

GOOD FRIDAY – NOON SERVICE 2010

The Holy Spirit called together Satan, his armies, and his ministers. They saw that Jesus had triumphed, to their grief, for none of them had not been tormented by Jesus' victory. They began one by one to relate what the death of Jesus did to them. Sin and Hell were terrified. Death trembled as the dead rebelled, demanding life. So also did sinners, now forgiven, rebel against their former master, Satan.

To You, O Christ, be glory, because the Evil One saw You and was troubled!

Sin cried aloud. She gave counsel to her sons, to the demons and the devils, and said to them, *“Though you were legion, the sea has swallowed you and your company. This Jesus will destroy you. You, with a snare took Solomon. Yet now, you will be overcome by the holy disciples, takers of fish and ignorant men. For lo! They have taken the draught of men, which once were taken by us. We have lost the prize.*

Satan said of Our Savior, “He is the greatest of all evils. Is it not sufficient for Him alone that He should ruin us? But likewise He takes vengeance for Jonah. He was avenging him when He seized and cast him into the sea. For Jonah emerged after three days and came up. He was saved. But not so my demons, my horrid legions, as the depth of the sea closed upon Pharaoh and his army. So too is it closing upon us.

I tempted Him once with pleasant bread, but He desired it not. To my grief I strove to learn a psalm. I thought that by His psalm I might take Him my prey. I failed. Then I learned it a second time. But He made my second trial vain as well. I brought Him up to a mountain and showed Him all possessions. I gave them to Him. He was not moved. It was better for me in the days of Adam, who gave me no great trouble.”

The Evil One ceased from his speech and then went on, *“Jesus makes me idle. For lo! The publicans and harlots take refuge in Him. What work shall I seek for myself? I was master of all men. To whom shall I be a disciple?”*

Sin said, *“This Son of Mary is come, as a new creation, and has created mankind anew.”*

Death lamented and said, *“I have learned fasting, which I used not to know; lo! Jesus gathers multitudes, but His feast proclaims a fast for me. One man has closed my mouth. Yes, I, who have closed the mouths of so many, has now had his mouth closed.”*

Hell said, *“I am hungry also for the first time. This Man Jesus, God of God, triumphs now as at the marriage, when He changed the water into wine. Now He changes the dead into life. Moreover, God made a flood, and washed the earth, and purged her crimes; fire and brimstone He sent upon her, that He might make her stains white. By fire He gave me the Sodomites. By flood, he gave me the Giants. He closed the mouth of the all who hate Him and opened my mouth to receive them.”* Hell went on, *“How I loved those days! Now, in place of deadly*

visitations of justice, He has wrought in His Son, the quickening of the dead by grace. He has shown His mercy.”

“Prophets and righteous men,” said Satan, “I have seen a plenty. Though their strength was exceedingly mighty, there was in them something that belonged to me. Their fallen nature and the affliction of original sin in them was our heaven. Yet This Man, Jesus, has clothed Himself with the body of Adam. This is what is troubling us. Our heaven has no power on Him. He is Man, yet also God. For His manhood in His Godhead is intermingled, and destroys us.

I saw Adam, that fountain from whence flowed all races of men, in the garden. I have sought his children through the years and caught them all. Never before did I see a Man, of whom one part was of God, and the other half, man. Even Moses, great as he was, who shone in his splendor, was my prey. I tempted him and he fell. I made his tongue to err. But this Man overcame and sinned not . . .

From where has this fruit of Mary sprung up before me, the grape whereof the wine is not according to nature? For lo! I stand between doubts. To turn away and leave Him, I am afraid, lest by His teaching, they should be sweetened, they, whom we have acquired by bitterness and treachery. But again, to tread on Him and crush Him, is a terror to me, lest haply He turn and become new wine unto sinners, and when they are drunken therewith, lo! they forget their idols and are lost to us. Lo! I Satan, I am afraid of both things. I am afraid of His death, as well as His life.”

Then Satan's ministers answered and gave counsel. *“Though both these things be grievous,”* they said, *“His death is better than his life.”*

Then shouted the host of devils and said, *“Hateful is the sign that we see in Christ. Never before have we suffered like this. The Son of Mary captures our cities. Arise, and let us go forth. Let us fight with Him. Let us fill the mob with shouts of ‘crucify!’”*

Then Our Lord subdued His might and constrained Himself. **He humbled Himself** that His living death might give life to Adam. **He gave His hands**, rather than hand that plucked the fruit, to the piercing of the nails. To those who smote in the judgment hall, **He gave His cheek**, rather than the mouth that ate forbidden fruit in Eden,. **He gave His feet** to be pierced, because his foot bore Adam to heaven, out of the grave. **He was stripped**, that He might make us modest. **He was fed with the gall and vinegar** to make sweet the bitterness of the serpent, which Satan had poured forth into mankind. **Blessed is He Who gives the victory to mankind** for free, by grace. For He has overcome Satan and ministers and undone death. The devils feared His life and His Words. They should have more feared His death, for by it He has lead captivity captive and free us from our sins.¹

We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You. Because by Your Holy Cross You have redeemed the world.

¹ from Ephraim Syrus