanted
12 to begin having a family right away, but Jamie has some
13 health concerns that were not going to enable her to do that
14 without some help, so they used some fertility drugs and
15 their story is amazing.

16 Because when I first met Ayla in the hospital, they
17 were telling me that on Good Friday of last year there was a
18 follicle large enough so that she could conceive and they did
19 so on Easter Sunday, so they considered the baby -- what did
20 you call her?

21 JAMIE: We called her EE before we found out who she
22 was, that was her nickname, because she was our Easter egg.

23 PASTOR FRY: So that was a sign from God, but that
24 was a difficult pregnancy.

25 Do you want to tell about that a little bit? Would

1 you say hello to Daren and Jamie Splonskowski?

2 (Applause)

3 JAMIE: We had several complications in the very
4 beginning and I ended up in the emergency room a couple of
5 times.

6 It was a twin pregnancy and we lost one baby and
7 through all of it -- her due date was actually the Epiphany
8 -- and through all of it I just really felt like with the
9 Good Friday, the Easter, and all the signs, that she was
10 given to us from God.

11 And I just had a sense of calm the whole time, not
12 that it wasn't still scary, but through all that underlying I
13 felt a deep sense of calm like everything was going to be
14 okay.

15 PASTOR FRY: Daren, maybe you want to speak to that
16 scary day when she was going to be delivered.

17 DAREN: Jamie was in the hospital for two and a half
18 weeks before Ayla was born and then Halloween she was
19 delivered by C section at thirty weeks and five days.

20 She weighed two pounds/nine ounces and would almost
21 fit in your hand, as you can tell by the picture up there.

22 But she did well and was doing a good job growing
23 and then on November 17th everything changed from there.

24 PASTOR FRY: Do you want to tell about that, Jamie?

25 JAMIE: Daren was at work that night and I got a

1 phone call at 3:00 o'clock in the morning from the NICU where
2 she was.

3 And they had said that she had some blood in her
4 stool and that she was very ill.

5 So I immediately left and went there and she was
6 diagnosed with a life-threatening intestinal infection.

7 And Daren and I are both medical people, so that's
8 sort of a blessing and a curse, because we knew what the
9 risks were with the possibility of surgery, the possibility
10 that we would lose her.

11 It was very scary and I just prayed and prayed and
12 prayed.

13 And she was transferred to Children's that day and
14 she was seen by surgeons and it was a very, very tiring day
15 and I was completely exhausted.

16 For the first time I didn't feel all that calm, and
17 most of my family had left the hospital and it was just Daren
18 and I and my sister-in-law.

19 I was laying in the lobby on the couch in the
20 Children's NICU and I was praying, and I was like I need
21 help.

22 I don't feel calm. I don't know what to do. I want
23 her to be baptized.

24 And, lo and behold, as I'm saying those words Pastor
25 Wenda steps off the elevator and I was like, oh, my God, he

1 listens.

2 And I remember what she was wearing, and I just was
3 absolutely stunned, I guess.

4 No one had called her. She said she just felt the
5 need to come, and we definitely felt the need for her to come
6 as well.

7 So we prayed and she gave us communion and then she
8 baptized Ayla, which was kind of interesting.

9 She could only use three drops of sterile water and
10 a sterile gauze pad, and Ayla never opened her eyes, but it
11 gave her strength and it gave us strength and from there she
12 gradually, slowly got better and better.

13 PASTOR FRY: Daren, do you want to speak to that?

14 DAREN: Through all this we always thought we had a
15 good relationship with God, and we found that indeed we did,
16 though today our relationship is much stronger.

17 We feel very open to speak about God and share our
18 experience with others.

19 In our case it was an enormous life-changing event;
20 the miracle of the baby that may not have been.

21 JAMIE: It's not always that way, though, and I
22 found that even through just small things, like traffic, when
23 you lose the calm, it's so easy to get it back.

24 And like Daren said, in this case it was an enormous
25 life-changing event, but it's not always.

1 played it Wednesday night, but his friend Tommy is still
2 struggling in the hospital for his life, for health and
3 healing.

4 A stroke affects one of our grandmothers of the
5 faith.

6 Three marriages that I know of are being attacked by
7 the demon of pornography. I am so tired of that.

8 He is so at work, the enemy, against us, which is
9 why God's testimony of the blood and the water are what we
10 need to cling to, because Christ knows about blood, and he
11 knows about violence, and he knows about heartache, and he
12 knows about the depths of hell.

13 But he knows no defeat. He is the living water, and
14 the blood and the water they give proof of his love for us,
15 disciples.

16 They are proof that his presence is with us, just
17 like Jamie and Daren testified.

18 His presence is with us through the water and the
19 blood and we can cling to the promise that it is cleansing
20 blood and life-giving water, and all we need to do is take a
21 drink of either the wine of communion or the water of Christ,
22 the living water.

23 And it will cleans us. All we simply need to do, as
24 Jamie said, is turn to him, so let's do that right now in
25 prayer.

1 Lord, our hearts are heavy with the thought that so
2 many suffer, and we ourselves admit avoid suffering if we
3 can.

4 But your water and your blood testify to your
5 presence and your life in us.

6 So give us courage today in the midst of things we
7 cannot understand to cling to your proof of love for us.

8 Thank you for the Christmas story, and the Easter
9 story, and the Good Friday story, yes, mostly the Good Friday
10 story today, for your water and blood poured from your side,
11 poured out and flowed out for all the world to see your love
12 and forgiveness. Thank you, Jesus. In your name, Amen.

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25