

# John 19:31-42

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[ 0 : 0 0 ]     So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first and of the other who had been crucified with him. But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs.

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

For these things took place, that the scripture might be fulfilled. Not one of his bones will be broken. And again, another scripture says, they will look on him whom they have pierced.

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.

Nicodemus also, who earlier had come to Jesus by night, came bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about 75 pounds in weight. So they took the body of Jesus and bound it in linen cloths with the spices, as in the burial custom of the Jews.

[ 1 : 0 9 ]     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. So because of the Jewish day of preparation, since the tomb was close at hand, they laid Jesus there.

This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. Well, good morning, and I just want to give my own personal word of greeting.

It is good to have you here, and I am thrilled, thrilled beyond words, really, that after six months of Sundays like this, we will be the assembly of Christ Church next Sunday morning in greater and greater numbers.

It has been a most difficult spiritual season, a forced week upon week of diminished return for the church of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Yet in that weakness, we have persevered, and we are ready. And so I look forward to seeing up to 100 of you next week, and we walk forth out of our holes into confident, joyful assembly together.

[ 2 : 3 7 ]     Praise God for that provision for us. Well, if you were here at the start of the service, not knowing when you hit your link to arrive this morning, Pastor Nee called us to worship through the heavy heart of a psalmist who had concerns for the church.

He called it a downcast church that needed its eyes lifted up. I wasn't aware that he would move from that depiction of the church as a city downcast into worship when I wrote my own introduction, which was simply this.

As a preacher, my heart is heavy for the church. It's burdened. Not just the church universal or the church in its circumstances or the church in the West, Christ Church, the people of God, burdened along three lines.

Confidence. What appears to me to be so little confidence in the gospel. So much misplaced comfort outside the gospel.

And a lacking of courage that would bring forth the gospel. Confidence, comfort, and courage.

[ 4 : 18 ] Now, anyone need any of that this morning? Stay with me. 30 minutes.

And I promise confidence and comfort and courage will be given. And it won't come from me. I'm not some Sunday morning podcast inspirational speaker that's going to give you a douse of something to carry you through the day.

The confidence and comfort and courage that's needed is going to come from what was read this morning by Andrea in the Weigman living room.

And so we begin there. When we look at this text, we have two simple questions each week. What do we have here? And why should it matter?

What do we have here? Well, I'm assuming you didn't have time to read it during the week. And so it's important that I most clearly and simply let you see it for yourself.

[ 5 : 24 ] I hope your eyes are on the text. John 19, 31 to 42. What we have here is a text with two requests.

There it is in verse 31. The Jews asked Pilate. And in verse 38, Joseph of Arimathea asked Pilate.

Now, the first request, the Jews to Pilate was that his legs would be broken. The request of Joseph of Arimathea is that his body might be taken.

It's as simple as this. The text concerns getting Jesus off the cross and getting Jesus in the tomb.

The text, in two words, is simply death and burial. Which probably gives some insight into that ancient creed of 390 or so, which we read about first by Ambrose the Bishop, that creed of the apostles where we articulate that from last week, Jesus suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried.

[ 6 : 58 ] The requests in the text deal with death and burial. But that's not all we have.

While those subjects are there, those requests occurred at a time when the religious were rushing about.

Those are my, what do we have here? A text with two requests while the religious are rushing about.

Now, this observation came to me when I was reading it early in the week. One of the first observations I made, verse 31, since it was the day of preparation, and so that the bodies would not remain on the cross on the Sabbath.

And then verse 42, so because the Jewish day of preparation, since the tomb was close at hand, they laid him there. So the two requests are embedded within the bookends of the religious rushing about to complete what was necessary for their great day.

[ 8 : 14 ] And he wanted you to know that because he puts all of what happens in the middle, death and burial, swirling with a tonal quality for the reader that whatever was going on in death and burial was going on in the midst of a religious people that were readying themselves for the main matter.

I mean, think about it. If you're not familiar with Judaism, and there's no great thing there.

John should probably be your favorite writer because John's always trying to tell those of us who aren't familiar with Judaism what they're doing while they're doing it. Even in our own text here, you noticed it a couple of times, a little parentheses for that Sabbath was a high day, wanting you to know if you're not aware.

And also wanting you to know that it says in verse 40, they bound him as is the burial custom of the Jews. So John is writing to people who are clueless about why the religious would be rushing about.

And he says it's because it's on the day before Passover. I looked this week at something called the Mishnah, a word you don't need to remember, but it's just a collection of tractates that were written describing the practices of the Jewish people by those who handled it in intertestamental times and in early centuries.

[ 9 : 45 ] And in one of those tractates, they write about your preparation for the Passover. And they talk about the Sabbath in general. Listen to some of the things they say, which articulate why the religious holiday kept the Jews busy and why they had to get them off the cross and in the ground.

Some Jews permitted work until midday before that Passover day. Quote others, not. It'd be like a whole day off beforehand.

In Judea, it says, they used to do work until midday. In Galilee, they used to do nothing at all. In the school of Shammai, they forbade all work after evening fell, while the school of Hillel permitted work until sunrise.

Whatever so work a man had begun before the Passover, he could finish it on that day. But if he started it on that day, he was not permitted to finish it, even if he had time to do it.

So all of this helps you understand that the narrator wants you to know these guys are getting ready for a main religious event. Think of what you're going to do in a couple months' time at Thanksgiving.

[ 11 : 05 ] Think of what you're going to do come Christmas and Christmas Eve with all your shopping. There will be a day, which for you is the last day of preparation. And it's all got to be done.

No more making of the food. No more buying of the gifts. No more assembling of the family. And so you'll take work off on the front side so that you're prepared for the main event that the day holds.

This is what was going on. Now think of the irony then. Death and burial of Jesus take place while the religious are readying themselves to celebrate that which gives them life and that which makes them God's own people.

What an irony. When you think about it then, John wants you to sense that people were rushing to tie up loose ends before they could celebrate the activity of God's salvation.

Think of it this way. Religion is always readying itself for your observance. But in the midst of your rushing, God is accomplishing that which you actually needed from him.

[ 12 : 39 ] So that's what we have. That's what we have here. A text with dueling requests which are asked of Pilate that occur in the time where the devoted are rushing about.

Why does it matter? Why does it matter? And not why does Pastor Helm think it matters. Why does John think it matters? Here's where the text gets really interesting.

For while all the preparations for religion are being done, while all preparations for religion are being done, substitution for sin was actually being won.

That's the first little paragraph there. I mean, it is astounding. Look at what happens. The request was asked to break his legs which of course would make him die faster given their need to get him off the cross before their Passover began.

Yet arriving there, they did not break his legs. The request was not granted and it wasn't granted probably because he had been scourged so thoroughly on the front side. He was unlike the others who died on either side of him and his lifeblood had already run out.

[ 14 : 01 ] He died quickly in that manner. And so the request, although granted, was not fulfilled. But John says, for these things, put your eyes on it, verse 36, they took place, that is his bones were not broken, took place, that the scripture might be fulfilled.

Not one of his bones will be broken. And again, another scripture says, they will look on him whom they have pierced. This is amazing here.

There's a quotation from Exodus 12, a borrowing of that same quotation from Psalm 34, followed by a direct quotation from Zechariah 12. Three quotations from the law, from the prophets, from the Psalms.

This summation of all the Hebrew scriptures, something's going on in Jesus' death that is promise fulfilled, even in regard to his sacrifice and the not breaking of his bones.

Exodus 12, if you're not familiar with it, it's the Passover text. And when the sacrificial lamb was offered, the bones of the sacrifice were not to be broken.

[ 15 : 13 ] Psalm 34 is a Davidic text. When he was in the hand and hometown of his enemy, the deliverer, God himself, secured him and released him from there without any disorientation of his body taking place to him.

Zechariah is a prophetic text in which God talks about the day he will bring salvation. And on the day that he brings salvation, they will look on God who is pierced.

They will look on God who is their savior. Put it all together. What John is articulating to you through verse 36 is simply this, that while all the final preparations for the religious were being done, an actual substitution for sin in fulfillment of all the Old Testament scriptures was actually being won.

That Jesus was the fulfillment of the sacrificial Passover lamb, Exodus 12. That Jesus was like the savior leader whom God delivered and kept secure as he did David in Psalm 34.

That Jesus was none other than God himself coming as deliverer, bringing in salvation. That's why it matters. And notice where that comfort, I'm finally where you wanted to be today, where your comfort comes from.

[ 16 : 32 ] Your comfort comes from the knowledge that God made a adequate substitution for your sin in the death of Jesus in accordance with all the scriptures.

which means that comfort is a consequence of confidence in scripture fulfilled. We talk about the infallibility of scripture.

We talk about whether God is trustworthy. Can his word actually believe? And you sit at home and you wonder. And the church is downcast in confidence because it has relinquished its understanding of the scripture.

And it has so little comfort in the death of Christ because it doesn't know that he's the fulfillment of what God actually intended.

I don't know what greater comfort I can bring to you today than to talk to you of the death of Christ. You want comfort in life? It's the death of Christ.

[ 17 : 33 ] You want confidence? Dear church, let's recover the scriptures. J.C. Ryle, an old writer, said, we rest our souls on a finished work.

We rest our souls on a finished work if we rest them on the work of Jesus Christ, the Lord. We need not fear that either sin or Satan or law shall condemn us at the last day.

We may lean back on the thought that we have a Savior who has done all, paid all, accomplished all, performed all that is necessary for our salvation.

that is what I want to stick within your mind today and ooze like sap into your heart and fill your entire being.

You have the comfort of a substitution for sin through the death of Christ based on a fulfillment of the scriptures, which is to be your great confidence.

[ 18 : 54 ] if the church is ever going to recover her rightful standing in this culture, it will be attended by the comfort of substitutionary atonement as the means by which God actually fulfills every promise and inscripturated word.

And the church will rise in confidence, oh downcast soul. It will lift up like gates and walk with its shoulders back or as Ryle says, leaning upon.

Christ did all, accomplished all in the promises of what God had for all. There is so little power for life in the church because we do not understand the fulfillment of the promise in Christ's death.

And not only that, all of these things ought to lead toward courage. Remember, I came out of the gate telling you I was arguing for confidence and comfort and courage.

We'll look at burial beginning at verse 38. Courage for the Christian. after these things, Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple of Jesus but secretly for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate to take away the body of Jesus and Pilate gave him permission.

[ 20 : 34 ] So he came and took away his body. Notice what John wants you to know about Joseph of Arimathea. not merely that the body of Jesus was taken down but that Joseph of Arimathea was himself a follower of Jesus but secretly until that very moment for fear.

He walked his city in fear as the church does today until the truth and the finality of Christ's death was understood by him.

And notice he didn't walk alone and you won't have to walk alone either. He gave him a reading one-to-one partner by the name of Nicodemus. For these two men according to Luke were also men of the council of the Sanhedrin.

These were men who read the scriptures together one-on-one and with others and they Nicodemus also comes who had earlier come to Jesus by night and what they do is they wrap him appendage by appendage in weight that is 75 pounds and they bury him and if the indications of the Old Testament world are correct I've never visited the graves of the ancient world there probably was a 9x9 courtyard into which a stone would have been placed behind which four to six individuals of a family would have been laid and they probably put Jesus down in a 9x9 piece of turf and accomplish this work and put him on a slab upon which no one had been laying and put the doorway but the fact remains that it was Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus who did it.

Nicodemus whom Jesus has said the day will come when I will be lifted up like the serpent in the wilderness and I will draw all men to myself and it is that Nicodemus who now stands at the foot of the cross and looks up upon Jesus who has now been lifted up from the earth and draws himself to him by faith and this secret follower who for three years was wondering how God would fulfill his promise to make adequate substitution for sin and bring us into a right relationship takes the body of Jesus down and honors him with Joseph of Arimathea it is what is needed in the church today I'm going to call it what it is it is a coming out party for Christian faith the earliest adopters of a movement from Judaism to Christianity are rooted in Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus the 19th and 20th centuries which have tried to tell you that Paul started Christianity are absolutely reading absurd texts here are the seeds of a belief in promises fulfilled among the rulers of Israel who took Jesus as all that he really was and they lived finally in confidence and they had the comfort of their sins washed away and it gave them courage to do something and so they asked the world they asked of the world for something and the church today walks around mute mute the way

[ 23 : 56 ] Jesus was when he was behind a tomb as though he was still without a voice this one who called Lazarus come out and he walks out Jesus now we treat him as though he's still all appendaged up there's nothing for us to do or ask or say my heart's still burdened for the church so burdened where has our confidence gone in what is our comfort being placed what accounts for lack of courageous action I'll tell you what it is we make too little of the death of Christ not enough understanding that we are to bury our lives in the tomb of Christ not enough mental apprehension that I hold to a confidence in the scriptures which proclaim

Christ but let me tell you this Christ Church Chicago may we recover our confidence in the scriptures because it will give you comfort in the substitution for your sin it will work its way out into courageous actions on behalf of the gospel in our city and the world will once again know the church as she should be a life changing transformational organism that embraces all with the love of Christ you want a life get back to his death want to be free from your sin bury yourself in his tomb and come out with resurrection power well for that I suppose we gotta wait till next week our heavenly father these two requests ironically situated around the religious rushing about which provide for us substitution on the promises of scripture so that our timid souls can speak for you may it be true for our church may it be true for all churches we ask in Jesus name amen men