

*Kingo: Vil dog Himlen intet tale L 326:6.8 tr. DeGarmeaux; tune: Freu dich sehr (ELH 256);
alternate hymn: Christ, the Life of all the living ELH 333*

148. Lent 4 – I

Lord, give us the Bread of Life. Amen.

John 6:1–15 After these things Jesus went over the Sea of Galilee, which is the Sea of Tiberias. Then a great multitude followed Him, because they saw His signs which He performed on those who were diseased. And Jesus went up on a mountain, and there He sat with His disciples. Now the Passover, a feast of the Jews, was near. Then Jesus lifted up His eyes, and seeing a great multitude coming toward Him, He said to Philip, “Where shall we buy bread, that these may eat?” But this He said to test him, for He Himself knew what He would do. Philip answered Him, “Two hundred denarii worth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may have a little.” One of His disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, said to Him, “There is a lad here who has five barley loaves and two small fish, but what are they among so many?” Then Jesus said, “Make the people sit down.” Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, in number about five thousand. And Jesus took the loaves, and when He had given thanks He distributed them to the disciples, and the disciples to those sitting down; and likewise of the fish, as much as they wanted. So when they were filled, He said to His disciples, “Gather up the fragments that remain, so that nothing is lost.” Therefore they gathered them up, and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves which were left over by those who had eaten. Then those men, when they had seen the sign that Jesus did, said, “This is truly the Prophet who is to come into the world.” Therefore when Jesus perceived that they were about to come and take Him by force to make Him king, He departed again to a mountain by Himself alone.

Just as physical life has to have nourishment to be sustained and grow, so also spiritual life. If you have life in God, you must nourish it with the Bread of Life, or it will wither and die. Many Christians live a very poor spiritual life: eyes are dull, hands withered, and knees weak. This happens because they don’t nourish themselves properly with the Bread from heaven. — What kind of bread is that? *Jesus* says: “*I am the Bread of Life.*” With His love, grace, Spirit, and life He is in the Holy Gospel through which you partake of Him, when you use it from the heart.

How does this happen? You should be diligent in your calling as a Christian and be zealous for all good works, serving the Lord with a pure heart, becoming rich in the service of love, making the most of your talents. Then if you feel in yourself much sin, much weakness, selfishness, self-righteousness, pride, laziness, cowardice, unbelief, and lukewarmness, then press on more and more to Jesus. For you need strength, spirit, courage, and understanding, and you need forgiveness of sins, forgiveness for all you have done, and for all you neglect. This makes you hungry for the Bread of Life.

Use the Word diligently then, both by yourself and together with others. Daily renew your Baptismal covenant, and partake of the Lord’s Supper regularly. Rise early to gather manna, and you shall find it. The wilderness and the dry places shall blossom [*Isa 35*], and the rock shall pour forth abundant water [*Exo 17:6*]. You shall eat and live; you shall surely grow in the Lord’s power. Faith, love, patience, hope, peace, and joy within you shall increase. Christ shall become strong in you, while sin and the flesh shall die and be destroyed.

Are you hungry today for the Bread of Life? Does your heart beg for life and happiness, for faith and love, for peace and forgiveness of sins? What the Lord’s servants have to offer you seems so little. But really there is life and truth in it. Eat and drink without cost [*Isa 55*]; indulge yourself heartily. You will get all you need and it shall be more than enough for everyone. — But if you do not hunger for Him who is

the Bread of Life, then you are most certainly dead spiritually. God help you to wake up before it is too late!

Yes, Lord Jesus, make the dead alive and strengthen the living. Be our life, and let us live only in You. Amen.

There is a food, supplying
What earth can never grow;
From hunger we are dying
Unless we learn to know.
It is the manna sweet
That falls from heav'n so often
And ev'ry care doth soften—
God's Word, this food indeed.

Thy sheep, dear Lord, we come here
Thy holy Word to heed,
Grant that we may not leave here
Of nourishment in need.
O Jesus, Bread of Life,
All hungry souls be filling
Who gladly now are dwelling
With Thee in desert strife.

We surely then would perish
Upon the path we trace,
If Thou left us to famish
Without Thy Word of grace.
Thy kingdom, Lord, be first!
O let us be reminded—
Enough Thou art supplying
To calm all need and thirst.

*Landstad: Hvad er det blandt saa mange L 288:5-7 tr. DeGarmeaux;
tune: Von Gott will ich nicht lassen (ELH 465); or O Bread of Life from heaven ELH 266*

149. Lent 4 – II

“Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.” [2Co 3:17]

Galatians 4:21–31 Tell me, you who desire to be under the law, do you not hear the law? For it is written that Abraham had two sons: the one by a bondwoman, the other by a freewoman. But he who was of the bondwoman was born according to the flesh, and he of the freewoman through promise, which things are symbolic. For these are the two covenants: the one from Mount Sinai which gives birth to bondage, which is Hagar—for this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and corresponds to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children—but the Jerusalem above is free, which is the mother of us all. For it is written: “Rejoice, O barren, you who do not bear! Break forth and shout, you who do not travail! for the desolate has many more children than she who has a husband.” Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are children of promise. But, as he who was born according to the flesh then persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit, even so it is now. Nevertheless what does the Scripture say? “Cast out the bondwoman and her son, for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman.” So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman but of the free.

The self-righteous are household slaves in the Lord's eyes. They work for reward and are afraid of punishment. They are born of the flesh and look to the law. The believers on the other hand are the children of the house. They are born of God, children of grace, children by a miracle. Their life has sprung up by the miraculous power of the Holy Spirit, contrary to nature and reason. They look to grace and truth in Christ and expect an inheritance without the service of works. These two kinds of people Paul finds illustrated in Hagar with her son Ishmael — and Sarah, Isaac's mother. Hagar was the bondwoman and did not belong to Abraham's race. Sarah was a freewoman and Abraham's true wife. Hagar gave birth according to the order of nature, Sarah by a miracle through God's promise. Hagar and Ishmael despised Sarah and Isaac, but finally the despisers had to be thrown out. Sarah was the queen, and Isaac the heir.

As it was then, so also now. We who read this, are we children of Sarah, or perhaps children of Hagar? We all belong to the outward fellowship of the church, but are we also born in the Jerusalem which is above? Are we God's children, or perhaps household slaves? Are we under law or under grace? Do we live the life of true freedom and holy love? Do we have the special adoption of the Spirit that cries out: "Abba, Father"? Is our citizenship in heaven? Do we strive for what is above, or perhaps for what is earthly? Note it well! The Scripture says: "Cast out the bondwoman and her son, for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman." And let this be of greater concern to your heart than anything else, that you may be the child of the freewoman, born above and an heir of eternal life. It is sad to come upon this passage: "Cast him out; he shall in no way be heir with the son of the house!" O how important it is to be made free from the law and to stand in the true, blessed state of grace!

Yes, God of grace, may You indeed know us as Your children of grace! O lead us out of bondage, to the blessed freedom of Jesus' true disciples. Unite us in faith with Him, so that on account of the body of Christ we may be dead to the law, but alive in Him, who rose from the dead. Amen.

Though others still in bondage walk,
Themselves with laws impeding,
And ne'er a taste at all have caught
Of heaven's sweetest feeding,
Which we through Jesus' death believe,
By faith receive,
The goal of all His bleeding.

While Hagar and her children poor
In willing thralldom tarry,
We never can enough procure
To thank the King of glory,
Who by His Son far from us took
The Law's hard yoke
Which we could never carry.

Thy Church, Thy dear Jerusalem,
Thy flock on earth, still crying,
Who have in heav'n their only home,
Their hope now testifying;
They follow Jesus in His Word
And are assured
Of freedom in their dying.

The time shall come when Ishmael
And all the unbelieving
Shall be cast out of Israel,
Their judgment just, receiving,
But we shall stand Thy throne around
In glory crowned
With joy eternal living.

*Kingo: Lad andre hen in Trældom gaa L 292 tr. DeGarmeaux; tune: Maria, hun er en Jomfru reen (ELH 268);
alternate hymn: All that I was ELH 451:3-4*

150. Lent 4 – Monday

Lord, Lord, wake us and show us Your crown of thorns. Amen.

John 19:4–7 Pilate then went out again, and said to them, “Behold, I am bringing Him out to you, that you may know that I find no fault in Him.” Then Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. And Pilate said to them, “Behold the Man!” Therefore, when the chief priests and officers saw Him, they cried out, saying, “Crucify Him, crucify Him!” Pilate said to them, “You take Him and crucify Him, for I find no fault in Him.” The Jews answered him, “We have a law, and according to our law He ought to die, because He made Himself the Son of God.”

“**B**ehold the Man!” Pilate says, and presents God’s Son as most miserable, most wretched, and most mistreated, so that they should either despise Him or have pity on Him. “And He Himself, the Holy One, whom I worship, whose feet I would embrace and kiss as I say this, I a poor sinner worthy of condemnation, — He Himself stands there covered with blood, full of tears, full of disgrace, a mockery before all men, a spectacle that angels hide their faces from, a King, more humbled than one should think possible, and yet He finds no sympathy” (Löhe¹). “Behold the Man!” Look at Him, all who are human, and see what man has become. This is what has become of Adam and his children. They were supposed to have ruled over the earth with pure blessing, but they have put thorns of the curse on their own head. They were created for glory, but they have lost God’s glory and have sunk down into shame. They should have loved one another and been the express image of love, but here in the piercing crown of thorns you see the condition of their heart. In the spit-upon face, and the scourged bloody body, see the condition of their soul! So fallen man is a servant of Satan and must end up in fire and brimstone if he is not born again. Then all the devils will mock him and say: Behold the man, who was created in God’s image, as king of creation and judge of spirits! What has become of his heavenly crown? And he will feel the curse of God as thorns throughout his soul and be down-trodden in eternal shame.

But all this misery Jesus has now taken on Himself, so that we can be saved from it by faith in Him. Now see the *Man* who receives His deserved punishment, complete and full. Not a drop of sympathy is poured into the cup. See it, heaven and earth and hell, and tell me now if the Man has not perfectly willingly, perfectly silently, and patiently paid for the offense of taking for Himself God’s own ruling crown. And look at Him, you poor sinners, when you are troubled over the pride that clings to your hearts.

¹ 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.

Look to Him and be confident against the accuser. Look to Him and receive grace to be humble in your innermost heart!

O grant us Your Holy Spirit for this, Lord Jesus, and reign over us from Your seat of glory. Here is my sinful, poor, wicked heart. Take it and rule in it, and rule over all that I am and all that I have. O that I may be obedient to You, and rejoice in walking on the path of suffering after You! Dear Lord Jesus, give me this grace, we pray You from our whole heart. Amen.

*Lord Jesus, to our hearts so dear,
Who freed us all from Satan's fear!
Thou camest as the spotless Lamb
To bear our sinful guilt and shame.
Now by Thy death upon the cross,
Thou saved us from eternal loss.*

I thank Thee from my inmost heart
For all Thy pains of ev'ry sort,
I pray most humbly unto Thee
That Thou my sins forgivest me,
For which, O Jesus, Thou hast died,
Betrayed, and scourged, and crucified.

Thy bloody back, the crown of thorns,
Yea, spit of shame Thy face adorns.
Thy heavy cross, Thy harshest death,
Bring comfort in my rightful death;
True medicine Thy Passion gives
That all my sinful sores relieves.

*Danish/Jonæson: O Hjertekjære Jesu Krist L 337:2.4 tr. DeGarmeaux; tune: Melita (ELH 418);
alternate hymn: Jesus I will never leave ELH 362:1-2*

151. Lent 4 – Tuesday

Lord, draw us to You, and let Your righteousness and truth preserve us. Amen.

John 19:12–16 From then on Pilate sought to release Him, but the Jews cried out, saying, “If you let this Man go, you are not Caesar’s friend. Whoever makes himself a king speaks against Caesar.” When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he brought Jesus out and sat down in the judgment seat in a place that is called The Pavement, but in Hebrew, Gabbatha. Now it was the Preparation Day of the Passover, and about the sixth hour. And he said to the Jews, “Behold your King!” But they cried out, “Away with Him, away with Him! Crucify Him!” Pilate said to them, “Shall I crucify your King?” The chief priests answered, “We have no king but Caesar!” So he delivered Him to them to be crucified. So they took Jesus and led Him away.

Pilate in the end sold his soul for Caesar’s friendship. Before this he had swung back and forth, drawn by the Lord and drawn by hell. Now he comes to a dead halt at the line that leads straight down to the lake of eternal fire and brimstone. Fear of the Jews’ raging accusation and Caesar’s displeasure over many offenses he was guilty of, and of which Satan now reminded him, overcomes any feeling of justice and truth in his soul.

But Pilate should teach us that whoever fears men instead of the Lord has made a disastrous choice. What did the unfortunate man gain by giving in to the Jews? His conscience, before this burdened by many sins, now became ten times worse, and Caesar’s favor was fleeting. Not long after this Pilate was

summoned before the judgment seat of cruel Caligula, who deported him to Gaul, where he soon went the way of Judas.²

It was a terrible deal like Esau's that Pilate made, as a warning to all lukewarm, timid Christians. "Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God" (James 4:4). O that all who want to please both God and the world might understand, in time, where their path leads them! If only they might consider that they are brothers of Pilate! They are more afraid of offending their worldly friends than of offending Jesus and losing Him. They are ashamed of His shame and turn away from the way of His cross. They still want to belong to His people, but they will not confess His name, and they will not follow the footsteps of His suffering. Honor, power, and respect in the world are more precious to them than their soul's salvation in the Lord and faithfulness to the truth. Yes, many sell their conscience for one simple pleasure or a puny, paltry, passing gain.

O you Christians who love the Lord and hold your soul dear, beware of the favor of men, and do not depart a hairbreadth from the way of a good conscience. Glory-seeking and favor of men will still always be lurking right behind you, but by the Spirit *of Him* who testified the good confession before Pontius Pilate, you shall always be able to watch and tread them under foot.

Grant us this grace, merciful, faithful God, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

If the world my heart entices
On the broad and easy road,
And doth by its gay devices
Silence ev'ry thought of God,
When the heavy load I see
Which, dear Lord, was laid on Thee,
I can still each wild emotion,
Calm and blest in my devotion.

Lord, whate'er may pain or grieve me,
Thy dear wounds can make me whole;
When my heart sinks, they revive me,
Life pours in upon my soul:
May Thy comfort render sweet
Every bitter cup I meet;
Thou who by Thy death and passion
Hast procured my soul's salvation.

Heerman: O what precious balm and healing L 15:3-4 ELH 293:3-4 tr. R. Massie; tune: Der am Kreuz

152. Lent 4 – Wednesday

Lord Jesus, draw us to You. Amen.

Matthew 27:31–32. Luke 23:27–31 Then when they had mocked Him, they took the robe off Him, put His own clothes on Him, and led Him away to be crucified. Now as they came out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name. Him they compelled to bear His cross. ... And a great multitude of the people followed Him, and women who also mourned and lamented Him. But Jesus, turning to them, said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For indeed the days are coming in which they will say, 'Blessed are the barren, the wombs that never bore, and the breasts which never nursed!' Then they will begin 'to say to the mountains, "Fall on us!" and to the hills, "Cover us!" 'For if they do these things in the green wood, what will be done in the dry?'"

² This is one possibility of what happened to Pilate, according to Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History* II 7.

He is condemned to die and is led out together with “two other criminals.” “*Two other criminals,*” the Scripture says, thus calling Him a criminal. So God’s Son is led through the streets of Jerusalem, bearing His cross. What a procession!

Legions of angels would be willing to take the cross from Him, but no man would, and He Himself *will* and *shall* carry it. Isaac carried the wood for the sacrifice; his father Abraham had laid it on him. But here the Father’s Only-begotten bears not just the tree He shall be offered upon in the fire of God’s wrath, He also bears the unspeakably heavy burden of judgment on His soul. He *knows* the way He is going. He feels the fire in His conscience. “Murder is driven into all His bones.”

O how terrible sin is, and how serious God’s justice is! God’s Son willingly gives Himself to suffer in the place of sinners. Couldn’t this willingness be enough to take away wrath? Couldn’t the Father then be gracious to His Son without His suffering? No, the punishment *must* be endured, and the torments of condemnation then still take hold of the Beloved. Death shakes and overcomes the One who is perfectly sinless and whole. Hellfire burns in this freshest, greenest, whole wood. But what a bonfire there will be then, when the hollow, dry, chopped branches are kindled together!

The event with Simon of Cyrene shows how Jesus poured out His soul to death, how His strength had left Him (Isaiah 53:12; Psalm 38:11). Not that Satan could have stopped Him in His work of atonement, nor that anyone either could or would bear the sins of the world for Him and with Him, neither Simon of Cyrene, who had to be forced to bear the cross, nor the thieves who deserved eternal punishment themselves. But we shall see here how completely sin consumes man’s power and how completely Jesus here denies Himself the use of His almighty power, how completely He has given everything for us and how perfectly He thus atoned for us.

Simon of Cyrene had to be *forced* to bear the cross after Jesus. That I know! However, though at first we bear the cross with the greatest reluctance, we learn later on to bear it willingly. The heavier the cross for the true cross-bearers the lighter it becomes, the longer we bear it the dearer it becomes, until all our trouble and affliction become pure blessedness and everlasting songs of praise.

Lord Jesus, I thank You that You bore the accursed cross for me, so that I may bear the cross which sanctifies me in communion with Your suffering. O there is still so much in me that does not want to do it. Have mercy on me, teach me to take my cross willingly and gladly, and draw me to You. Amen.

Gladly I will lowly bow me
Willingly Thy cross to bear;
Help Thee, if they would allow me
In Thy burden yet to share.
If my eyes pour forth a flood,
I would weep with tears of blood!
Since Thou on the cross must suffer
For my life the price to offer.

Grant me ever to be yearning
Burden of Thy cross to bear,
From Thy perfect patience learning
To be falling from Thee ne’er.
If my sin may bring to me
Greatest pain and misery,
Thou wilt help me in my sighing,
In my need and in my dying.

*Kingo: Kommer, I, som vil ledsage L 328:4-5 tr. DeGarmeaux; tune: Freu dich sehr (ELH 256);
alternate hymn: The Head that once was crowned ELH 393:3.6*

153. Lent 4 – Thursday

Lord, make it calm in our ears, and make it clear to our eyes. Amen.

Matthew 27:33–34. John 19:18. Mark 15:28 And when they had come to a place called Golgotha, that is to say, Place of a Skull, they gave Him sour wine mingled with gall to drink. But when He had tasted it, He would not drink. ... There they crucified Him, and two others with Him, one on either side, and Jesus in the center. ... So the Scripture was fulfilled which says, “And He was numbered with the transgressors.”

The Lord did not want to taste anything that would numb His senses. He wanted to taste death for us with all its bitterness. And now the hour has come, now the Paschal Lamb will be slain, now the Son of Man shall be lifted up [*Joh 3:14*], now all the prophecies of His atoning suffering shall be fulfilled. Now He shall become a curse for us, as it is written: “Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree” [*Deu 21:23; Gal 3:13*]. Highly praised Son of God, my soul’s unspeakably precious Savior, I see You led up to the place of execution for criminals between two other criminals. You, who knew no sin, are made to be sin for me. But You are the same, Love and Righteousness itself, and Your heavenly purity gleams undiminished in the crucible of suffering wrath. I see You, while You let them take Your holy body and again strip off its clothing, lay it down and stretch it on the cross, and drive nails through Your hands and feet. They are fastened to the cross with spikes, these hands which were lifted to heaven only in blessing and intercession and which touched the earth only to do good. I see them raise the cross and I see You, my Jesus, the Father’s Only-begotten, the Glory of all of heaven, hanging there, a curse for us cursed sinners.

Do You love us so much, eternal, blessed God? Do You deem us worth so much that You will be made a criminal and die the death of the cross at the place of the skull [*Golgotha*] for our sake? For us wretched and wicked ones, for me and all sinners who in ourselves are only poison and gall and are mingled with those who crucified You and walked around the cross and made fun? Then take my soul in exchange. Take my heart, and fill it with Your love. Take every feeling of life, every drop of blood, every heartbeat. O take me totally and completely, and let me forever belong to You, forever serve You, and live for You, for You alone! Let everything in me that displeases You be crucified, so that I live no longer to myself, but live for You, who loved me and gave Yourself for me! Yes, precious Lord Jesus, I pray You sincerely, grant me such grace, have mercy on me, even on me, a poor sinner, Lord Jesus! You let Yourself be crucified for me, and I am Yours, dearly bought with a price. Let me never, never let go of Your cross and the nails that pierced Your hands and feet. Amen.

High upon the cross they lift Him,
Pressing hard, they make Him moan,
And with cruelty they outstretch Him,
Arms fatigued down to the bone;
Nail Him to the cursed tree,
Thus to break His spirit free,
Wickedly they leave Him hanging,
Thus His suffering more prolonging.

Ev'ryone who passes by Him,
Stand ye still and mark it well
Come yet closer, now to eye Him,
In the whole world, can you tell:
Was there ever such a Man
Under God's most wrathful ban,
Filled with pain and condemnation,
Satan's darts and sin's oblation?

My soul's Light and Consolation,
Thou art cursed for my misdeed.
Wash my shame in lamentation;
Thy dark suffering hath me freed.
For my Lord's forsakenness
Frees me from death's cruel press;
Hell's eternal death I merit,
But for me my Lord did bear it.

*Kingo: Bryder frem i hule Sukke L 329:5-7 tr. DeGarmeaux; tune: Freu dich sehr (ELH 256);
alternate hymn: When I survey the wondrous cross ELH 308:1-2*

154. Lent 4 – Friday

Lord Jesus, let us hear Your voice interceding from the cross. Amen.

Mark 15:25. Luke 23:34. Isaiah 53:12 Now it was the third hour, and they crucified Him. ... Then Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do." And they divided His garments and cast lots. ... Therefore I will divide Him a portion with the great, and He shall divide the spoil with the strong, because He poured out His soul unto death, and He was numbered with the transgressors, and He bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

The following thoughts now fall on my heart with Jesus' intercession for His murderers:

1) *Only love and mercy is found in His soul*, not a trace of anger, not a drop of bitterness. They inflict on Him the most frightful pains, but He excuses them and prays for them. He prays for the soldiers, for Pilate, the priests, and all who take part in crucifying Him. 2) *While praying for others, He pours out His blood*. Naked and bloody, clothed in shame and pain hangs the Pure and Holy One and He prays that the Father, for the sake of His suffering, might forgive those who cause His suffering. "Totally and completely surrounded by the waves of pain He sinks down into the spiritual need of His enemies and seeks to deliver them." In the service of evil they stretch out His hands and nail them to the cross, but in that very way He stretches out His hands in prayer for them. His first Word on the cross is the *word of a High Priest*. 3) *He prays and asks for full forgiveness for all*, so that it is ready when the sinner will simply seek and receive it. Here He does not pray with the condition: "If it is Your will, My Father," but completely unconditionally: "Father, forgive them!" His blood and death are a perfect, fully valid payment for the guilt of sin for the whole world. These men surely ought to know what they were doing. They have no excuse. But the Lord excuses them and provides grace for them if they would accept it.

Such is our High Priest Jesus Christ. My heart praises and worships Him. He spreads His vicarious atonement over the most hardened sinners. He takes the sins of all upon Himself, so in Him there is forgiveness for all. Many of Satan's blind instruments, whom Jesus prays for, continue in their unbelief and are lost, but it is not because there was no forgiveness to be had for them. They simply would not

repent so that Jesus' blood could cleanse them from all their sin. Thousands of Jews and Gentiles have experienced the power in the intercession of the Crucified and thank Him for it in eternal salvation.

And we joined in nailing God's Son to the cross. He died also for *our* sins. Even *we* stand under the grace of His High-Priestly intercession and can be fully assured that all our sins also are paid for and atoned for by His blood. Go in, my soul, before God's face. Receive full forgiveness for everything by the fullness of His merit, and receive the adornment of His priestly purity, patience, and pity, so that you too can stand well-pleasing before the Father and that you may love and bless your enemies. God, help and bless us for this by Your Holy Spirit. Amen.

O come and stand beneath the cross
And hear what Jesus speaks to us;
The words that from His mouth proceed
Will comfort us in times of need.

Upon the cross my Jesus lay
Despite the dragon's devious way,
The voice of grace resounded clear
With life and comfort us to cheer.

He prayed for all His enemies:
"O Father dear, forgive them this;
They know not what they do and say,
But blindly walk their sinful way."

O Jesus, pray Thou, too, for me
That I increase my strength in Thee,
My heart is weak, my eyes are blind,
But grant that I Thy light may find.

*Kingo: Kom under Jesus Kors at staa L 331:1-4 HCH 100:1-3 tr. P. C. Paulsen and DeGarmeaux (stanza 2);
tune: Herrnhut (ELH 324); alternate hymn: When I survey the wondrous cross ELH 308:3-4*

155. Lent 4 – Saturday

The kingdom belongs to the Lord. You, You are Israel's King!

John 19:19–22 Now Pilate wrote a title and put it on the cross. And the writing was: Jesus of Nazareth, The King of the Jews. Then many of the Jews read this title, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city; and it was written in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin. Then the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate, "Do not write, 'The King of the Jews,' but, 'He said, 'I am the King of the Jews.''" Pilate answered, "What I have written, I have written."

The governor wanted to ridicule the Jews who had caused him so much annoyance and pain of conscience and so shamefully turned him into their obedient servant. "Behold your King!" he said earlier, and now he puts "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews" above the head of the Crucified. But if God's providence is seen marvelously everywhere, then it is even more wonderfully seen in every detail of Jesus' suffering. Pilate's stubbornness put in his mouth an answer that is proclaimed and heard throughout the whole world! "What I have written, I have written." What stands there *shall* stand there, and *shall not* be changed: Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews, Messiah. This despised Branch of David's Root, this Jesus, who hangs there on the accursed tree, is the King over the house of Jacob, and for that reason He dies, not because He says: "I am King of the Jews," but because in truth He is. — The words, "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews", were placed over the

thorn-encircled head of the crucified Savior, as a summary of the prophecies of the Messiah as the victorious King of Israel through suffering and death.

It was written in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin. The message of the cross shall be preached not only in Hebrew, that is, the Jewish language, but also in the different languages of the Gentiles. The furious Jews forced Pilate to crucify the Lord of glory, but no cry and threat by men on earth or spirit from hell shall be able to tear this truth down from the cross or prevent it from being preached in every tongue. It shines like the sun over all the earth, this Gospel: this Man from Nazareth who hangs on the cross is *Jesus*, God's Son, Savior of the world, the King who was to come to His people, and that's why He dies. This is the reason for His death. And by His death He establishes the Kingdom. By His death He makes the prince of death powerless, and He makes the *Word of the Cross* into the sword of the kingdom.

Be a son of Jacob, an Israelite without guile, dear friend, since the fact remains that Jesus *is your King*, there with His royal saving power, stronger than all powers in heaven and earth, holding His scepter to rule and defend you. And He writes indelibly in your soul: I am your King, the kingdom belongs to Me, and you are My blessed possession.

Yes, precious Savior, Lord of glory, let it be so, and spread Your royal power over all the earth. Gather Your Israel from all peoples. Amen.

On His cross has Pilate written
Splendid title: "King of Jews!"
Envy angry hearts has bitten
All who heritage misuse.
They insist on vengeance grim,
Tearing Jesus limb from limb,
Though they make Him bloody, gory,
Yet He is the King of Glory.

On my heart imprint Thine image,
Blessed Jesus, King of grace,
That life's riches, cares, and pleasures
Have no power Thee to efface.
This the superscription be:
Jesus, crucified for me,
Is my Life, my hope's Foundation,
And my Glory and Salvation.

Kingo: Bryder frem i hule sukke L 330 ELH 593 tr. DeGarmeaux and P. O. Strømme; tune: Freu dich sehr