

0279

John 19:16-43

April 15, 2022

Good Friday

Text

So they took Jesus, ¹⁷ and he went out, bearing his own cross, to the place called The Place of a Skull, which in Aramaic is called Golgotha. ¹⁸

There they crucified him, and with him two others, one on either side, and Jesus between them. ¹⁹ Pilate also wrote an inscription and put it on the cross. It read, “Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.” ²⁰ Many of the Jews read this inscription, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city, and it was written in Aramaic, in Latin, and in Greek.

²¹ So the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate, “Do not write, ‘The King of the Jews,’ but rather, ‘This man said, I am King of the Jews.’ ” ²² Pilate answered, “What I have written I have written.”

²³ When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they took his garments and divided them into four parts, one part for each soldier; also his tunic. But the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom,

²⁴ so they said to one another, “Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it to see whose it shall be.” This was to fulfill the Scripture which says,

“They divided my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots.”

So the soldiers did these things, ²⁵ but standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother and his mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. ²⁶ When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, “Woman, behold, your son!” ²⁷ Then he said to the disciple, “Behold, your mother!” And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home.

²⁸ After this, Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said (to fulfill the Scripture), “I thirst.” ²⁹ A jar full of sour wine stood there, so they put a sponge full of the sour wine on a hyssop branch and held it to his mouth. ³⁰ When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, “It is finished,” and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

³¹ Since it was the day of Preparation, and so that the bodies would not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a high day), the Jews asked Pilate that their legs might be broken and that they might be taken away. ³² So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first, and of the other who had been crucified with him. ³³ But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. ³⁴ But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water.

³⁵ He who saw it has borne witness—his testimony is true, and he knows that he is telling the truth—that you also may believe. ³⁶ For these things took place that the Scripture might be fulfilled: “Not one of his bones will be broken.” ³⁷ And again another Scripture says, “They will look on him whom they have pierced.”

³⁸ After these things Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus, and Pilate gave him permission. So he came and took away his body.

³⁹ Nicodemus also, who earlier had come to Jesus by night, came bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy-five pounds in weight. ⁴⁰ So they took the body of Jesus and bound it in linen cloths with the spices, as is the burial custom of the Jews.

⁴¹ Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb in which no one had yet been laid.

⁴² So because of the Jewish day of Preparation, since the tomb was close at hand, they laid Jesus there.

Prayer

Introduction

There's something about us as humans where we feel this need to memorialize and to honor sacrifice.

In Washington D.C., there is the Vietnam Wall, the World War II memorial, the Korean War memorial.

There's a national World War I memorial in Kansas City, a national Civil War Memorial in Gettysburg.

Battlefields from the American Revolution and the Civil War are sights that millions of Americans visit annually.

There's a September 11 memorial and museum in New York. Nationally, there are actually more than 500 9/11 memorials.

Between memorials, museums, monuments, statues, and historical sites, we have hundreds of locations across this country where we memorialize sacrifice.

In Christianity, there is no more prominent symbol of our faith than the cross. The place where it looked like the ministry of Jesus came to its ending was where it was just beginning.

Good Friday is the day when Jesus died on the cross and it is the day when we remember the ultimate sacrifice, when we remember the greatest act of love that the world has ever seen when Jesus Christ, the son of God gave his life so that all who believe in him can have eternal life.

Today we come to the crucifixion in John 19.

On Sunday, we looked at the final events before the cross, as Pilate ended by sending Jesus to be crucified.

This evening, we will look at the crucifixion of Jesus, the death of Jesus, and the burial of Jesus.

The point of this passage is simple. Jesus died to save a fallen humanity.

Special instruction

I'll mention this at the end too but in the spirit of Good Friday, we do ask that after the service, people leave in silence.

Crucifixion

First, we look at the crucifixion of Jesus.

John begins by describing Jesus being taken to the place of his crucifixion.

So they took Jesus, ¹⁷ and he went out, bearing his own cross, to the place called The Place of a Skull, which in Aramaic is called Golgotha.

It was tradition that a person who was sentenced to Roman crucifixion would carry the top cross beam to the site of his execution.

From the other gospels, we know that at some point, Jesus had lost the ability to carry his cross beam and a man named Simon of Cyrene had to be recruited to assist him.

John adds that Jesus was taken to a place called the Place of a Skull. We're not sure if it was called that because it resembled a skull or if it had earned that nickname as being a sight of crucifixions.

There is a lot of agreement both historically and among contemporary scholars that the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem is the location of this crucifixion sight and also the tomb where the crucified Jesus would be buried.

After that short prelude, John quickly takes us to the crucifixion itself.

¹⁸ There they crucified him, and with him two others, one on either side, and Jesus between them.

John doesn't actually give us a lot of detail related to the crucifixion itself. Crucifixion was well known to his first century audience, and so a lot of gory details were not needed.

In the ancient world, execution methods were often designed to be as shameful and agonizing as possible.

John also makes mention of two others being crucified along with Jesus. All four gospels include this detail. It highlights the innocence of Jesus contrasted by the guilt of the two others crucified alongside him.

Beginning in verse 19:

¹⁹ Pilate also wrote an inscription and put it on the cross. It read, “Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.” ²⁰ Many of the Jews read this inscription, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city, and it was written in Aramaic, in Latin, and in Greek. ²¹ So the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate, “Do not write, ‘The King of the Jews,’ but rather, ‘This man said, I am King of the Jews.’ ” ²² Pilate answered, “What I have written I have written.”

In Roman crucifixions, it was not uncommon to have a written inscription of what the condemned had been convicted of.

Pilate writes: “**Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.**”

Now we’ve talked a lot about kingship in these chapters in John.

And on the cross, while Pilate puts it forth as a condemnation against Jesus, Pilate is unwittingly testifying to the truth because Jesus is in fact the king of the Jews.

In God's providence, he can still use that which is sin in accordance with his plans. God can still use the world working against him to amplify his message.

The text mentions that the inscription was written in three languages: Aramaic, Latin, and Greek.

Aramaic was the commonly spoken language in Judea. Latin was the official governmental language of Rome. Greek was the more widely spoken regional language in the Mediterranean world at that time.

When Pilate writes this - or has it written - the Jewish council is displeased. They don't want it written as a statement of fact that Jesus is the king of the Jews. They want it written that Jesus claimed to have been king of the Jews.

Perhaps as another antagonistic act against the Jews, Pilate refuses.

The Jewish people don't recognize Jesus as their king but he's crucified under the written words that he is their king.

It's also another picture of Jesus as the king who suffers.

Verses 23-24 we see the continued humiliation of Jesus on the cross as Roman soldiers gamble for his clothing :

²³ When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they took his garments and divided them into four parts, one part for each soldier; also his tunic. But the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom, ²⁴ so they said to one another, “Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it to see whose it shall be.” This was to fulfill the Scripture which says,

**“They divided my garments among them,
and for my clothing they cast lots.”**

So the soldiers did these things,

People were generally crucified naked as a furthering of the shame and humiliation.

Crucifixion was also often a public spectacle. We see that mentioned in the passage.

The condemned had no rights anymore. The fact that the guards vie for his meager possessions would not be unusual. Although John does mention that Jesus' tunic was a seamless piece and that the soldiers cast lots for it.

In John 13, when Jesus washes the feet of his disciples, Jesus lays aside his outer garment. That incident and the washing of the disciples' feet points to the humility of Jesus.

Now we covered John 13 last April, and even though it's six chapters before the crucifixion, in terms of time, it was only the night before that Jesus showed his humility to the disciples before his ultimate act of humility on the cross.

Back in our passage. In verse 24, John says that this fulfills an Old Testament prophecy - specifically from Psalm 22 - where the garments are gambled over.

As we saw with Pilate - and really with the high priest as well, we see too with the guards that though they are wicked, they are unwittingly fulfilling the divine plan.

Verse 25, we turn from those who are working against Jesus to those who are at the cross and who love Jesus.

²⁵ but standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene.

All four gospels mention women at the cross.

John and Jesus

I want to give a brief aside on these women. Stick with me for a moment here.

John mentions the mother of Jesus. Interestingly he doesn't refer to her as Mary here, or for that matter, anywhere else in his gospel. The only other place where she's referred to in this gospel is in John 2 at the wedding feast. Both here and there, she's identified simply as the mother of Jesus.

It's interesting that John's Gospel is the only gospel where Mary is never given as the name of Jesus' mother. John never mentions himself in his gospel. John never mentions his brother, the Apostle James in this gospel.

But then he mentions an obscure guard named Malchus. He mentions the former high priest, Annas.

It's interesting to consider the lists of women at the cross in the four gospels.

Matthew 27:56 says:

**Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James
and Joseph and the mother of the sons of
Zebedee.**

Mark 15:50 says:

**⁴⁰ There were also women looking on from a
distance, among whom were Mary Magdalene,
and Mary the mother of James the younger and
of Joses, and Salome.**

So you have the same two Mary's in Matthew and
Mark.

But the third woman is described differently. In Matthew, she's described as being the mother of the Sons of Zebedee. That's James and John.

Matthew says their mother was at the cross.

Mark doesn't say the mother of the sons of Zebedee. He identifies a third woman as Salome.

Keep in mind that John doesn't mention himself or his brother in his gospel.

Or his mother even though we know from Matthew that his mother is at the cross.

I am of the opinion that Salome, and the mother of the Sons of Zebedee, and the sister of Jesus' mother in John are all the same woman.

Which would mean that the Apostle John and Jesus are first cousins.

And that will be relevant in a moment.

John mentions two more women.

Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene.

Many scholars believe that Mary the wife of Clopas was actually Jesus's paternal aunt but I won't get into that whole argument.

John finishes his list by mentioning Mary Magdalene. This is the first time that John makes mention of Mary Magdalene and it matters that he introduce her here at the cross because he will also establish her in the following chapter as a witness to the risen Christ and the one who first discovers the empty tomb.

So these women, and other women are witnesses to Jesus' crucifixion.

Verses 26-27:

²⁶ When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, “Woman, behold, your son!” ²⁷ Then he said to the disciple, “Behold, your mother!” And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home.

The disciple whom Jesus loved, as we’ve discussed at other times, is John.

And Jesus gives John the task of taking care of Mary.

The historical assumption and tradition has always been that Joseph was deceased by this point.

Jesus did have siblings, but we also know during his ministry, they did not yet have faith in him.

Jesus tells Mary **woman, behold your Son.**

And he tells John **Behold, your mother.**

So Jesus entrusts Mary into the care of cousin John.

We see the concern of Jesus that he is worried about his mother's welfare even when he's facing the agony of the cross.

Jesus continues to follow the Law of the Old Testament until they very end as the fifth commandment commands to honor your mother and father. Jesus does both on the cross.

The death of Jesus

We come to our second scene. The death of Jesus.

John has moved the story forward to the final moments before Jesus dies. From Mark's gospel, we know that Jesus was on the cross for about six hours.

In verse 28, John says:

²⁸ After this, Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said (to fulfill the Scripture), “I thirst.”

Now it would stand to reason that Jesus would be thirsty what with his exposure to the elements, the duration of his crucifixion, and his loss of blood and other fluids. But John says that this points to something deeper than simply being thirsty and that it is a fulfillment of scripture.

Psalm 22:15 and 69:21 are likely references.

Now that might seem like a pretty minor point that Jesus fulfills, but the point is that until the very end of his life, Jesus has fulfilled all that was written.

Back in John. When Jesus mentions his thirst, John records in 19:29:

²⁹ A jar full of sour wine stood there, so they put a sponge full of the sour wine on a hyssop branch and held it to his mouth.

This sour wine was a cheap wine that the average citizen drank. We're not sure if it was standard to wet the mouth of the crucified but they do this for Jesus.

And then in verse 30, we see the final words of Jesus and death of Jesus.

³⁰ When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, “It is finished,” and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

It is finished.

In English, that’s three words. In Greek, it’s just one word. Tetelastai.

And that is the most significant word that has ever been uttered to the world.

It is finished.

That is the ultimate victory of Christ on the cross.

We are unrighteous. But Jesus has lived the righteous life.

Sinful people could not follow the law of God, but Christ followed it fully and completely.

We are dead in sin. Because of Jesus life and death we who are dead can have life.

God's plan to redeem a sinful world is finished.

The Jews and the Romans crucified Jesus. They thought they had won but it is Jesus who would have the victory because he died on Friday but the tomb was empty on Sunday.

At the end of verse 30, John tells us that Jesus gave up his Spirit.

Until the very end, we see Jesus in control during his passion narrative. Jesus wasn't killed. Jesus gave up his spirit. Jesus wasn't taken by Rome, he gave himself over.

That's our savior.

Giving his life so we can live.

That's the love of God. That we are sinful and that our sin does warrant a divine punishment but Jesus took that penalty for us on the cross. Jesus paid for our sins. On the cross.

I've said this before on past Good Fridays, but for people who have a low view of sin, the cross shows us the cost of sin. The cross shows us that sin was bad enough that the only way that they could be atoned for was by Jesus dying for us. If there had been another way, God would have done that.

But it is Jesus who is the perfect sacrifice. Fully God and so he is worthy to die for us and redeem us. Fully man so that he is like us in our humanity.

After his death

There's still a lot of action after his death.

Verses 31-37 talk about the treatment of the body of Christ after his death. These details matter for several reasons. Among them, to remind us that Jesus is in fact dead. We will also see John continuing to look at these events as fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies.

So you have Jesus on the cross. The two other men are still on their crosses.

It's getting later in the day and it's the time of Passover. The Jews wanted the crucifixions completed and the men to be taken off of the crosses before sundown, lest they violate the laws of Deuteronomy.

It wasn't that they suddenly cared about Jesus or these other men who were crucified but that the law of the Old Testament called for them to not leave the bodies hanging lest it curse the land.

Verse 31:

³¹ Since it was the day of Preparation, and so that the bodies would not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a high day), the Jews asked Pilate that their legs might be broken and that they might be taken away.

And so Pilate had the legs of the other two men broken to speed up their deaths.

Verse 32:

³² So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first, and of the other who had been crucified with him.

But they don't break the legs of Jesus and this will lead into two further Old Testament prophecies being fulfilled.

Verse 33:

³³ But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs.

Instead, they take a long spear and poke it through the side of Jesus to ensure that he is really dead.

Verse 34:

³⁴ But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water.

Are the blood and water here meant to be symbolic? Possible, although I take it more as John pointing to Jesus' humanity and realness of his body and of his death. Real flesh and blood, given for our sin.

John then gives us a personal note.

Again, he mentioned four women at the cross but he was there too.

³⁵ He who saw it has borne witness—his testimony is true, and he knows that he is telling the truth—that you also may believe.

As always in this gospel, he doesn't mention himself by name.

But for this one instance, the narrator of this gospel gives a personal note that he has seen these thighs and has written this account so that other people can believe.

Meditation

John saw what Jesus did. He saw the life Jesus lived and was so changed by it that John's life was transformed by Christ. And so he bore witness to the truth of Jesus for the purpose of other people believing in this savior.

Again, John had a unique position in the history of Christianity. None of us have that but all of us are in a position as followers of Jesus who have had lives impacted by Jesus to tell others about Jesus.

We naturally share good news. We naturally talk about great experiences and things we love. Has Jesus transformed your life?

There are people around us who we have opportunities to share Jesus with.

Our world memorializes its heroes. Our world glorifies its heroes. We remember sacrifices. We observe days like 9/11 and say “Never forget.” We see someone in uniform and say “thank you for your service.”

Jesus invites us to share the one truth that brings eternal life. The gospel that Jesus died on the cross for our sins. Jesus gave his life so that all who believe in him can live.

³⁶ For these things took place that the Scripture might be fulfilled: “Not one of his bones will be broken.” ³⁷ And again another Scripture says, “They will look on him whom they have pierced.”

John closes this section by referring to the fulfillment of two scriptures.

That none of the bones of Jesus were broken and that Jesus would be pierced.

We don't have time to go into a lot of details on those verses but even after the death of Jesus, the scriptures are being fulfilled.

Jesus had a life, a ministry, and even a death which were all in fulfillment of the scriptures.

We come to our third scene, and this will be our shortest scene.

The burial of Jesus

There are a few reasons why the burial matters.

Most significantly among them is the fact that Jesus is buried sets the stage for the empty tomb on the first Easter morning.

All four gospels mention that Jesus was buried. And John's Gospel will note two men who were associated with this burial. Joseph of Armimathea and Nicodemus.

³⁸ After these things Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus, and Pilate gave him permission. So he came and took away his body.

³⁹ Nicodemus also, who earlier had come to Jesus by night, came bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy-five pounds in weight.

Verse 38 informs us that Joseph of Arimathea had been fearful of the Jewish leaders. But Joseph works behind the scenes to get Pilate to allow him to bury Jesus.

From Matthew's gospel, we know that this Joseph was a wealthy man. The fact that he was able to persuade Pilate to let him take the body of Jesus also shows that he may have been influential.

John also tells us that this man had become a disciple of Jesus. Imagine for a moment being a disciple of Jesus during his ministry. Jesus was still just a young man at the height of his popularity and the length of his ministry was short lived at about three years. And then they see him brutally crucified under the Romans.

Again we know the rest of the story and that Jesus rose from the dead on Easter but to his followers, all they knew in the moment was the heartbreak and searing loss of their beloved teacher and friend.

While Joseph of Arimathea is only mentioned here in this gospel, John also mentions that Nicodemus is present.

John notes that Nicodemus **earlier had come to Jesus by night.**

That specific event is in John 3 when Nicodemus approaches Jesus to learn more about him. I would think I've probably referenced that story more than any other event in this gospel during our study of this book.

Nicodemus was a pharisee and a prestigious teacher who had been intrigued by Jesus.

We had seen Nicodemus one more time in John 7 when Jesus had been teaching at the temple and there's a backlash from the Pharisees and Nicodemus tries to diffuse the situation.

In the end, it appears as though Nicodemus too had become a follower of Jesus.

The text says that Nicodemus had brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes and that it weighed about 75 pounds.

Let's briefly flashback to John 12. John 12 is the same time in which Jesus enters Jerusalem for the final time so it's less than a week between that chapter and Jesus' death in John 19.

In John 12, Jesus is eating, and Mary, the sister of Lazarus anoints Jesus.

Mary therefore took a pound of expensive ointment made from pure nard, and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped his feet with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.

So Mary used one point of expensive ointment.

And she gets criticized for it! That it's too excessive!

⁴ But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (he who was about to betray him), said, ⁵ “Why was this ointment not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?

John 12:7-8, Jesus tells Judas to back off when he says:

“Leave her alone, so that she may keep it for the day of my burial. ⁸ For the poor you always have with you, but you do not always have me.”

When we preached from John 12, we talked about how extravagant such things could be in the ancient world and the incredible cost of a point of expensive ointment.

Nicodemus has 75 pounds.

Jesus might have died the death of a common criminal but they're giving him a burial fit for an ancient king.

If they could afford it, bodies would be anointed in spices and fragrances to take away the smell.

⁴⁰ So they took the body of Jesus and bound it in linen cloths with the spices, as is the burial custom of the Jews. ⁴¹ Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb in which no one had yet been laid. ⁴² So because of the Jewish day of Preparation, since the tomb was close at hand, they laid Jesus there.

The fact that they bound the body of Jesus in linen matters because we see those linen cloths in the tomb on Easter.

Lord willing, we'll revisit these verses in the future but for now, I want to focus on the burial tomb. John describes it a new tomb and this again points to the royal treatment that Jesus' followers give to him after his death.

And it is there that the Lord Jesus is buried.

We have covered a lot this evening.

It was a big section to try to get through in one shot but it also fits together as a cohesive narrative as it takes us through Christ's crucifixion, death, and burial.

As Jesus is crucified and dies, one of the things which is striking to me about these scenes are the people around Jesus.

You have Pilate who unwittingly testifies to the kingship of Christ. You have the Roman guards gambling over Jesus' possessions. Sinful men who do not realize that their own savior is in their midst and they are participating in his execution.

You have the two criminals on their own crosses, crucified alongside Jesus. That points us to the gospel. That Jesus is the innocent man who dies so that the guilty can be forgiven.

You have the women at the cross. Mary, the mother of Jesus. I think of the popular passages where we meet Mary at Christmastime. A faithful Jewish girl who was from nothing but who was given the once in history task of carrying the Lord and here she sees him die. Here she sees her son die.

And in the end of the passage, we're introduced to Joseph of Arimathea. A rich man. And Nicodemus, a respected Pharisees.

We see the diversity of this group who had come to Jesus and who loved him.

Something that matters in John's Gospel is the idea of witnesses. You have those who witness to Jesus during his ministry. John the Baptist, the scriptures, the works of Christ, the Holy Spirit, God himself all bear witness to Jesus.

After the resurrection, there will be this theme of seeing and believing as people witness the risen Christ.

And it shouldn't be surprising that at the cross, so much of John's attention focuses on witnesses.

Those who saw Jesus crucified, those who saw Jesus died, those who saw Jesus dead.

Witnesses to the cross.

And witnesses to the glorification of Christ on the cross as he gave up his life so that we could live.

We remember and memorialize our heroes. At this church, we try to remember that Jesus gave his life for our sins every week and to remember the good news that Jesus rose from the dead.

That's the message we need every week, every day, every hour.

That we are sinful people but we have a savior who died so we can live.

(Leave in silence)