



The Fifth Sunday in Lent, commonly called  
Passion Sunday.

*The Collect.*

**W**E beseech thee, Almighty God, mercifully to look upon thy people; that by thy great goodness they may be governed and preserved evermore, both in body and soul; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Due to the suffering, death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ may we repeat with John Donne the following lines of his immortal poem, Death Be Not Proud:

*Death, be not proud, though some have called thee  
Mighty and dreadful, for thou art not so;  
For those whom thou think'st thou dost overthrow  
Die not, poor death, nor yet canst thou kill me.  
From rest and sleep, which but thy pictures be,  
Much pleasure; then from thee much more must flow,  
And soonest our best men with thee do go,  
Rest of their bones, and soul's delivery.  
Thou art slave to fate, chance, kings, and desperate men,  
And dost with poison, war, and sickness dwell,  
And poppy or charms can make us sleep as well  
And better than thy stroke; why swell'st thou then?  
One short sleep past, we wake eternally,  
And death shall be no more, death, thou shalt die.*

Our Lord did, indeed, defeat death and Hell at Golgotha, did He not?

*20 Wisdom crieth without; she uttereth her voice in the streets: 21 She crieth in the chief place of concourse, in the openings of the gates: in the city she uttereth her words, saying, 22 How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? and the scorners delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge? 23 Turn you at my reproof: behold, I will pour out my spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you. 24 Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; 25 But ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: 26 I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh; 27 When your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. 28 Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me: 29 For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord: 30 They would none of my counsel: they despised all my reproof. 31 Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices. 32 For the turning away of the simple shall slay them, and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them. 33 But whoso hearkeneth unto me shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from fear of evil. (Prov 1:20-33)*

In reading every verse of the Proverbs, we are getting a deeper glimpse of the Mind of Christ as revealed to us through the ministry of the Holy Ghost. I hope and pray, Friend, that you will cherish and value each word so much so that you savor it prior to consuming it, then chew well so that your spiritual enzymes can best extract the full flavor of them, and then rest on them after swallowing them into your heart – digesting them into every spiritual cell of your soul - that they will become a part of your very being in Christ. This, my friends, is our daily bread for which we pray at every moment of worship.

On the night of April 18, 1775, the hero-patriot of the American Revolution (Paul Revere), rode from Charlestown to Lexington to warn the Colonial militia and others at Lexington, and all along the way, that the British Army was on the march. "The British are Coming!" was the warning that he broadcast with great alacrity throughout the course of his midnight ride. We learn an example from this of the importance of sounding the warning loud and clear. This is precisely the point of verse 20 of today's text: 20 Wisdom crieth without; she uttereth her voice in the streets: 21 She crieth in the chief place of concourse, in the openings of the gates: in the city she uttereth her words If we are owners of wisdom, we too must proclaim the warning that will save and redeem! The warning is a general warning to all who will heed. This leaves the evil-doers without excuse. They will never be able to claim at the Judgment Seat, "No one ever told me!" On that fateful night of Revere's ride, only ONE man new the danger. At the end of his ride, all along the way to Lexington had heard the warning. Sharing the Gospel begins with one soul, but is fulfilled in the ears of many.

We note the personification of Wisdom here in the text. It is made to appear as a Person crying out – and it truly is a Person and Forerunner of the Voice of the Son of God of the Gospel message. The Holy Ghost gives utterance and testimony of the Word that is fulfilled in our Lord Jesus Christ. 22 How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? and the scorers delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge? 23 Turn you at my reproof: behold, I will pour out my spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you How pitiful that the most simple minded among us often consider themselves of great and brilliant mind. They proclaim great theories that go unproven, and expound upon great opinions against the Creation-Model of God; yet they are truly fools who are blind to wisdom – not because they are made so by nature, but because they prefer to believe a lie to believing the Truth of God. But the dread and fear that lurks deep in the silent clefts of their hearts does not go away. *Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools* (Romans 1:22) Their false claims do not invalidate true science but only distort true science to their own ends: *"...keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called.* (1 Tim 6:20) The Holy Ghost is not characterized by a closing of the doors, but an opening of the flood-gates of Mercy. If every man will only heed the warning, turn from mischief, and listen to the Words of Life, then shall the Holy Ghost share that Spirit that is His and reveal wonderful mysteries to your heart. Verse 23 is an appeal to revival of heart and mind. God has not stopped your ears from hearing – it is your own sinful nature that has done so. God is not telling you that you must EARN your salvation through good works, but rather that, if you allow the Spirit of wisdom to work in your members, it is His work of Redemption and Righteousness that will save you. *".....work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.* (Phil 2:12-13) We must constantly remind ourselves that our good works are not ours, but they belong to Christ who works through us. We may lay sole claim to the works of unrighteousness which we do.

Let us examine the next five verses in the context of our sowing disobedience and reaping judgment. 24 Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; 25 But ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: 26 I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh; 27 When your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. 28 Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me

1. **God visits, in Mercy, a rebellious generation** (and, certainly, our own generation) by means of:
  - a. **The Call** (vv 24) – Humanity, with practically unanimity, have turned their backs on God. Please do not consider modern day churches in a different light from the greater multitudes – **they are even greater offenders**. But God speaks from the earthquake, the burning inferno, and the Whirlwind, if necessary, to get His truth across. Whether accepted or rejected, it nonetheless serves its purpose as a **two edged sword** cutting in one direction to convict of sin, and in the other (of those who heed it not) to condemn.
  - b. **God not only issues a clarion Call, but He accompanies His Call** (vv 24) **with an "outstretched hand."** You are sinking in the quicksand of sin. God commands, "Be still so as not to speed your peril, and "Look up to my outstretched arm to save you – even NOW!"
  - c. **The Counsel of the Lord has been given** (vv 25). Many will look up in desperation and grasp the outstretched arm. Others will look up to the open gates of Mercy and procrastinate reaching up for they feel the opportunity of salvation will always be open (yet they perish). Others of vulgar spirit simply disregard both the Counsel and the Arm of Salvation.
  - d. **God has issued a reproof of those who foolishly neglect so great a salvation** (vv26). Judgment stands with a drawn sword, but Mercy pleads the case of fools. Mercy begs a reprieve of time to allow greater consideration for those slow of hearing. Wickedness flares up before the eyes of the Lord and He will destroy, yet His heart of Mercy says "Wait, perchance they will repent." Remember in the days before the Deluge, Noah was in the Ark for seven days before the fountains of the deep were broken up, and torrential rains descended from Heaven. But there comes a time when the Lord says, "No Longer!" and the HE closes the door of the Ark to save those within, and to destroy those without. How the multitudes who had scoffed and ridiculed at Noah must have hammered at the door of the Ark when their doom became apparent, and in the midst of vicious wild animals seeking the same refuge.
  
2. **A wicked and adulterous generation, such as we are today, neglects and resists the grace of God.** *A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given unto it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas.* (Matt 16:4) What greater sign need we than that which has already been given, for as Jonas was three days and three nights in the belly of the whale, so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. He died and rose again. Do we require a greater sign than THAT? It is not that this generation has not heard the counsel of God, but far more seriously have they rejected that counsel. God forbid! How sad when the desolation falls in darkness rather than in seeing joy rise as the Sun. What terrible fear and anguish await the foolish sinners. Is it

not sad that a season of sin is so much more valued by this world than an eternity of joy?

3. **Those who reject God's Counsel shall eat the fruits of their own sins. 29 For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord: 30 They would none of my counsel: they despised all my reproof. 31 Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices. 32 For the turning away of the simple shall slay them, and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them** Thank God for King David, the murderer and adulterer, who found grace in the eyes of the Lord; or the promiscuous Samaritan woman who came to Jacob's Well at Noonday; and for the Woman taken red-handed in the sin of adultery. Why? Because, like John Newton (the treacherous slave-trader-turned-clergyman), save for the grace of God, go I. When God brings the torrential blasts of the stormy seas against our sails, or the lingering miseries of old age, or the fears of a thousand wicked remembrances, or the quakes and fires of nature – there comes at the end, a stillness and silence. It is then that the sensitive ear can discern that still, small voice of God. It was ever there, but the storms generated by our sins have blotted out the voice.

The volume of wisdom, on mercy and grace, is not a tome, but the essence of simplicity: **33 But whoso hearkeneth unto me shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from fear of evil.** Blessed quietness is the plight of the saved in Christ. Do you have that "*quiet from fear of evil?*"