

156. Lent 5 – Annunciation – I

“O my Immanuel, come and be born in my heart!”¹

Luke 1:26–38 Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin’s name was Mary. And having come in, the angel said to her, “Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women!” But when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and considered what manner of greeting this was. Then the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end.” Then Mary said to the angel, “How can this be, since I do not know a man?” And the angel answered and said to her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God. Now indeed, Elizabeth your relative has also conceived a son in her old age; and this is now the sixth month for her who was called barren. For with God nothing will be impossible.” Then Mary said, “Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word.” And the angel departed from her.

In the midst of the Lenten season we shall meditate on this Gospel and Jesus’ deity and His two natures in one Person, so that we do not forget who it is that suffers. We consider it seriously and worship His love. Then we shall know this love in our hearts, and the Lord Himself shall gain better stature in us both as King of pain and King of glory. It is necessary for Jesus to be spiritually conceived in our heart, — and it is blessed!

The Holy Spirit testifies in the Scripture so clearly and faithfully about the mystery of the Deity in Christ, because it is so absolutely important that we know it. And the Church has understood this, so it often presents to us these testimonies of the Spirit for meditation in our Divine Services.

Can anyone who simply reads the Gospel about Jesus’ conception get a different meaning from it than that the Son Mary would bear is *God’s* Son? Isn’t it clear that He had no earthly father? And doesn’t the angel say repeatedly that He shall *be called the Son of God*? But to *be called* the Son of God is to *be* the Son of God, according to Scripture’s use of language. Doesn’t Mary also understand the angel’s words in this way? And doesn’t the angel even refer back to the prophecies of the Messiah in which His Deity is expressed? We remember 2 Samuel 7 where David is promised a Descendant who shall sit on his throne forever, and whose Father shall be God, and He shall be God’s Son. We may think of Isaiah 9 where the same Heir of David’s throne is called “Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace” with a kingdom of peace without end, which He rules over forever. How can the Holy Spirit in Scripture say this and how can the Lord’s angel say it if this Son of Mary is not God’s Only-begotten, true and eternal God with the Father? The whole Bible teaches that He is conceived by the Holy Spirit, and that He is true God and true Man in one Person. We may freely and loudly call them fools who deny that Christ is true God. They read the Scripture wrongly and do not see its true meaning, because they want to be wiser than what is written. When mankind follows its pride, it walks in darkness.

Let us rather worship and thank God for His incredible gift. It is glorious to be fully assured of Christ’s Deity. For then He is for us a perfect Savior and His name is great and outshines all other names. Why should it trouble me that His Person is higher and more wonderful than what my poor reason can comprehend? On the contrary, God’s wisdom and power *must* surpass all my understanding, and here is all God’s Wonder of wonders, the highest and deepest and greatest, so that all the angels wish to look into

¹ The Norwegian Church transfers the Annunciation (traditionally March 25) to the Fifth Sunday in Lent so that this important festival is not overlooked.

it [1Pe 1:12]. So I bow myself gladly and happily before His wondrous power and believe that His love is infinitely greater than all that we comprehend and understand. Or should *anything* be miraculous for *God*?

What then shall keep us from saying with Mary: "Let it be to me according to your word." He says: "I love you with eternal love. I give you My only-begotten Son and in Him I give you eternal life." And I answer: "Let it be to me according to Your word." Was Mary disappointed when she believed the Lord's Word? Then shall we be disappointed if we rely on His Word? No! It has pleased God in His eternal love to give us His Son as our Savior and to let Him become Man so that we shall partake of His glory. Let the sages and champions of unbelief keep their messiah: a man whose person and teaching has its time and then drops out of sight forever.

We are not served by such a savior. We must have One who is Lord over time and eternity, over earth and heaven, over life and death, over sin and righteousness, over men and angels and devils, and *that* we have, praise be to His name! With the whole Christian Church we believe in Jesus Christ, God's only-begotten Son, true God and true Man, who suffered and died, rose again and lives and is seated at God's right hand.

God the Holy Spirit, give us such a simple and childlike mind. Amen.

There came a message from the sky:
God has the earth befriended,
His Son who dwells in heaven high,
By angel hosts attended,
Will now your flesh and blood put on
As David's Son;
Your wretched state is ended.

It first to Nazareth did come
By Gabriel expounded;
To Mary, in her humble home,
So wonderful it sounded;
O Mary, hail, thou shalt not fear,
The Lord is near,
To thee hath grace abounded!

Thou shalt a Son conceive and bear,
Who is the Prince of heaven,
Who shall to David's throne be heir
And Jacob's house be given;
He shall extend to ev'ry race
His reign of grace,
His kingdom, like a leaven.

The Holy Spirit shall to thee
His boundless power render,
Abundant shall the mercy be
From Him, thy strong Defender;
This Child is therefore from above,
Whom thou shalt love
As mother kind and tender.

Come, Christmas-Child, and be my guest,
Give me Thy Holy Spirit,
Prepare my heart and make it blest
Forever through Thy merit,
That I at last may dwell with Thee,
Thy kingdom see,
And all its gifts inherit.

*Kingo: Nu kommer Bud fra Englekor L 294:3-7 tr. HCH 84 P. C. Paulsen;
tune: Maria, hun er en Jomfru ren (ELH 268); alternate hymn: We all believe in one true God ELH 38:2*

157. Lent 5 – Annunciation – II

*Lord, what is man that You are mindful of him,
And the son of man that You visit him? [Psa 8:4]*

Isaiah 7:10–16 Moreover the LORD spoke again to Ahaz, saying, “Ask a sign for yourself from the LORD your God; ask it either in the depth or in the height above.” But Ahaz said, “I will not ask, nor will I test the LORD!” Then he said, “Hear now, O house of David! Is it a small thing for you to weary men, but will you weary my God also? Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel. Curds and honey He shall eat, that He may know to refuse the evil and choose the good. For before the Child shall know to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land that you dread will be forsaken by both her kings.”

Our Lord Jesus is the true “Immanuel” in our passage: “*God with us.*” He is the true, eternal God, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, begotten of the Father from eternity, but also true Man with body and soul, originating from Adam, like us in all things, except without sin. He is one with the Father in eternal deity and one with us in true human nature. What a union between God and us is His holy Person! How near God has come to us since one and the same Lord Jesus is both God and Man! His birth on earth is the birth of *God’s Son* from *human* Mary. His human sufferings are the sufferings of God’s Son, and the blood of the Man Jesus Christ is the blood of God’s Son. How glorious is human nature by the union of God’s Son with Man in one Person! A jewel isn’t set in lead, but in gold, yet even the gold receives luster and splendor from the jewel. Much greater glory we receive from the personal, indissoluble union of God’s only-begotten Son with man. Angels are glorious, thrones and principalities in heaven are near to God, but only with man is He united in one Person. God’s Son did not become an angel, but He became Man. O how great man is made by this! But we lay our glory at His feet: not we, but *He* has done it. He decided it, willed to love us so, chose us in His free love. It is not our *praise*, and yet this indeed is our *Praise* [Jer 17:14]. For us it is at once most humbling and most uplifting. Yes, this truth that God’s Son became Man is worth more than all that we know otherwise. And there is more strength and joy for the soul in it than in all else that is beautiful and noble. In wonder and worship the Apostle Paul breaks forth in 1 Timothy 3:16: “Great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen by angels, preached among the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up in glory.”

But it is also a miracle of grace that this is revealed to the simple. It is done for all and offered to all, but we must become simple if we shall receive and keep it. The truth must lead us out of the dreams of pride, and teach us to know what we have become. All who do not see themselves as lost sinners cannot know the glory of the Person of Jesus Christ. For His *Person* and His *office* are inseparable. As He is “Immanuel” in His Person, so He is also in His office. *He*, God and Man in one Person, is our *Jesus*, who takes away what separates us from God. *He is our Christ*, the High Priest who presents us to God, the Prophet who brings God’s truth and life to our souls, and the King who destroys our death, establishes the kingdom, and grants us to live and reign with Him in eternity. If Ahaz and Judah in the prophet’s prediction of “Immanuel” could have the assurance of their nation’s continuance, because the people from which He was to be born, could not perish, how much more then shall we, Immanuel’s own true people, be saved who have originated and been born of Him and are members of His Body, flesh of His flesh, and bone of His bones! Become simple in heart, childlike in mind and spirit, and you shall receive this in faith.

God, help us that in truth we may belong to *Immanuel’s* people. Amen.

Triumph, ye heavens! Rejoice ye with high adoration!
Sing to the Lord, to the Savior, in glad exultation!
Angels give ear! God unto men draweth near,
Bringing to lost ones salvation.

Triumph, ye heavens! Rejoice, O ye nations and wonder!
God and the sinner no power of the devil may sunder.
“Peace and good-will!” Hark! it is echoing still,
Silencing Sinai’s thunder!

God in man’s nature! O mystery past comprehending!
Now is the temple thrown wide and the incense ascending!
Christ is the way! We who were once far away,
Now at His footstool are bending.

*Tersteegen: L 135:1-4 LHy 187:1-3 tr. unknown; tune: Lobe den Herren;
alternate hymn: From east to west ELH 267*

158. Lent 5 – Annunciation – Monday

*Lord, teach me to know the shame of my nakedness,
and clothe me in the dearly-bought robe of righteousness. Amen.*

John 19:23–24 Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took His garments and made four parts, to each soldier a part, and also the tunic. Now the tunic was without seam, woven from the top in one piece. They said therefore among themselves, “Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be,” that the Scripture might be fulfilled which says: “They divided My garments among them, and for My clothing they cast lots.” Therefore the soldiers did these things.

They strip off the Lord’s clothing. God’s Son is to hang on the cross naked and pay for the world’s vanity and love of fancy clothing, and purchase for us a robe of righteousness.

But when they divide His clothes and cast lots for His tunic, they unwittingly fulfill the decree of God and the prophets’ prediction. How could David 1000 years earlier know this and describe it so correctly and exactly in Psalm 22 as if he stood there and saw it? Or did the soldiers know the Scripture and do this to fulfill it? No, but God wants to help us to believe. If we learned to know the Scriptures well, then we must believe, for the whole Old Testament contains the New. So human wisdom could not possibly write it. Only God’s Spirit knew what would happen thousands of years later.

The robe, without seam, woven from the top in one piece, which could not be taken apart, and which God did not allow the soldiers to tear apart, reminds us of the seamless wedding garment of righteousness, which Christ gives His believers, and which is woven for us by His laying aside His glory and by dying on the cross in nakedness and shame. The robe cannot be divided. If you have Christ’s righteousness, then you have it whole, not a part of it, but the full robe. In other words: If you believe in the Lord Jesus from your heart, then you are *entirely* justified before God, *all* your sins are forgiven you. He shelters you completely. There is *no* condemnation for you at all. You can be fully assured of eternal life. Your original sin and your actual sins, your old transgressions and your daily weaknesses, the disobedience which you know and your secret faults, Jesus has atoned for all, and all He did and suffered is given to you in Baptism. If you believe, then it is all yours. What you are required to do, to love and to carry out: perfectly to fulfill the law, to be holy in all things, behold, it is *done* by Him in your place, and it is accounted to you. Then you have put on Christ, since you are baptized into Him. Blessed are you — if you believe! Then you have the wedding garment. The shame of your nakedness is taken away. Christ was lifted on the cross naked. You shall be lifted up to the throne of glory in the robe of salvation.

So we praise You, Lord Jesus, for all that You did and suffered for us, though we still understand it only a little. Give us more and more of the light of the Spirit. Explain to our soul the meaning of Your

holy suffering, and help us to believe with a simple heart, so that we can stand clothed in Your righteousness and praise You eternally. Amen.

Lamb of God, pure and holy,
Who on the cross didst suffer,
Ever patient and lowly,
Thyself to scorn didst offer.
All sins Thou borest for us,
Else had despair reigned o'er us:
1. Have mercy on us, O Jesus!
2. Have mercy on us, O Jesus!
3. Thy peace be with us, O Jesus!

Decius: L 65 ELH 41 tr. Composite; tune: O Lamm Gottes, unschuldig

159. Lent 5 – Annunciation – Tuesday

Worthy are You, Lord Jesus, to receive honor and praise and power forever!

[Rev 5:12]

Matthew 27:39–44 And those who passed by blasphemed Him, wagging their heads and saying, “You who destroy the temple and build it in three days, save Yourself! If You are the Son of God, come down from the cross.” Likewise the chief priests, also mocking with the scribes and elders, said, “He saved others; Himself He cannot save. If He is the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe Him. He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now if He will have Him; for He said, ‘I am the Son of God.’” Even the robbers who were crucified with Him reviled Him with the same thing.

“**O**ur fathers trusted in You; They trusted, and You delivered them. They cried to You, and were delivered; They trusted in You, and were not ashamed. But I am a worm, and no man; A reproach of men, and despised of the people. All those who see Me laugh Me to scorn; They shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, He trusted in the LORD, let Him rescue Him; Let Him deliver Him, since He delights in Him!” So David in Psalm 22 described Jesus’ feelings and crying out on the cross. And in another psalm: “As with a breaking of my bones, My enemies reproach me, While they say to me all day long, Where is your God?” (Psalm 42:10). Let no one imagine that the Lord shook off their mockery of Him without feeling it. “Reproach has broken my heart, And I am full of heaviness; I looked for someone to take pity, but there was none; And for comforters, but I found none. They also gave me gall for my food, And for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink” (Psalm 69:20-21). It was part of His atoning work to pay for all the mockery and ridicule which men use and delight in on this poor earth. How many have their pleasure and pride in making fun of others! Jesus also had to bear this. Let the boisterous mockingbirds see and hear what transpires around the Lord’s cross. It should cure them of their shameful mockery. The weight of His holy, exhausted body pulled on His pierced hands and feet with unspeakable pain. Suffering none of us can imagine went through all His members like a fire, and in every nerve burned the pains of death. But even harsher the sting of being mocked broke His heart. It was harder than anyone imagines for God’s Son to be overwhelmed by the mire of shame. You should have come down from the cross, my Jesus, and they should have seen with terror that You are God’s Son. But the nails were forged in the counsel of the Eternal One, so they hold You fast. You love us with the love that is stronger than death and greater than all the agonies of hell.

So I will gladly be despised and reviled for Your sake. I too feel the very tempting power of derision and I am tempted to flee the cross. But with You I shall conquer and crucify the flesh. To be mocked for You shall be a thousand times greater honor for me than to be exalted to the golden thrones of worldly

triumph. Grant me this grace that I never may dishonor You by ungodly living or by impatience when I suffer, but let me suffer as a Christian should and be mocked because the Spirit of glory rests upon me.

Keep us from these terrible things: from mocking You in Your saints on earth. Amen.

O sacred Head, now wounded,
With grief and shame weighed down,
Now scornfully surrounded
With thorns, Thine only crown.
O sacred Head, what glory,
What bliss, till now was Thine!
Yet, though despised and gory,
I joy to call Thee mine.

Men mock and taunt and jeer Thee,
Thou noble face of Christ;
Though mighty worlds shall fear Thee,
How art Thou now despised?
How art Thou pale with anguish,
With sore abuse and scorn!
How doth Thy face now languish
That once was bright as morn!

What Thou, my Lord, hast suffered
Was all for sinners' gain:
Mine, mine was the transgression,
But Thine the deadly pain:
Lo, here I fall, my Savior!
'Tis I deserve Thy place;
Look on me with Thy favor,
Vouchsafe to me Thy grace.

Clairvaux, Gerhardt L 333:1-3 ELH 334-335:1.2.4 tr. Composite; tune: Herzlich tut mich verlangen

160. Lent 5 – Annunciation – Wednesday

Lord, convert us, and give us a portion in Your kingdom. Amen.

Luke 23:39–43 Then one of the criminals who were hanged blasphemed Him, saying, “If You are the Christ, save Yourself and us.” But the other, answering, rebuked him, saying, “Do you not even fear God, seeing you are under the same condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this Man has done nothing wrong.” Then he said to Jesus, “Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom.” And Jesus said to him, “Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.”

The penitent thief is the only one of whom the Scripture declares that he was converted in his last hour. It is even possible to be converted just before death; but it happens very seldom. Most of these conversions are only pretended, not genuine. Often people, who seem to repent in time of sickness and need, when they become well again, sin as before. Let none of us think: “I still have time to ask for grace before I die, and so I will be saved,” for with such thoughts in the heart you sin against grace. And if you continue like that from day to day, then it is very sure that you will hardly repent in your dying need.

This thief is also a notable example of true repentance. He confesses his guilt of sin and confesses that he has deserved death. His heart's contrition shines clearly beside the other thief's impenitence. This is true repentance: that one not only confesses himself sinful, but *guilty*, and confesses from the heart that he deserves God's wrath and the sentence of death. Then He expresses his faith. While the disciples are offended, while the people and their leaders make mockery, and while the Lord hangs on the cross in

deepest shame, His glory thus shines in the soul of this penitent. He believes, confesses, and worships Him as God's Son. "For with the heart one believes to righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made to salvation" [Rom 10:10]. Whoever can pray thus from a contrite and believing heart is saved as surely as God is righteous and truthful, but only those are saved. Repentance and faith are the only way of salvation.

And now Jesus with glorious words grants the thief paradise. With the death He suffers right now He purchases redemption and salvation for all sinners, even hanging on the cross, in the midst of His deepest humiliation, He grants the thief the paradise of glory. By His royal decree He snatches this soul out of death and transports him into His heavenly kingdom. Is He not the Savior and King, as is written above His head? Does He wear the crown of thorns in vain?

Greatly to be praised are You, Lord Jesus, for everything! Greatly to be praised because You took the thief, the *thief* with You from *the cross to paradise!* Sentenced to death, You took the one sentenced to death out of death and led him in triumph to heaven. Grant us also by Your grace true repentance and living faith, and take us to Yourself in paradise, when our time comes. Help us now, today to seek and find You in the true words of grace. Amen.

O Root of Jesse, David's Son,
And Jacob's Star of heaven!
Thou art the Christ, the blessed One;
Thy name all praise be given:
By grace Thou hast redeemed us all
From Adam's fall,
And Thou wilt guide and tend us.

O could I speak in ev'ry tongue,
The Scripture's deep expounding,
Were in my mouth the angels' song
That through high heaven is sounding,
I on my knees would humbly fall,
On Jesus call,
And worship Him forever!

My sins are countless as the sands,
My crimes, O God, are crying,
Deliver me from sin's dread bands
And save me, Lord, when dying;
O let me not, for evil past,
Be lost at last,
Grant me Thy grace, I pray Thee!

*Den danske Psalmebog: On Mary, Virgin undefiled L 297:4-6 ELH 268:4-6
tune: Maria, hun er en Jomfru ren*

161. Lent 5 – Annunciation – Thursday

At Your cross, Lord Jesus, is the home of love; draw me there, O draw me there. Amen.

John 19:25–27 Now there stood by the cross of Jesus His mother, and His mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus therefore saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing by, He said to His mother, "Woman, behold your son!" Then He said to the disciple, "Behold your mother!" And from that hour that disciple took her to his own home.

After His Baptism Jesus called Mary "woman," but cared for her as His mother. This will now come to an end. For He shall be "cut off from the land of the living" (Isaiah 53:8) and no longer be known by anyone according to the flesh. But He does not

leave His mother friendless and helpless. As He Himself willingly entered the state of being a son, with a son's love and duty for Mary, He now places the same love and duty on John. For He has this authority even from the cross. And to Mary He gives a mother's rights in the house of John. He is the *Lord* of the Fourth Commandment, but submitted obediently to it. How perfectly He pays for all our disobedience against this commandment and how gloriously He honors this commandment and teaches us the duty of love toward our parents!

It was a beautiful gift John received here. He accepts as his mother the one blessed by God among women. He cares for her, takes care of her, and as far as possible heals her soul wounded by the piercing sword of grief [*Luk 2:35*]. Yes, for John, the disciple of *love*, this is a beautiful and precious treasure. But many who *say* they love the Lord refuse to accept such a gift from Him. John led Mary away from the cross as his mother (presumably before the final terrible hours of darkness) and it is said that she lived with him for eleven years before he closed her eyes in death.

But your parents and other elderly and forsaken people are also Jesus' mother (Matthew 12:48 ff.) whom He gives you and whom He wants you to give your filial love to receive them and care for them. "Do you seek your peace in Jesus, and is His cross your stay?" Then see, they are standing with you under the cross and from there He speaks to you, saying: "Behold your mother!" *Your crucified Jesus* gives them to you. *Receive them* from Him, and with the love that follows them as His gift to your *heart* they shall become for you the most precious treasure you could have in your home on earth.

"O Christ is a generous Benefactor! He bestows His body as food, His blood as drink, His soul as ransom price, His wounds as healing, His arms as refuge, His cross as shield, His pierced heart as deposit of love, the water from His side as a bath, His sweat as medicine, His crown of thorns as adornment, His words as testimony, His life as model, but *His members as recipients of the love of those who are loved by Him*" (Bernard of Clairvaux).

Grant me grace, Lord Jesus, also to receive and care for Your own. Give me the precious gift of love in my poor heart, and let it rule in my home. Amen.

And when His mother He beheld,
Whose heart with agony was filled,
He said: "Behold thy mother, John!"
And unto her: "Behold thy son!"

O Jesus, should I suffer loss
And stand forsaken with my cross,
Yea, even scorned by man I be,
Send friends of Thine to comfort me.

*Kingo: Kom under Jesus Kors at staa 331:5-7 HCH 100:4-5 tr. P. C. Paulsen; tune: Herrnhut (ELH 324);
alternate hymn: Our blessed Savior seven times spoke ELH 337:1.4*

162. Lent 5 – Annunciation – Friday

"My God, be not far from Me, For trouble is near; For there is none to help." [Psa 22:11]

Matthew 27:45–49 Now from the sixth hour until the ninth hour there was darkness over all the land. And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" that is, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" Some of those who stood there, when they heard that, said, "This Man is calling for Elijah!" Immediately one of them ran and took a sponge, filled it with sour wine and put it on a reed, and gave it to Him to drink. The rest said, "Let Him alone; let us see if Elijah will come to save Him."

Being forsaken by God is the same as being damned. So did God *want* to do this with His Son? Did this happen by the Father's determined will? Not one sparrow falls to the ground unless God wills it. Should this then be done without Him? The Scripture expressly says that it was according to God's gracious will that the Son tasted death for us all (Hebrews 2:9). Or what power other than His love could bring the almighty Father to withdraw from His beloved Son? It happened because of our guilt, according to the decision of His own good will. He left Him in the pains of death under the tempting, mocking, and tormenting power of the devil and man. And the Son knew that He was forsaken and fully realized the horror of it. The darkness of eternal death surrounded Him and rushed in against His soul with all the terrors of hell. All that the world deserved now comes upon Him, all the suffering of punishment which we human beings together have deserved to taste eternally are collected in one cup and He drinks it down and *tastes all the fire of wrath* which is in it. "I don't know what happened before in heaven and in the Redeemer's soul to bring about being forsaken of God. But I shudder at the thought, and a nightmare comes over my soul, just as over nature at that time. Here I see that there is complete truth in St. Paul's and Luther's doctrine of Jesus' substitutionary atonement. Whoever does not see it is blinder than that night which fell on the land when Jesus was crucified" (Löhe²).

The power of sin, the severity of justice, the torments of the damned, the greatness of mercy, my soul's eternal worth with God — nowhere is all this revealed so well as in the Lord's words: "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" But what can I, a wretched sinner, say about it? I sink down at the foot of Your throne with a profound sense of my unworthiness to be redeemed at so great a cost and with my soul full of thanks and adoration.

Because You, my Jesus, cried out so, I can say with joyful voice even in death: Praise to You for the unspeakably great mercy of redemption! Justice is satisfied, condemnation is taken away. Nothing keeps me from Your love; eternal life belongs to me. Now together with all the saints I shall be with You with praise and thanks forever! Amen.

Near the cross was Mary weeping,
There her mournful station keeping,
Gazing on her dying Son,
There with speechless grief oppresséd,
Anguish-stricken, and distresséd;
Through her soul the sword had gone.

Whom upon that Sufferer gazing,
Bowed in sorrow so amazing,
Would not with His mother mourn?
'Twas our sins brought Him from heaven;
These the cruél nails had driven;
All His griefs for us were borne.

When no eye its pity gave us,
Where there was no arm to save us,
He His love and pow'r displayed;
By His stripes He wrought our healing;
By His death, our life revealing,
He for us the ransom paid.

² Johann Konrad Wilhelm Löhe (1808-72) was a German Lutheran pastor who fought against Rationalism. In 1844 he published an influential *Agenda* for use in North America, based on older German Lutheran liturgies. He supported the establishment of a theological school at Fort Wayne, IN, in 1846, and the Neuendettelsau Mission Society in 1849. Also at Neuendettelsau he founded a Deaconess Home, hospitals, and a seminary which trained pastors for North America, Australia, New Guinea, and Brazil.

Jesus, may Thy love constrain us
That from sin we may refrain us,
In Thy griefs may deeply grieve.
Thee our best affections giving,
To Thy glory ever living,
May we in Thy glory live.

*Sporon, based on Stabat Mater: L 332:1.2.4.5 [We substitute] ELH 294 H. Mills, based on Stabat Mater;
tune: Alles ist an Gottes Segen*

163. Lent 5 – Annunciation – Saturday

*Lord Jesus, grant us to understand Your atoning suffering
and to taste Your love. Amen.*

John 19:28–29. Psalm 22:14–15. Psalm 69:21 After this, Jesus, knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, said, “I thirst!” Now a vessel full of sour wine was sitting there; and they filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on hyssop, and put it to His mouth. ... I am poured out like water, And all My bones are out of joint; My heart is like wax; It has melted within Me. My strength is dried up like a potsherd, And My tongue clings to My jaws; You have brought Me to the dust of death. ... They also gave Me gall for My food, And for My thirst they gave Me vinegar to drink.

All the wicked things which sin has brought in on us, Christ endured without asking for relief from men. The snares of death surrounded Him, the floods of the ungodly terrified Him, the sorrows of death overwhelmed Him, the water came over His soul, the floods overwhelmed Him. The Lord’s terror and fears came over Him, anger burned Him like fire. God forsook Him, but He held on to God. Filled with the sense of God’s wrath, being forsaken by God, and the torments of death, He still looked to God and remained in faith on the rock of God’s promises. What is written in the Psalms and the Prophets is His strength and hope, not to free Him from death—for that He should and would suffer with all its pain and torments—but to suffer it quietly and patiently and hold on to God in the midst of the fullest feelings of forsakenness and the darkness of death. First and foremost for Him, for the sake of His faith, it is written in the 22nd Psalm: “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me? Why are You so far from helping Me, And from the words of My groaning?” If He had not had such words of Scripture to cling to, then He could not have gone through death and become the Prince of our faith as He did.

But it is written also for the sake of our faith and for that reason He spoke these words. We should see that the Scriptures about the Messiah’s sufferings are fulfilled in Him in every detail. So also Psalm 22:14-15, 69:21, and therefore He now says: “I thirst.” If His torment of soul reaches its height with the previous words, then here we hear the expression of His most severe physical pain. For five or six hours He has hung on the cross. His wounds are burning; His blood is poured out. “He is poured out like water, And all His bones are out of joint; His heart is like wax; It has melted within Him.” Dryness and thirst overwhelm Him. But His faith and love gain the victory. When He receives the vinegar mixed with gall, it is the last drink God’s Son takes on earth. No one has anything else to give Him in death. — I will be silent, my friend, and let the Holy Spirit Himself explain this to you.

But You, precious Savior, be eternally praised and honored! The living streams of paradise are Yours, but You thirst unto death and drink vinegar for my sinful pleasures, so that You can give me the water of grace while I live, the cup of comfort when I die, and the sweet and saving drink of eternal life in heaven. I say again from my whole heart: Praised be Your sweet name, Jesus! Amen.

In Jesus I find rest and peace—
The world is full of sorrow;
His wounds are my abiding place;
Let the unknown tomorrow
Bring what it may, There I can stay,
My faith finds all I need today,
I will not trouble borrow.
Until I found that crystal spring,
My way was dull and dreary;
I looked for peace in many a thing;
But still my soul grew weary.
Unsatisfied, All things I tried,
And yet my soul had not espied
The fount of life so near me.

In pity, then, Thou cam'st to me,
Thine arms to me extending;
I heard Thy voice: Come unto Me
And rest in peace unending.
Immanuel Loves thee full well,
He saves thy soul from death and hell,
In perils thee defending.

Unknown Danish author: L 298:1.2.4 ELH 437:1.2.4 tr. G. A. T. Rygh; tune: I Jesu søger jeg min Fred