

Good Friday

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[0 : 00] As I said at the beginning, the Apostle Paul, one of the writers of the New Testament, reminded the believers in Galatians that before their very eyes Jesus Christ had been publicly portrayed as crucified.

And so it is something we have done today by reading these passages out together. What is your response to this death of Jesus, his crucifixion?

Mark has described the mockery of Jesus in these verses. The soldiers, the passers-by, the religious leaders, they mocked him and treated him so badly and abused him.

Mark also describes the misunderstanding of the people who heard what he said as he cried out, Eloi, Eloi, lama, tabakfani, and thought, he's calling Elijah to see what happens. There's mockery, there's misunderstanding, but at the very end, in those last few lines, Mark describes a tremendous miracle taking place in one man at the cross.

It's a miracle because this is a Roman centurion, the very man who has overseen the crucifixion of Jesus himself. Well, the miracle comes in those last few verses, doesn't it? If you look on the screen, let me read them to you again.

[1 : 44] Jesus let out a loud cry and breathed his last. Then the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom.

When the centurion, who was standing opposite the dead Jesus, saw the way he breathed his last, he said, truly this man was the son of God.

There's the miracle at the cross. You see three things very simply in those lines. You see the cry that Jesus makes, the curtain being torn in two, and then this centurion's miraculous confession. He's the son of God. First of all, there's the cry. Of course, this is the second cry that Jesus calls out. He's already called out, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

But the cry at the end there, this loud cry from Jesus, is as he breathes his last and dies.

Sometimes we forget that moment. He dies.

[2 : 56] Jesus, the king, the Messiah, has not saved himself. Jesus, the Messiah, has not called out to heaven for help, for Elijah to come and take him down.

Jesus cries a loud cry and breathes his last. The king is dead. How does that create a miracle?

Well, it is this, that when the centurion sees it and hears it, deeply moves him, and he begins to miraculously see what others around have mocked or misunderstood.

Jesus is the son of God. You see, rather than what would normally happen, a slow, whimpering struggle with death, over many hours and even days, the centurion sees Jesus' suffering coming to a climactic conclusion.

He cries, a loud cry, and breathes his last. Mark explains this as he focuses straight away to the curtain back in the temple in Jerusalem.

[4 : 28] Mark wants us to be in no doubt as to the significance of this moment when Jesus cries the moment Jesus dies. And so Mark turns our eyes away from the now limp and lifeless body of the crucified Messiah to the great curtain in the temple in Jerusalem that separated the holy of holies, the presence of God, from his unholy people.

The great curtain that acted as a great no-entry sign that said to God's people, keep away, God is holy, and you are sinners. As Jesus cries and breathes his last, the curtain of the temple is torn in two, from top to bottom.

Who's doing that? From top, from heaven to earth. God is just as Jesus said, and we read earlier, that the Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom, a freedom price for many.

He's finished. And so by ripping the curtain in two, God in heaven declares through the work of his Son that now the ransom price is paid.

Now there is freedom through his blood. Now there is the forgiveness of sins. Now the riches of my grace are poured out. The cry leads to the curtain torn in two.

[6 : 11] And of course then that leads to the miraculous confession by the centurion, the very last line. We read when the centurion who stood opposite the dying and now dead Jesus, when he saw the way that Jesus breathed his last with this loud cry, he said, truly, this man was the Son of God.

The Son of God. Yesterday morning, I was up by Patchham Mill on the downs there walking our dog. And there was this really thick mist that had descended.

Do you remember that yesterday? And he just covered the downs. And at one point, I threw the tennis ball and Albus the dog, boom, he was gone. Completely lost in the mist.

I couldn't see him at all. But then, you know, as the sun began to come up, the mist began to clear. And out he came, bounding towards me with the ball in his mouth for the joy and happiness.

In Mark's gospel, especially here at the cross, the mist is down. The mist is down over many people's hearts and lives today in Brighton.

[7 : 30] people treat Jesus, the man, just like they treated him on the cross, misunderstanding him and even mocking him.

But as the centurion saw the way Jesus breathed his last, a miracle took place in that man. The mist began to clear.

As Jesus was portrayed as crucified before his very eyes, he looked and he saw the Son of God. The Son of God.

I have every expectation that the same miracle will take place even here as before our eyes, Jesus Christ has we believe faithfully and publicly being portrayed as crucified.

Mock him, misunderstand him no more. He came not to be served but to serve and to give his life as the ransom payment, the freedom payment, the forgiveness payment for many.

[8 : 50] And this is the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Repent and believe. Christian, make sure you continue to do that.

Don't let the mist descend. See the glory of Jesus and learn how to serve in his footsteps. Amen. Amen. Amen.