

WEEKLY DEVOTION – Tuesday, March 19, 2024
Pastor Bruce Kischnick, Grace Lutheran Church, New Albany, IN

“The Crucifixion of Jesus”

READING: I Corinthians 1:20-25 – Where is the wise man? Where is the scholar? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe. Jews demand miraculous signs and Greeks look for wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than man’s wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than man’s strength.

On the first Sunday of this month I preached a sermon in which I mentioned a scholarly work I’ve been reading called “The Resurrection of Jesus”. I mentioned in the sermon that the author established what he calls “historical bedrock”. These are facts that the vast majority of scholars accept whatever their religious views. One of only three he grants is the crucifixion of a man named Jesus of Nazareth under the authority of one Pontius Pilate, Roman governor of Judea. Believers, agnostics, skeptics, and outright atheists nearly unanimously agree on the fact of Jesus’ crucifixion.

After the early service I bumped into Georgianne Weathers and in a concerned tone she asked me, “Pastor, do you know that in the comments section of our Facebook page someone has written Moslem statements about Allah, Mohammed, and ‘the prophet Jesus’?” I said I had no idea. She asked who takes care of the Facebook page, and I could only say that Jim Furber used to do that, but I wasn’t sure who was doing it now. I suggested that Jim might still be able to access the page and take down those comments.

After the late service I made a quick run to Baptist Floyd to see someone, and when I came back into the church parking lot, Georgianne was just coming out of the church. In speaking with her she said she had called Jim, and he had been able to access the page, take down the comments, and block the person who had made the comments. Then she showed me screen shots she had taken of the comments. There were three of them, and each one appeared to be a direct quote from the Qur’an. Each one warned against the Christian doctrine of the Trinity for, they claimed, Jesus was only a prophet of God, but not equal to Allah, and not the last and greatest of the prophets since that was obviously Mohammed.

I was a little surprised to discover that a Moslem had been watching our 8:00 o’clock service. I was not all that surprised that the person had responded negatively to what he or she heard in my sermon. You see, the Qur’an states categorically that Jesus was never actually crucified. It claims that another person was crucified in his place so that it only appeared that he had been crucified. He did not die on the cross for he was a prophet of Allah, and Allah had spared Jesus of such a death. Keep in mind, the Qur’an was written some 600 years after

the crucifixion took place. Mohammed countered the sacrifice of our Lord, and in so doing attempted to take out the very heart of the Christian message: no crucifixion, no resurrection, and thus no salvation.

Our Scripture lesson for today is considered by most the first written word about the crucifixion of Jesus. Paul wrote I Corinthians some 10 to 30 years before the Gospels appeared. The crucifixion is attested by all four Gospels, by Paul in Romans, I and II Corinthians, and Galatians, by Luke in Acts, by John in Revelation, and by the writer to the Hebrews. It is also attested to by Josephus, a Jewish historian, and a number of the Early Greek Fathers. As St. Paul says, the crucifixion is “the power of God and the wisdom of God.” It is an essential doctrine of Christianity. The Qur’an has it wrong. Western scholars admit as much.

As Paul says in our text, while allowing that a man named Jesus died on a Roman cross, the world often considers it “foolishness” to speak of that event as a sacrifice for all mankind. Our Moslem friend was of the same mind. He or she can’t even grant its occurring. But for you and me the moment of the cross and the event of Easter are the very lifeblood of our faith. Jesus, our Lord, gave himself into death to pay our penalty and satisfy the Father’s justice. Then rose again on the Third Day that we might know beyond the shadow of a doubt that the price had been accepted, and that we now have eternal life in his name. Thanks be to God forever. Amen.

PRAYER:

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

1) LENTEN SERVICES are being offered every Wednesday. Services start at 7:00 PM. Our overall theme is “The Forgiveness Challenge” and the pastors are interviewing various Biblical characters whose lives or stories teach us important truths about the forgiveness of God and the forgiveness we can give to one another. This week The Unmerciful Servant visits us. Join us as well.

2) Holy Week is just ahead. There will be services on Maundy Thursday and Good Friday at 7:00 P.M. Easter morning services at 6:30, 8:00, and 10:30.