

John 19:16b-30

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[0 : 00] John chapter 19, verses 16b through 30. Please stand for the reading of God's word. So they took Jesus, and he went out, bearing his own cross, to the place called the place of a skull, which in Aramaic is called Golgotha.

There they crucified him, and with him two others, one on either side, and Jesus between them. Pilate also wrote an inscription and put it on the cross.

It read, Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews. 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.

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. Pilate answered, What I have written, I have written.

When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they took his garments and divided them into four parts, one part for each soldier, also his tunic.

[1 : 13] But the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom. 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. But standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother and his mother's sister Mary, the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene.

When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, Woman, behold your son. Then he said to the disciple, Behold your mother.

And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home. After this, Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said to fulfill scripture, I thirst.

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. When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, It is finished.

[2 : 19] And he bowed his head and gave up his spirit. This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. Amen. Well, good morning to all of us here at the loft and to those who are situated in the living room all across really this country.

Two things I wanted to just mention before we turn to the Bible together. The first is this past eight days, there have been two baptisms.

And I wanted to make you aware because in the past, historically, we've assembled as a congregation out at Promontory Point with, you know, a hundred or so of us witnessing a baptism. And given these times, we're unable to do that. And so if you run across King Tan or Jake Meeks, do rejoice with them.

They went into the water and emerged out of the water, really emblematic of the new life that is taking place in their hearts. And so King Tan and Jake Meeks, grateful for you guys.

[3 : 42] And secondly, as we look ahead to the fall, there have been some questions about what church will look like for us going forward. Now, many of you are aware that we have acquired a building at 62nd and Woodlawn that is undergoing a year of renovation.

So we won't be able to move in until September of 21. But in the meantime, we've had a committee of four individuals that have been exploring feasible options for us as a congregation.

Feasible, safe, wise, and cautious. So two things to be in prayer for. We are hoping that we will be able to congregate outside for a few weeks, beginning as soon as possible, given a space.

And so keep that in your prayer. There are two locations we are thinking through. They are outside, very open. And we can gather with lawn chairs and masks.

And we can do our best to amplify sound. Of course, the services will be broadcast over Zoom. And so if you're unable to meet physically, you'll still be able to be with us virtually.

[4 : 59] And secondly, there is a large auditorium that we are in, favorable conversation with a church in the neighborhood. The auditorium seats about 800.

And so we are hoping that sometime in the fall, a lease will be signed and we can gather, of course, at a very safe distance, just given the size of the auditorium.

So those are two things to keep in prayer as a way of update as we go into the fall. So let me pray for us as we turn to the Bible together. Father, Father, we come to your word this morning.

It is a mighty word. And you are a mighty God. And we are a feeble people. And so would you impart life to us? Would it be food that nourishes?

Would it be water that quenches? Would it be peace that, in a time where we are restless and anxious and uncertain?

[6 : 03] Amen. So go with us in this hour, we pray. We ask these things for Jesus' sake. Amen. Amen. The end of life. The end of life. Unpredictable.

Often untimely. Undesirable for many. How will we die? Who will be around? What will be at stake? I've pondered it. And I'm guessing many of us have. What needs to be said? Perhaps it's a grim way to enter a new week this morning.

But this morning we're given access to witness the death of a man. Albeit he is no mere man, for it is the Lord Jesus. And from the Bible we are aware that there have been seven statements given by Jesus from the cross in the Gospels.

Of the seven said by Jesus while on the cross, John, our writer, gives us four of them. As life expires, what will Jesus say?

[7 : 13] As one breath shortens, what will he utter? As Jesus enters into death, what will the Son of God speak?

If this is one of your first times reading a Gospel writer on the death of Jesus, you may be struck by its brevity. Beginning in verse 17, there you have it. Jesus is bearing his cross.

He's leaving, he's bearing his cross. And by the end of verse 30, he has bowed his head. Thirteen verses, and Jesus is gone.

There are various ways to move through this text, but as I spent quite some time in it, I want to propose that John the writer is leading us by a sequence of object lessons.

He is teaching through the use of visual aids. He wants us to envision really three physical objects as we walk by this scene.

[8 : 15] As we accompany Jesus while he dies. Three physical objects. An inscription, a tunic, and a branch.

An inscription, a tunic, and a branch. And these objects collectively will demonstrate for you and I that the cross depicts Jesus, the King, securing life for the people of his kingdom.

The cross secures life for you and I. And as Jesus submits his very own life, he is seizing and securing our eternal life.

Three things that we'll navigate through our time. Firstly, an inscription, beginning in verse 16 through 22. Jesus has been delivered over to be crucified.

He has already been flogged and subject to beating and mockery. He has been humiliated and his rejection by his people is complete. He has come to his own people, John has told us earlier, and his own people did not receive him.

[9 : 24] And beginning in verse 17, he sets out of the city of Jerusalem. He's bearing the horizontal cross beam of the cross. Historians tell us that the vertical beam stood fixed at the execution site.

And there he bears his horizontal beam to the place of the skull, Golgotha. Verse 18 narrates what happens to Jesus.

With minimal commentary and brevity, there they crucified him. That's it. That's all John gives us. And you may be asking, well, what about the gore?

Where do they put the nails? Are they in the wrist or are they in the hand? You know, what was the condition Jesus was in? You may be curiously asking. We don't know.

We're not sure. Perhaps the original readers knew all the details. Crucifixions were not uncommon. And they did not need to be retold. Perhaps it was so horrific, John didn't want to recount them.

[10 : 27] We can only wonder why John left out all the details of fastening our Savior to an instrument of torture and death.

Instead, John does something quite surprising. He diverts our attention from the man on the cross to the sign above the cross.

There's an inscription that reads, Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews. The inscription historically is used to announce the crime of the victim.

It's used to publicly shame the victim, but also to make every bystander aware of why that person was fastened to that instrument of death.

The charge was posed by Pilate, and it drew opposition from the Jews. They disputed over the wording of the crime. The Jews didn't want anyone to think that Jesus was their king.

[11:26] They didn't want any perception. Rather, they wanted Pilate to rewrite the sign and say, no, no, no, he claimed to be our king, but he's not actually our king. I mean, if you've been following John closely, at no time did Jesus actually claim to be a king or a rival to Caesar.

Rather, for the Jews, he had not made himself a king, but he had made himself out to be the son of God, according to 19 verse 7. He wasn't their king.

He was actually their God. Pilate was certainly asserting his authority in the pronouncement, and what I've written, I have written. Pilate wanted it to be clear that they were under his jurisdiction.

The only king that would ever be king was Caesar, and any king that would dare propose a new throne would not be tolerated. Caesar would be their king, and the cross was to reinforce that statement.

All rival kings were shamed in the empire. It was okay to humiliate Jesus, but the Jews didn't want to be humiliated. The Jews wanted to be distanced from Jesus.

[12:36] Don't say that bloody mess is our king. He is not our king. We don't want to be associated with him. And so John provides an observation. Interestingly, John provides an observation that none of the other gospel writers note.

The inscription was worded in three different languages. One writer has put it this way. It was an international inscription. Recorded in Aramaic, in Latin, and in Greek.

Every bystander could read it. If you were passing through Jerusalem, which many were, it was the time of Passover. So certainly there were many Jews from around the region reassembling.

And we can only deduce that with the influx of population, Rome might have said, well, we need a few more soldiers there as well. Many were in town.

Aramaic was the common language of the region. Latin dominated the realm of law, authority, and Roman rule. Greek was the language of the empire, the lingua franca, so to say.

[13:43] And Rome's objective was to put up the crime in multiple languages to serve to warn the populace and wield the empire's power.

Everyone needs to know Caesar is king. Whether you speak Aramaic, Latin, or Greek. Well, for you and I, the reader, we are able to discern that Pilate's unwavering decision to leave the sign-up is actually incredibly ironic.

The premier religious leader, Caiaphas, early on, has already stated that the death of this man would be better for the nation.

We've already seen in John's gospel that people speak better than they know. And here we have not the leading premier religious figure in Jerusalem, but the leading premier political figure in Jerusalem.

Thinking he's mocking the Jews and humiliating Jesus. All the while, the sign is true.

[15:04] You and I know he is the king of the Jews. But from all appearances, he is no king at all. He is in no position of power, it appears. He is not sitting on a leather chair behind an executive desk on a high floor overlooking the city's skyline.

He is not emerging from a private jet to the applause of a crowd. He is certainly not behind a lectern before a chamber of political leaders giving a speech.

He is in no Oval Office. You see, the picture that Pilate sees is a pitiful figure that he has just put to death, puny and powerless.

Yet, unbeknownst to Pilate, he has just fastened the Son of God to a cross. And this king reigns regardless of where he's situated.

You need to know. You need to know. We need to know. Jesus needs no office to reign. He needs no leather executive seat.

[16:16] He doesn't even need a throne to reign. He needs no crown, no jet, no chauffeur, no standing army, no visible military might.

Why? Because he's been appointed king forever. That God himself, in Psalm 2, he said, I have set my king. And while the nations rage, while the kingdoms and kings battle, God laughs because he

set his king.

He reigned as he wandered through the Galilean hillside with no place to lay his head. He reigned when he didn't have the coinage to pay the taxes, so Peter had to go fishing.

He reigned as he descended into the city, or actually ascended into the city on the back of a colt, not a chariot. And here is the outrageous claim of Christianity that Christ reigns regardless of how it appears.

You're thinking COVID. You're thinking remote learning. You may be thinking social disruption, election year, unrest, poverty, war, famine, fire.

[17 : 36] Remember, the Bible comes down and says, amongst all of that, you may be looking for a leader. And the Bible says, here is your king.

He reigns. He reigns when we suffer loss. He reigns when we succeed. And I can go on and on and on. And when it appears that Christ has succumbed to the ploy of the Jews, crushed under the power of Pilate, the laughing stock of the crowd, the spectacle of bystanders, as he is being executed, he reigns.

And no other leader, no other individual reigns in this way. You take the mightiest man and throw him behind bars, and sadly, a couple of our governors have ended up there.

They don't rule from behind bars. You throw Jesus behind a sealed grave, and he still reigns. Wow, I'm excited.

I'm too excited. John's declaration is from the cross. We see the king enthroned and drawing subjects to himself. It is a universal summons.

[18 : 56] The inscription is the international announcement. Everyone needs to know. Greek, Aramaic, or Latin speaking. You all need to know English, Mandarin, Spanish, French, whatever you speak, the inscription is there.

It's international. Jesus reigns. And God has set his king over all the earth, and his name is Jesus. Pilate believes he's exercising power when he is just God's pawn.

The inscription. Whoa. I'm excited. I don't know if I can get it. An inscription. An inscription.

Secondly, a tunic. 23 through 27.

John shifts us from the inscription above Jesus to another object before the cross, namely a tunic. Customarily, the executioners were entitled to the last earthly possessions of the one being executed.

Arguably, Jesus' only earthly possession was about to be stripped from him. It was his outer garment. And there's some discussion over this.

[20 : 10] How was this split into fourth? So you could think of an outer robe split into fourth at the seams. Some have also speculated that it wouldn't be beneficial to split a garment four ways, because then no one could wear it.

So they have proposed that the garment actually being divided would have included his head covering, his belt, and his sandals. And therefore, you could split those multiple ways and still retain the use.

However, when they get to the inner garment, they're torn. The inner garment, the tunic, is seamless. It appears to be a single piece.

And it would be difficult to split. So the soldiers, the four soldiers, decide to cast lots for it. The soldiers are simply following military practice.

And unbeknownst to them, they are fulfilling messianic prophecy. John represents them as oblivious to what's going on. There, the Son of God is hanging before them.

[21 : 16] Yet they're holding a tunic, casting lots to see who would get it. See, John wants you and I to know that they may be oblivious. But all of Scripture is actually coming to a fruition here in the cross.

So he cites Psalm 22, verse 18. Humanly speaking, if you view the cross, it's a cosmic failure. Your king is dead. It's a premature death.

Given 2020, we've seen, I don't say it laughingly, but we've seen, you know, Black Mamba, Black Panther pass. And as we see these cultural athletic icons pass, our judgment is they died prematurely.

They had so much more life to live at the age of 41 and 43. All the good they were doing. And here, you can apply the same to Jesus.

He's dying at 33. It's too early. But it's actually according to script. From all earthly appearances, it's as if this revolution failed.

[22 : 25] But biblically speaking, it's actually fulfillment. It's not failure. It's fulfillment. God is not failing. He's fulfilling his plan. Unthwarted.

Undeterred. Unhindered. And in contrast to these four soldiers, you have verse 25. But standing at the cross of Jesus were four women.

The picture is a contrast. As the soldiers cast lots for Jesus' undergarments, the women have cast their eyes upon Jesus. And in verse 26, we hear Jesus speak for the first time.

He looks upon his mom and he directs her attention to the disciple whom he loved, which many will say is John, likely John the writer. So he has this eyewitness account. Jesus then looks at John the writer and directs his attention to his mother and says, behold, your mother.

You see, the section on the tunic is showing that Jesus' life is being empty. His physical possessions are being stripped of him.

[23 : 33] We see the loss of property and possessions. And now we behold the stripping of relationships. The grief that comes from the loss of loved ones. Jesus is no longer able to be the object of his mother's affection.

And he will no longer be able to care for his mom. Yet there is more at work in this text than merely Jesus' compassion for his mom. As Jesus is dying, he's actually reorienting, reorienting all of human relationships.

It is to say that in Jesus' death, our human relationships change. Blood relations are no longer, would no longer be the primary relationship.

But all of a sudden, new relationships emerge because Jesus has died. I need to spend some time unfolding this. It is often thought that our earthly and our familial relationships are the most substantial relationships we can experience.

They are important all throughout the Bible. And that's why later on in the New Testament, there's a talking about what marriage should look like, how moms and dads should treat their kids, and setting the home life orderly.

[25 : 00] The Bible is replete with passages that affirm the value and the centrality of the home. Yet Jesus is actually offering an alternative vision of family.

It's grander and more significant. In these words he utters from the cross, Jesus is establishing his new family that wouldn't be founded on blood lineage, but on his work upon the cross.

His family would not emerge from natural birth or heritage. Instead, this is illustrative of what John has told us earlier in his gospel.

Jesus came to his own, namely the Jews, and they rejected him. But to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born not of blood, nor of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but born of God.

In some way, John is saying, this is what happened to me. Mary was not my mother. But when Jesus was fastened on the cross, she became my mother.

[26 : 13] I became her son. And the blood relations, we had different families, but all of a sudden, God is bringing together this family. And you may remember, I mean, remember in Mark's gospel, Jesus is off healing people, and then his family go, he's crazy.

He's nuts. And they come running and trying to get Jesus out of the crowd, and the crowd comes to Jesus, and, hey, Jesus, your mother and your brothers are trying to get you.

They're looking for you. And you remember what Jesus said? He's looking at his followers. These are my mother.

These are my brothers, those who do the will of God. You see, when the king summons his people, we are not only people in a kingdom, we're a family in a household.

And this is what Jesus is doing. John is testifying that when I came to know Jesus, I was not only born anew, but I was given a new family, one that is substantive and enduring.

[27 : 25] In Christ, we are a faith family forever. I can look at the men and women in this room and call them brothers and sisters, to the older ones, fathers and mothers, to the younger ones, really sons and daughters.

We are a covenant family. It challenges some of us who see this congregation as a mere peer group or a social club or a peripheral relationship.

Why do we log in to greet one another in Zoom? Because behind that screen is a brother or sister for whom Christ died.

Jesus died to form this family and we too often have neglected her to our shame. I have heard people say, the church plays second fiddle to my family, which I'm not quite sure that's what the New Testament communicates.

We are to be a family that expresses deep love for one another so onlookers are banging on our doors to get in. We are to be a place where unmarried singles feel that they are in a community that exceeds any earthly relationship.

[28 : 46] We are to be a place where the orphan, the outcast, the downcast, and the shun are welcomed. When earthly families reject an individual, the church should stand up and say, Jesus loves you.

We are to become a family of this sort. And I can attest that there are people that I walk with that they share this.

They're nomads in life. They're products of dysfunction. And all of a sudden, they find solace in our company. Why? Not because we're spectacular people. We're actually quite not.

But Jesus spectacularly saves us. As the soldiers divided his garments, Jesus was uniting his people.

While they're casting lots for his tunic, Jesus was casting a new family who would look to him as king. An inscription, a tunic, and finally, a branch.

[29 : 58] A branch. Verses 28 to 30. Finished. Finished is the word you need to highlight, star, memorize in this section.

In verse 28, we're told that Jesus is well aware that all was finished. In verse 30, he cries, it is finished.

In the final moments of Jesus' life, he is fulfilling the scriptures and finishing the task. It is as if Jesus, I just picture, he has this mental checklist checklist in his mind.

His life's to-do list. I don't know if, I have one of those. I don't have a life to-do list. I have like, if I could just have my day's to-do list together. But here is Jesus' mental checklist comprised of the entire Hebrew scriptures.

39 Old Testament books. And there he is checking off verse by verse, line by line, completing the promises he made, God made to the patriarchs, completing the prophecies and the visions that he gave to the prophets, achieving the expectations of all the people.

[31 : 14] Check, check, check, check. And he gets his final checkbox right there. Psalm 69, 21.

What's left for me to do? Oh yeah, I'm thirsty. I thirst. And there's the final checkbox. And immediately he checks that and the sequence of events unfolds.

The Bible tells us that there, beside the cross, is sour wine. Sour wine.

Upon hearing his statement that he's thirsty, the soldiers serve him sour wine, saturating a sponge from a hyssop branch. whether this is an act of mercy or mockery, we're unsure.

It could have been a drink that the soldiers did drink, simply for pleasure and hydration, or it could have been a type of anesthetic to prolong the suffering by appeasing Jesus' agony.

[32 : 20] John simply records that what we are seeing is actually a storyboard. He's already seen this storyboard. You know what a storyboard is, right?

If you get into film, the final product is actually crafted by a storyboard. And here we're seeing the final product of the cross. But the entire Old Testament is the storyboard.

And there John says, hey, I've seen this sketch already from Psalm 69. The thirst sketch.

And here he concludes. I thirst comes from Psalm 69. And it's interesting and noteworthy. But as we wrap up this point, I want to say this.

John wants us not necessarily to focus on the statement, which is intriguing because it fulfills and finishes Jesus' work.

[33 : 26] day. But he's wanted us to remember that it's Friday afternoon. It's Friday afternoon. The sun is setting, but it's no ordinary Friday.

This is Passover Friday. Well, how do you know it's a big deal thing? Because five times in two chapters, John has gone to incredible lengths to tell you what day it is.

1828, 1839, 1914, 1931, 1942. It is Passover.

It is the day of preparation. Five times in two chapters, John wants you to know what day it is and why. Because it is high holiday for Judaism.

them. They were to recount how they were delivered from oppression, how they were saved from slavery, how they were purchased to be free, a free people before God.

[34 : 33] And I'll paraphrase it for the sake of time, but you might recall the story or you could watch the print of Egypt or you could read your Bible in Exodus, but it was the final plague of ten.

The Lord would send an angel through the land of Egypt, claiming the lives of all the firstborn, young and old, male, female, cattle, animal.

The loss would be horrific. And in order for the angel to discern between God's people and God's enemy, it would come down to this bizarre act.

God tells Moses, take a blemish free lamb and kill it and apply the blood to your doorposts for the blood shall be a sign on the houses where you are.

Exodus writes, when I see the blood, God says, I will pass over you and no plague will befall you to destroy you. And now I read verbatim what Moses tells the leaders.

[35 : 37] After God commanded Moses, Moses now assembles the elders of Israel together. father, and he says this, take a bunch of hyssop and dip it in the blood that is in the basin and touch the lintel and the two doorposts.

The instruction was to take a hyssop branch and apply the blood for when God sees it, he would pardon and pass over. And John can't help but notice the image.

It is so significant that it is his final object. You need to remember not only the inscription, the tunic, but the hyssop branch. Why? Because this is the final Passover.

You remember the Exodus seen as the first Passover. John is saying, let me show you the final Passover. instead of dipping the basin of blood to apply to a doorpost, the blood is now coming down the back of a man.

We see the first Passover in Exodus. We'll see the final one here in John. And the connection is clear to the Bible reader. You were first delivered by the blood of a one-year-old lamb.

[36 : 58] Now you are delivered by the blood of a 33-year-old man. Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. This is your final deliverance.

Passover never needs to be repeated because it has been fully achieved. That's why Jesus is able to say in this scene, it is done. It's finished. Check. Done. Done. I'm going to leave for a few days. And we see it. The Lamb would die in your stead is what the Passover means. It would be salvation through substitution.

substitution. And if you're curious what a pithy statement of Christianity is, it's that salvation through substitution.

That all replete through the Bible is how, who can atone for their own sins. No one. So there's substitute. Rams caught in thickets, Passover lambs put on the altar, a 33-year-old son of God in your place.

[38 : 04] and it is finished is his cry. Jesus could not do any more. If you gave Jesus an extra year of life, he would not have accomplished more.

He could not have accomplished more. I don't know if that's theologically correct, but according to the Bible, he's done. The checklist is done. He could expire, walk away, what's the term, staged, staged off?

I don't know, he walks on the stage, that's it. it's closed. And likewise, here's the great news. You can't add more.

You can't earn more. You can't achieve more. You can't work your way more. This is a perfect life lived fully.

He finished the work God gave him to do. He finished the work of our redemption and salvation. He has secured himself a people. It is finished. It's as if Jesus is saying, I have pleased heaven by purchasing earth.

[39 : 10] All is finished. And so he bows his head. Incompletion, granting death permission to take him, giving up his life willingly for the salvation of many.

An inscription that declares him to be king. A tunic that demonstrates he is securing a kingdom of people and a branch that delivers humanity from the judgment of God.

I'm not sure what brought you here this morning. Perhaps you've stumbled into this mode of worship. You may be new to the neighborhood and here you are and you're not sure what to make of Jesus.

Well, I summon you to his cross this morning. He is a good king. He is a great king. He is the king above all kings and he is assembling this peculiar group of imperfect people who glory in a cross that achieve our salvation.

Well, you want to talk more? I'm at the new building from 1130 to 1230. For those who want to be strengthened by taking the Lord's table or if you're just wondering what it looks like to become Christian, I'd love to serve you communion for the first time and pass you the bread which is his body given for you and his blood poured out for you.

[40 : 48] dying Jesus is a beautiful king. Father, we thank you for this morning.

We thank you for these words, these strengthening words. We thank you for John's witness. And Father, I pray, I pray, that we would find refuge under the king of heaven in the assembly, in the family, in his kingdom, where the song that we forever sing, the salvation belongs to the Lord.

And so, Lord, we thank you for saving us. May we respond with gratitude, delight, worship, and service, we pray. We ask these things for Jesus' sake.

Amen.