



“Judge me, O God, because You have sentenced Your Son to the cross. He has paid the penalty of my guilt. He has made satisfaction for my sins! Judge me, O God, because you have judged Jesus in my place!”

It’s like Paul Gerhardt beautifully teaches in the Lenten hymn, “*A Lamb goes uncomplaining forth, the guilt of sinners bearing, and laden with the sins of earth, none else the burden sharing; goes patient on, grows weak and faint, to slaughter led without complaint, that spotless life to offer, He bears the stripes, the wounds, the lies, the mockery, and yet replies, ‘All this I gladly suffer’*” (LSB #438).

At one moment on the cross, Christ became our substitute. The Christian who has been baptized confesses in repentance and faith, “When God judges me, He declares me just as if I had not sinned for Jesus’ sake.” For the Christian, judgment is nothing to fear. For the Christian the judgment is the sentence we cannot wait to hear: “Acquitted! You’re coming home to heaven!”

One of the traditions on *Judica* is to put a veil over all statues and crucifixes in the Church. We don’t have statues here, but you see that our one crucifix has a black veil over it, reminding us that Jesus was judged in our place. The veil is placed over Him, so that it would be removed from you! Death came upon the Christ so that you would have life!

When the Jews accused Jesus of having a demon in our Gospel reading today, and then asked Him, “**Who do you make yourself out to be?**” (Jn 8:53), they were blinded by their own unbelief. They couldn’t see that Jesus was the Christ. We couldn’t either without the eyes of faith, lest we forget!

In their impenitence, the veil remained over their eyes. They couldn’t see that Jesus was the purest form of good; that Jesus was all that was actually right in the world. This is what evil does. Evil cannot see good as good. Evil sees good only as evil, and therefore turns everything upside down. Evil can only see other evil as good. We observe this play out every day in our world. The veil of unbelief is dark and expansive. It’s causing tension in families and ripping apart governments.

The only way to discern right from wrong is to look to the Scriptures. They are the only source of truth. As Jesus prayed in His High Priestly Prayer to the Father, “**Sanctify them in the truth; Thy Word is truth**” (Jn 17:17). The veil of unbelief is always threatening to cloud our vision from seeing Jesus for who He truly is, and from listening to His Word and keeping it – both guarding and obeying it. When in doubt, simply repent. And be ever reminded that it is not a matter of how strong your faith is that will get you into to heaven, but instead trusting like a child that when God “*judicas*” you, He will acquit you of all the accusations from Satan because of Jesus.

Though the veil will be on the crucifix until Easter morning, we know that the veil separating us from God in the temple “**was torn in two from top to bottom**” (Mk 15:38) when Jesus died on Good Friday. The dividing wall of hostility has been broken down; Christ is our peace (Eph 2:14). We repent because we don’t keep God’s Word. And true faith – no matter how great or small – confesses, “Judge us, O God, because Christ keeps Your Word even unto death on a cross”. Christ keeps God’s Word. That’s what makes Him our Savior, our Lamb of God who takes away our sin. In Jesus’ name, Amen.