

SERMON FOR OCTOBER 18, 2020

TEXT: ZECHARIAH 12: 10-12

THEME: GOD IS DEAD

**10** “And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy, so that, when they look on me, on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a firstborn. **11** On that day the mourning in Jerusalem will be as great as the mourning for Hadad-rimmon in the plain of Megiddo.

In the name of Jesus:

“God is dead.” That is what a German philosopher named Friedrich Nietzsche wrote in the 19th century. He used the phrase figuratively, in an attempt to explain that modern man, in all of his accumulated wisdom and learning, has no need for God.

Zechariah used the phrase literally. God. Is. Dead. Really, is God dead? That is what God says in Zechariah 12: 10: “They will gaze upon me whom they have pierced.” To gaze doesn’t mean to glance at, it means to fix your eyes upon, to look at intently, to focus your mind and eyes upon the One who has been pierced.

Gaze upon God, pierced to take away every sin. Your sin, my sin, every sin and all sin. Our ugly sin, our shameful sin, our haunting sin, God takes away every single sin. God takes away our guilt, that is the sin done by us, and

He takes away the shame, that is the sin done to us. Look upon Him whom they pierced. God is dead, Jesus died to take away the sin of the world.

We shouldn't be surprised that God suffers and dies. When God saw the evil and misery multiply before the flood, He grieved with a heart piercing sorrow. When God saw Israel suffering in Egypt, He came down in a burning bush and said: "I know their pain." Isaiah writes that God is high and lifted up, and that He, Jesus, was pierced for our transgressions and crushed for our iniquities. The Apostle Paul says: "God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself. God is Dead. Not figuratively not symbolically. Literally. God died in the Person of Jesus to take away sin.

Zechariah goes on to say: "They shall mourn for him as one mourns for an only Son, and weep bitterly over him as one weeps over a firstborn." (12:10). The only Son? That would be Jesus. Jesus, God's one and only Son, is dead.

Isn't it ironic. The God who created all things, created the tree from which the cross was carved, created the minerals from which the nails were made, who set in motion the political events that sent Pilate to the Governor's palace, Herod to the throne, and Caiaphas to the Temple, arranged the death of His Son on the cross! Christ, as God's Son, arranged His own betrayal, His own torture, His own execution, and His own death.

Gaze upon Christ, look at His anguish, His nail pierced hands, His head crowned with thorns. Pause to reflect, to consider what I am saying. God really came to earth, to live, to be crucified and die. Yes, Jesus died. On Good Friday God died, the Son of God died, was dead and buried, all to take away the sin of the world.

Are there other options? Sure! Instead of leaving our sin with God on the cross we can be defensive. When we are defensive about sin, we don't admit anything. We don't tell anyone. We keep the skeleton in the closet. We want to sin forgotten about, not forgiven. When we are defensive we have only one goal and only one goal, to hide our sin, to cover it up, and no matter what, we never ever want to confess it.

When sin rears its ugly head, there is another option. To be defeated. When we are defeated we feel as though we don't make mistakes, we think that we are the mistake. We didn't foul up, we are the foul up. We beat ourselves repeatedly over the head with our own sins to the point where we think that no one can or ever will love us. Our hearts are filled with blame and shame.

Defensive people hide their sins. Defeated people replay their sins. Depressed people gasp over their sins. Sadly, they never gaze, they never gaze upon God who hangs dead on a cross. There is a difference between someone

who gasps and gazes. Pharaoh gasped over the plagues God sent and pleaded with Moses to ask God to take the frogs away. Judas gasped for his sin and felt great remorse, hanging himself to death. They gasped over their sin, they never gazed upon Jesus who takes away sin.

There is a better way. Zechariah includes this promise from God: "I will pour out on them the Spirit of grace." (v10). Who is the them? They are the ones who caused God's death in the first place. God pours out His Holy Spirit of grace on the very people who crucified Jesus. And who would that be? That would be you, and that would be me.

So the Holy Spirit is poured out to us. Jesus says the Spirit convicts us of our sin. The Spirit's job is to show us our sins, in order to show us our Savior. That is why Zechariah writes: "On that day the lamenting in Jerusalem will be as great as the lamenting in Hadad-rimmon in the plain of Megiddo (this refers to King Josiah's death in 609 BC). The land shall lament each family by itself; the family of the house of David by itself, and their wives by themselves; ... and all the families that are left." (v 11-14). These people gasp and gaze, they have faith in God, God, dead on a cross.

Faith isn't feeling bad because our sins are exposed. Faith isn't resolving to try to do better the next time. Faith, saving faith, gasps and gazes, it gasps

at what God has done and it gazes upon God, dead on a cross, to take away the sins of the world.

There is no need to try to explain away our sin, eat our sin away, cry our sin away, work our sin away, or bury our sin away. It is sad but true, so many of us have carried out sin for so long that we can't imagine life without it. Maybe we can't imagine life without it, but God can and does. And God does more than imagine, He gives us Jesus.

If you have studied Latin, you may remember that the corona is the Latin word for crown. The coronavirus gets its name from a spiked ring of proteins on the surface that look like a crown. Hence the word coronavirus. If you are like me, you are sick and tired of hearing about and gazing upon this crown. You are fed up and ready to move on. You and I know that if we gaze at this virus long enough, we become completely overwhelmed.

But there is another crown that God wants us to gaze upon. It is the crown that announces God's love for you and me and for all. It is a crown that forgives sin and gives peace. It is the crown that Jesus wore that day He died. He died for you, to take away your sins. So gaze upon the crown of Jesus, who gave His life for you that you might have life by His name.

Amen