

[12:25] Lord, please be with them. We pray for families. We pray for children, Lord, that you would help the parents of those looking after children. We particularly pray for those who are perhaps finding life difficult at this time.

May they cry to you. Oh, Lord, there is so much we can ask for, Lord. Thank you that you listen to our cries and you will answer us appropriately. In Jesus' name.

Amen. Okay. Our second song is Will Your Anchor Hold. The author of this hymn is Priscilla Owens.

She was born in Baltimore in the USA in 1829 of Scottish and Welsh blood. For over 50 years, Priscilla was actively involved in work for children, youth.

And most of her songs were therefore composed for children. It says, We have an anchor that keeps the soul. Steadfast and sure while the billows roll.

[13:34] Billows are huge waves. Fasten to the rock which cannot move. Ground in firm and deep in the Saviour's love. Let's sing together. Let's sing together. Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

[16:57] To the God which shall all grow Round in earth and dear In the Savior's blood Let's read our passage tonight.

So if you have a Bible, whether that is physically or whether you have a tablet, please open it up to Matthew 27.

In the evenings we've been going through Matthew and we're now in the latter stages of this book. Matthew 27, verse 45 to 56.

Matthew 27, verse 45 to 56. Let's read the word of God. From the sixth hour until the ninth hour, darkness came over all the land.

About the ninth hour, Jesus cried out in a loud voice, Eloi, Eloi, lama, sabachthani, which means, my gods, my gods, why have you forsaken me?

[18:12] When some of those standing there heard this, they said, he is calling Elijah. Immediately one of them ran and got a sponge. He filled it with wine vinegar, put it on a stick, and offered it to Jesus to drink.

The rest said, now leave him alone. Let's see if Elijah comes to save him. And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit.

At that moment, the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook and the rock split.

The tombs broke open and the bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life. They came out of the tombs and after Jesus' resurrection, they went into the holy city and appeared to many people.

When the centurion and those with him who were guarding Jesus saw the earthquake and all that had happened, they were terrified and exclaimed, surely he was the son of God.

[19:33] Many women were there, watching from a distance. They had followed Jesus from Galilee to care for his needs. Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of Zebedee's sons.

This is the word of the Lord. May he bless us tonight. Let's pray before I speak. Heavenly Father, we come to your words. Lord, thank you that you speak to us through your word, Lord.

Please help us not to be distracted, but to hear your voice clearly for me speaking and for all those that are listening. Thank you that your word gives us life.

It encourages us, it rebukes us, it trains us so that we might be fully equipped for our Christian lives. So Lord, by your spirit, please speak to our hearts and minds and change us by your holy words in Jesus' name.

Amen. So whose death has been the most notable in history? In my generation, maybe Lady Diana in the 1990s.

[20:51] Perhaps you remember that. I remember my mother was in tears when she saw the funeral, the coffin, going through the streets of London.

It was a very emotional day for many of us. Perhaps it's Nelson Mandela or Margaret Thatcher, Billy Graham. Normally, we think of these famous and notable people that have had a profound effect on our society.

their own national or international mourning and their reflection on that person's life. The number of deaths registered in England and Wales in the week ending the 2nd of October 2020 was 9,945. COVID-19 is on the rise again and there is more death. Death can be ugly. It's a sad thing. Some people call it a monster.

It's an unnatural feeling of sudden loss. Last week was a bittersweet one for us as a church. We learnt of the death of our dear friend Chris Fry who was a model Christian.

[22:10] He fought the fights. He ran the race. He didn't give up. He passed through the valley of the shadow of death. and reached home. We thank the Lord for him.

He was such a blessing to so many. In our culture death is rather hidden. It's a bit of a taboo. An elephant in the room. We don't like talking about it. Personally I have never seen a dead body with the naked eye and I'm 41 years old.

In Victorian times death was a daily weekly monthly event. You would see it starkly. It's a reality that we all have to face death.

Well tonight we read about the greatest death of all time. None parallels it in human history. history. It's the most ugliest scene you have ever imagined and yet it is the most beautiful.

[23:20] In the past few weeks we have been studying the accounts of Christ's crucifixion the events leading up to that particularly the mockery that Christ faced and the huge irony of the fact that it really was the king of the Jews who the Romans and the Jews were ridiculing although they didn't realise it.

Last week we saw the camera lens panning on all the bystanders those that were around the cross and their reactions to the events.

And in this passage tonight we are looking at Christ's last hours before his death. So my first point is abandoned for me abandoned for me verse 45 to 50.

I'd like you to imagine the scene as if you were there all those years ago at Calvary. In verse 45 you see that at noon 12 o'clock a seemingly supernatural darkness covers the land.

Jesus is hanging there on the cross having been beaten flogged his back probably lacerated torn and scarred blood flows down a cruel crown of thorns piercing his head having been spat at and ridiculed intensely treated subhumanly like an animal you look at that crimson body on the cross and you remember the prophecy of Isaiah 52 saying his appearance was so disfigured beyond that of any man and his form marred beyond human likeness you cannot recognize him and when the sun should be in full strength there is utter blackness instead it stops shining you feel the heavy gloom this is no ordinary day something deep mysterious is happening this isn't an eclipse because there is no full moon at

[26:08] Passover you stare into the heavy dark sky and remember Amos 8 verse 9 in that day declares the Lord I will make the sun go down at noon and darken the earth in broad daylight a shudder goes through your body this is what was prophesied you recall the Torah darkness was one of the plagues sent by God against the Egyptians in Exodus 10 then the Lord said to Moses stretch out your hand toward the sky so that darkness spreads over Egypt darkness that can be felt so Moses stretched out his hand toward the sky and total darkness covered Egypt for three days no one could see anyone else or move about for three days yet all the

Israelites had light in the places where they lived here in Jerusalem it's three hours of darkness the ridiculing stops and there is an eerie silence you gaze up to the cross Jesus is suffering alone totally abandoned by everyone even his close followers you are thinking this must be a sign of judgment God's righteous judgment this is punishment for something then at around three o'clock Christ cries out in a loud voice verse 46 my

God my God why have you forsaken me you realize he's quoting Psalm 22 verse 1 David's cry for help what is happening here why does he feel abandoned he is bearing the sin of the world upon his shoulders he is feeling the full anger of God's wrath upon him for sin it seems God the father has withdrawn his comfortable presence for a time is Satan tormenting him fulfilling Genesis 3 16 15 he will crush your head and you Satan will strike his heel another part of Isaiah comes to mind Isaiah 53 4 to 5 he bore our griefs and carried our sorrows that he was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities that the chastisement of our peace was laid upon him by his stripes we are healed Christ is atoning for sin he's paying the price redeeming humanity propitiation for iniquity God is now no longer angry with me God is appeased because what of Christ what Christ has done he's taken that wrath for me wow what mercy what love for me and in verse 50

Jesus cries out again probably John 19 verse 30 it is finished finally sin has been dealt with we are free the mission of Christ has been completed Matthew 1 21 you are to give him the name Jesus because he will save his people from his sins finally he gives up his spirit voluntarily different from any man's death we cannot do this we die involuntarily we cannot determine when we go however Christ gives up his life for mankind a huge victory over Satan is accomplished never has there been such a last breath than there was

[31:39] Christ's to the majority of the onlookers there it means nothing but a usually cruel Roman death but as someone later states that death discharged the full debt the mighty debt which sinners owe to God and through open the door of life to every believer Christ redeems us from the curse of the law by becoming the curse for us for it is written cursed is anyone who is hung on a pole brothers and sisters let's come back to 2020 Jesus Christ did that for you and for me he was a substitute for you you and

I should have been there on the cross as people who have rejected God and rightly deserve to face his full wrath what is even more remarkable about this is that Christ was sinless he had never wronged anyone spotless yet made a vile sinner because of our wrongdoing what love picture that famous scene as the Titanic the ship that sailed from Southampton is sinking all those people are bored and some altruistic person gives you their place in the lifeboat or you're handed that life jacket here you can live

I'll die what love Christ knows the feeling of abandonment you can cry to God for help perhaps tonight you're feeling that way perhaps you feel there is no God but there is he's there for you with outstretched arms he loves you how do you feel about this scene when you look up to the cross does it make you thank God for what he has done for you you put in there does it make you not want to sin how often this week this last week have you thanked God for the cross this week thank God for the cross we should never forget this brothers and sisters this should be a daily remembrance my second point is access for me what does

Christ's death do for me incredibly as well as deleting sin it gives us access to the holy of holies the presence of God look at the consequence of Christ's death in verse 51 at that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom the earth shook and the rocks split visualize this moment it's 3pm and you are a priest in the temple in Jerusalem just about to make the evening sacrifice as you normally do then all of a sudden a super thick enormous curtain that separates you from the presence of God rips from top to bottom what on earth is happening you almost faint now there is access to

God the old covenant is over the new has come no longer are we separated from God we can now approach him with confidence because of his blood access for me this divide between Jew and Gentile has been broken the new covenant in Jesus blood has come to pass we now do not need any intermediaries to access God Christ is our high priest he is also the sacrifice behold the lamb who takes away the sin of the world Hebrews 6 19 we have this hope as an anchor for the soul firm and secure it enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain we sang about it friends we have direct access to God because of the cross of Calvary hallelujah it's like you have 24 7 access to the queen or the president you don't have to go for any rigmarole protocols you know them personally you have their number what a privilege friends no matter where you are at any time we have access to God and lastly my third point new life for me new life for me let's read 51b to verse 54 the earth shook and the rocks split the tombs broke open and the bodies of many holy people who had died

were raised to life they came out of the tombs and after

[38:43] Jesus' resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many people when the centurion and those with him who were guarding Jesus saw the earthquake and all that had happened they were terrified and exclaimed surely he was the son of God brothers and sisters this is a picture of new resurrected life whether the tombs did break open and dead people were raised and appear to many is debated Matthew could be commenting on the future resurrection when Christ comes back and all those that have died are brought back to life the new resurrection Christ has already started this motion and he will finalize it when he comes back

I think both answers are fine either way most of the commentators I have read agree with the literal view that this did happen there is a lovely scene if you take the former view as saints from the old testament perhaps the prophets or perhaps they were people that had recently died meet new testament believers the old and the new the text seems to read like this using the past tense there was certainly an earthquake in verse 54 we see the centurion and those with him were terrified here we see God's power over creation it begs the question though what happened to these resurrected people after this event did they go back to their graves that would seem strange perhaps they didn't have new bodies perhaps it was their original one why did they appear after Christ's own resurrection well that goes hand in hand with

Corinthians 15 1 Corinthians 15 where the Pauline text says the fruits Christ being the fruits of them that slept he comes first there is no other record of this happening in the gospels whatever view you take what we can see is that Christ's death produces new life and this isn't just any new life this is eternal life resurrected life new bodies for we believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him to end C.S.

Lewis in his book The Last Battle from the Chronicles of Narnia puts it like this when Aslan speaks to the Pevensie children while they'll never be leaving Narnia there was a real railway accident said Aslan softly your father and mother and all of you are as you used to call it in the shadow lands dead the term is over the holidays have begun the dream is ended this is the morning and as he spoke he no longer looked to them like a lion but the things that began to happen after that were so great and beautiful that I cannot write them and for us this is the end of all stories and we can truly say that they are all lived happily ever after but for them it was only the beginning of the real story all their life in this world and all their adventures in

Narnia had only been the cover and the title page now at last they were beginning chapter one of the great story which no one on earth has read which goes on forever in which every chapter is better than the one before the resurrection life is far better greater more glorious than life now far from death being the end of our life it is the gateway to an outstanding new life a life in which every chapter is better than the one before yes to live is Christ and to die is gain let us pray heavenly father we thank you for what we've looked at tonight thank you that you were abandoned for us forsaken!

[45:10] forsaken for us that you died on the cross so horribly that we can never fathom what you went through but it was awful and yet it was so beautiful that you have now given us eternal life our sins are forgiven that we have our consciences cleansed we can walk with our head high knowing that we have a great savior thank you there is now access for me we can now come into your presence wherever we are because of Christ the curtain is torn into and we thank you for the new life that you give us and the resurrected life that one day we will enjoy we look forward to that moment when the shadows flee in Jesus name amen blessing our last song together how deep the father's love for us 426 if you have the hymn book behold the man upon a cross my sins upon his shoulders ashamed I hear my mocking voice call out among the scoffers it was my sin that held him there until it was accomplished his dying breath has brought me life I know that it is finished let's sing together how deep the father's love for us how vast beyond all measure that he should give his only son to make a wretch his treasure how great the pain of searing loss the father

turns his face away as wounds which mother chosen one bring many sons to
glory behold the man upon a cross my sin upon his shoulders ashamed i
hear my mocking voice call out among the scoffers it was my sin that held
him there until it was accomplished his dying breath has brought me life
i know that it is finished i will not boast in anything no gifts no power
no wisdom but i will boast in jesus christ his death and resurrection why
should i gain from his reward i cannot give an answer but this i know
with all my heart his wounds have paid my ransom some

To be continued...