**"GO TO DARK GETHSEMANE" – Lenten Sermon**

Today’s sermon is based on the Lenten hymn “Go to Dark Gethsemane.”

This hymn emphasizes the suffering that Jesus endured

in the garden & during His arrest, trial, & crucifixion

A reminder of what Jesus experienced for us at Gethsemane & on Calvary

The text was written by James Montgomery 200 years ago

If you remember from 2 weeks ago, my last Lenten sermon, was about another hymn written by the same English poet. “Come to Calvary's Holy Mountain”

James Montgomery has two other well-known hymns in our hymnal:

Christmas - 367 – Angels from the Realms of Glory

Epiphany – 398 - Hail **TO** the Lord’s Anointed, Great **DA**vid's greater Son!

Keep in mind that even though maybe you like these melodies, he didn’t write those, he only wrote the lyrics, which is the most important part of the song.

The tune for "Go to Dark Gethsemane" was composed by Richard Redhead.

It’s interesting to learn that the tune we know for this hymn was also used for the lyrics of "Rock of Ages, Cleft for Me"!

Rock of Ages, cleft for me, let me hide myself in thee;

let the water and the blood, from thy wounded side which flowed,

be of sin the double cure; save from wrath and make me pure.

**Verse 1** focuses upon Jesus in Gethsemane

***"Go to dark Gethsemane, all who feel the tempter’s power.***

This is a good song to sing when we are faced with temptation

When we feel the tempter’s power, we can remember **Hebrews 4: 15-16** – ***For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin. Let us then approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.***

***Your Redeemer’s conflict see; Watch with Him one bitter hour.***

Remember how that last stressful evening… in the Garden of Gethsemane… Jesus asked His disciples to pray with Him. **Matthew 26:40-41** - ***Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. “Couldn’t you men keep watch with me for one hour?” he asked Peter. “Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.”***

***Turn not from His griefs away; Learn from Jesus Christ to pray."***

The hymn invites us to face our fears. To acknowledge what Jesus suffered on our behalf. And to learn from Him how to pray. That horrible evening, Jesus knew what was about to happen. The unfairness of it all! The extreme physical suffering! He knew that His disciples would abandon Him out of fear. He knew He would feel separated from His Father. Yet He prayed that God’s will would be done.

**In Luke 11:11 the disciples ask:** - ***“Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples.”***

Then Jesus taught them the Lord’s Prayer where we pray for His will to be done We ask for help in times of temptation, and we ask for forgiveness.

Jesus taught them to be persistent in prayer.

And to know that our Heavenly Father has our best interests in mind.

**Verse 2** focuses upon Jesus in the judgment hall

***"Follow to the judgment hall; View the Lord of life arraigned.***

In our imagination we can follow to the judgment hall in Matthew 26 where:

***59 The chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin were looking for false evidence against Jesus so that they could put him to death.***

***60 But they did not find any, though many false witnesses came forward.***

***63 But Jesus remained silent.*** *Until finally Jesus said*

64 ***…“But I say to all of you: From now on you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven.”***

***67 Then they spit in his face and struck him with their fists.***

***Oh, the wormwood and the gall! Oh, the pangs His soul sustained!***

Wormwood & gall are symbols of the suffering of Christ.

**Psalms 69: 21** - Foretells our Lord’s sufferings.

***They put gall in my food and gave me vinegar for my thirst.***

The drink offered to our Lord was vinegar, made of light wine, the common drink of Roman soldiers, "mingled with gall" meaning that the vinegar was made bitter by the infusion of wormwood or some other bitter substance, usually given, according to a merciful custom, to render them insensible to pain. Our Lord, knowing this, refuses to drink it. He would take nothing to cloud his faculties or blunt the pain of dying. He chooses to suffer every element of woe in the bitter cup of agony given him by the Father.

**Lamentations 3:19** –

***I remember my affliction and my wandering, the bitterness and the gall.***

***Shun not suffering, shame, or loss; Learn from Him to bear the cross."***

As Jesus went forth from the judgment hall He was literally bearing His cross,

We can learn from Him as we bear our own crosses.

**Matthew 16:24** - **Then Jesus said to his disciples, “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.**

What is the cross you’re bearing today? Is this isolation getting to you?

Are people treating you disrespectfully or unfairly?

Are you worried about how you’ll pay your bills?

Jesus knows. As He did at the tomb of Lazarus, Jesus cries with you.

We can learn from Him to bear whatever cross or trial life throws at us.

Jesus helps us bear it all.

**Verse 3** focuses upon Jesus at Calvary

***"Calvary’s mournful mountain climb; There, adoring at His feet,***

Calvary is the Latin name for the hill Golgotha where Jesus was crucified:

**John 19:25-27** - ***Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to her, “Woman, here is your son,” and to the disciple, “Here is your mother.” From that time on, this disciple took her into his home.***

Even in death He thought of the needs of others. He thought of you & me.

***Mark that miracle of time, God’s own sacrifice complete.***

**1 Peter 1:18-19** - ***18 For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors, 19 but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.***

We sinful people can’t enter heaven without there being a sacrifice.

In the Old Testament times, a lamb was sacrificed to God for the sins of the people. Jesus—God Himself—made the final sacrifice. He gave His life. For us.

***"It is finished!" hear Him cry; Learn from Jesus Christ to die."***

**Galatians 2:20** - ***I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.***

We’re all going to die, aren’t we? Unless Jesus returns before that happens.

Some of you have faced the reality of death in your own life.

Some have faced it with a spouse or a friend. The good news is that all God’s promises have been fulfilled in Jesus. We can look at Death without eternal fear-- We have the resurrection to look forward to!

**Verse 4** focuses upon Jesus having been raised from the tomb

Year ago, I used to struggle with Lenten songs and hymns like “The Lamb” that end with a verse about Christ’s resurrection. I felt like since we don’t sing resurrection hymns during Lent, should we even sing resurrection verses?

But if you do the math...

the season of Lent lasts from Ash Wednesday to the evening of Holy Saturday.

That is 46 days, but in our tradition, the 6 Sundays are not included, so that makes it 40 days of Lent.

Traditionally we worship on Sundays because Jesus rose from the dead on Sunday, and every Sunday is a celebration of Easter. It’s OK to have hope in the midst of the darkness

It’s OK to remember the resurrection, when we remember Jesus’ death.

So here we go:

***"Early hasten to the tomb Where they laid His breathless clay.***

Remember that early morning when those brave, but heart-broken women went to perform a sad job?

**John 20:1-2** - ***Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance. So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said, “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don’t know where they have put him!”***

***All is solitude and gloom; Who hath taken Him away?***

**John 20:11** - ***Now Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb 12 and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus’ body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot.***

***13 They asked her, “Woman, why are you crying?”***

***“They have taken my Lord away,” she said, “and I don’t know where they have put him.” 14 At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus.***

***15 He asked her, “Woman, why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?”***

***Thinking he was the gardener, she said, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him.”***

***16 Jesus said to her, “Mary.”***

All He had to say was ONE word. Her name. Jesus is our Good Shepherd:

**John 10:3-4** - ***the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. 4 When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice.***

***Christ is risen! He meets our eyes: Savior, teach us so to rise."***

**Romans 6:4** - **We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.**

Baptized children of God… We will die.

But because Christ rose from the dead, we will rise, too.

We will live forever with Him!

Our hearts are full of thankfulness to our sacrifice Lamb…

our risen and victorious Savior!

Amen!