

# Good Friday

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[ 0 : 00 ] Good morning, everybody. It's a real privilege to join with you for this Good Friday service. Obviously, it's not ideal. We're not together, and it's tough, but we are still opening God's Word.

We are still praying to God. We are still thinking about what Jesus has done, and there is a lot of goodness in that. It seems almost impossible to not think of the situation with coronavirus minute by minute, hour by hour.

Day by day, it's turning into week upon week, and soon more than likely month by month. It dominates the news cycle, our Facebook feeds, Messenger conversations, WhatsApp conversations.

Zoom has become this household brand overnight. Mortality has confronted us in a very real way. In the West, we insulate ourselves from death.

We push death as far away as we can to the margins. We orient our lives away from death as much as we can. And who could blame us? Sickness and death is the antithesis of a good life.

[ 1 : 16 ] Who wants to be acquainted with death? Who wants to suffer? So when a pandemic is declared for a virus without a vaccine, we experience great fear.

But some of us actually don't have that much fear. Some of you that may be listening in aren't crippled by fear. You feel very removed from the virus yourself.

You might not know anybody personally that has contracted it, let alone has gone to an ICU or, God forbid, has passed from it. So instead of a great fear, you feel more of a high-grade inconvenience, if you're to be honest with yourself.

A frustration at the intensity of the social distancing. Anxiety with its duration. School closures. Working from home. Max five people for gatherings. Not gathering at all. Lineups just to get groceries. It's frustration.

[ 2 : 20 ] It really is tough. I'm not going to downplay that. It's a real thing. Or maybe you're somebody who's kind of in the middle. You have some legitimate fear around death of this virus, but not a whole ton.

Maybe it's a mix between frustration with all the inconveniences and the fear of the virus. It's not as if the coronavirus has somehow accelerated our demise as individuals and as a culture, or has become the source of our frustration.

Rather, it has merely opened our eyes to the reality that no matter how hard we try to insulate ourselves from death and from suffering, we are more frail than we would like to admit.

Our bodies, our bodies, our finances, our careers, our worldly hopes, our daily schedules are way further outside of our control than we're comfortable with.

C.S. Lewis talked about this. He wrote about this when Britain was at war with the Axis forces. He said this, And he goes on to say, What does war do to death?

[ 3 : 52 ] It certainly does not make it more frequent. A hundred percent of us die and the percentage cannot be increased. Yet war does do something to death. It forces us to remember it.

The only reason that cancer at 60 or paralysis at 75 do not bother us is that we forget them. All schemes of happiness centered in this world were always doomed to final frustration.

In ordinary times, only a wise man can realize this. Now the stupid of us knows. It's a bit cheeky. So here we are.

We are isolated. We are shaken up. Some of us are suffering great fear. Others, great inconvenience or both. We are watching a good Friday service from our couches, from our kitchen tables, from our beds.

This is not the way church is supposed to be. And maybe for the first time we are asking why. Why would God allow something terrible to happen?

[ 5 : 00 ] Why are my greatest efforts towards creating stability in my life so frail? Maybe for the first time you have had the chance to peek behind the veil and see that life is actually lived.

The human condition is actually lived on the edge of a precipice. And you're understanding that for the first time. That you are small and more powerless than you realize.

Or more closer to death than you'd like to admit. And if this is the case, maybe you are asking some difficult spiritual questions. Like, is there any worth in this life? Do I have any worth in this life?

Is my situation seen by God? If it is, why am I suffering? Where is he? Does he not hear my cries? Even if I don't cry, why isn't he coming to save me if he is good?

As I said, today is Good Friday, which is a somber day in the Christian calendar. It marks the betrayal, the trial, the torture, the unjust execution of Jesus.

[ 6 : 03 ] Some 2,000 years ago outside of the city walls of Jerusalem. But it is a glorious day as well. Because we know that after Jesus has breathed his last. And is put in a borrowed tomb.

Three days later, he will rise again from the dead victorious. Hallelujah. We're going to spend some time in a prophecy that incredibly and vividly depicts the suffering and crucifixion of Jesus.

Written centuries before he was born to Mary in Bethlehem. And through his suffering and crucifixion, we will see that there is more hope in this life.

Than we could ever imagine. And that we matter more to God than we could have ever hoped for. So if you have your Bibles, please turn with me to Isaiah 52.

Starting in verse 13. And we're going to read all the way to the end of chapter 53. So start with Isaiah 52, verse 13. All the way down to the end of chapter 53.

[ 7 : 05 ] Behold, my servant shall act wisely. He shall be high and lifted up. And shall be exalted. As many were astonished at you, his appearance was so marred beyond human semblance.

And his form beyond that of the children of mankind. So shall he sprinkle many nations. Kings shall shut their mouths because of him. So that which has not been told to them, they see.

Sorry. For that which has not been told them, they see. And that which they have not heard, they understand. Who has believed what he has heard from us? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?

For he grew up before him like a young plant. And like a root out of dry ground. He had no form or majesty that we should look at him. No beauty that we should desire him.

He was despised and rejected by men. A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And as one from whom men hide their faces, he was despised.

[ 8 : 11 ] And we esteemed him not. Surely he has borne our griefs, carried our sorrows. Yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God and afflicted.

But he was wounded for our transgressions. He was crushed for our iniquities. Upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace. And with his stripes that are whips, we are healed.

All we like sheep have gone astray. All have turned everyone to his own way. And the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed and was afflicted. Yet he opened not his mouth.

Like a lamb that is led to the slaughter. And like a sheep that before its shearers is silent. So he opened not his mouth. By oppression and judgment, he was taken away.

And as for his generation who considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living. Stricken for the transgression of many people. And that and they made sorry.

[ 9 : 13 ] And they made his grave with the wicked and with a rich man in his death. Although he had done no violence and there was no deceit in his mouth. Yet it was the will of the Lord to crush him.

He was put. He has put him to grief. When his soul makes an offering for guilt, he shall see his offspring. He shall prolong his days. The will of the Lord will prosper in his hand.

Out of the anguish of his soul, he shall see and be satisfied. By his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous.

And he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore, I will divide him a portion with the many. And he shall divide the spoil with the strong. Because he poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors.

Yet he bore the sin of many and makes intercession for the transgressors. This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. A bit of a background before we get into the text.

[ 10 : 15 ] This is the fourth servant song. Isaiah has four of these throughout kind of the middle part, the middle to the end part of his prophecy.

And the suffering servant from the first instance to the second to the third to ours today is this progressive revelation of who this servant is.

And the servant is this messianic type of figure that looks to deliver Israel from their foreign exile, from their oppression. On one hand, the servant, he is clearly a man.

But there's more to this servant than just a regular man. Isaiah talks about him with these divine characteristics. And we'll get into that.

And if you are a Christian, you are likely very familiar with these words. They're very, very famous words in the Christian faith. And if you're not a Christian or you're unfamiliar with this, you might have heard them in Handel's Messiah.

[11:18] These are very famous words. So as a way of introduction, let's jump into our text. We'll see four things that this text will teach us. It'll teach us that the suffering servant is both God, fully God and fully man, is a substitute for broken and sinful humanity, is completely victorious in what he sets out to do.

And finally, is the source for universal blessing. I'll say those four things again. He is both fully God and fully man, is a substitute for broken and sinful humanity, is completely victorious in what he sets out to do, is the source of universal blessing.

Let's jump into the first one. He's fully human and fully God. So if you look with me in chapter 52, verse 14.

As many were astonished at you, his appearance was marred beyond human semblance. We'll get into this idea of why he is so marred, this suffering servant.

But it is very clear that he is a human. In chapter 53, 1 to 3, it says, This is a regular looking man.

[12:52] A man that wouldn't necessarily stand out in a crowd. Not particularly tall or good looking with a fantastic physique.

It's just a regular person. He was despised and rejected by men. A man of sorrows, acquainted with grief. And as one from whom men hide their faces, he was despised and we esteemed him not.

He, this suffering servant being fully human, not just looks like a human, an average human, but experiences human emotions. Human sufferings.

If we take a moment, not that we were going to jump into the Gospels, but if we were to take a moment to do a survey through the Gospels, we will see that Jesus was fully human.

That he was tempted. He had family members. And he had family members actually that he didn't necessarily jive with perfectly. He had issues with them.

[13:52] He hungered. He felt anxiety. He felt betrayal. Very human thing to feel, betrayal. He was abandoned.

He was beaten. He was killed. And he was buried. All things that human beings can experience. Especially death and burial.

He did not merely understand the human condition. Jesus did. He didn't just merely understand it. But he lived it in complete fullness. And this is a great comfort for us.

Because we have a Savior that can commiserate with us. That can relate to us. That is sympathetic to us. Not as a far off deity. But one who has lived the human life.

But he's not just human. The servant, the suffering servant. He's also God. Passage. The passage opens up.

[14:54] Verse 13 of chapter 52. It says, Behold, my servant shall act wisely. He shall be high and lifted up. And shall be exalted. Nowhere in the Bible are.

We don't see things in the Bible. I'll say it this way. Very rarely do we see things in the Bible. That are spelled out in such an explicit, obvious way. Nowhere do we see in the Gospels Jesus saying, I am God.

But we see hints of it. We see instances of it. Things in the narrative clearly. That Jesus does clearly. A regular person couldn't do.

Only God could do. And here, Isaiah is doing the same type of thing. So he says this servant is high and lifted up. If you're looking for this term, high and lifted up.

We see it actually in Isaiah chapter 6 verse 1. Where Isaiah is in the throne room of God. And he declares that God himself. Describes God himself as high and lifted up.

[15:57] You don't use this language for God. And then use it for a regular person. It is very holy language. That describes a very holy God.

And here the servant. He is high and lifted up. He is exalted. It's remarkable. Additionally, the servant is called the arm of the Lord.

We see that in verse 1. Who has believed what he has heard from us. And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed. Throughout scripture, the arm of the Lord is a reference to God himself. Specifically how God provides deliverance. For his people from bondage. The arm of the Lord. The servant here is the arm of the Lord.

Again, we see Jesus doing things that only God can do throughout the Gospels. He forgives sins. He heals people. He casts out demons.

[16:58] He knows the future. He's in control of the elements and the created order. He heals and performs all sorts of miracles. Things that only God can do.

The servant here is both fully man and fully God. Jesus is both fully man and fully God. And why is this important to us? Why is this important?

I mean, I talked about the struggle. The very real struggle that this coronavirus is causing for us. But if it wasn't the coronavirus, it would be something else. I mean, why is this important?

How does that relate to my struggle, to my experience, to the human condition? This matters to our hope and meaning in a very, very deep way. This isn't a sidebar.

Humanity has fallen away from communion with God. And the sufferings that we experience, both small and grand, are because of this. I read recently, and I'm totally lifting this from a book that I was reading recently.

[18:03] It's that we decided, as humanity, we decided to find a home for ourselves by leaving the only true home that we were created for. God has created us, humanity, with a purpose to know him and be known by him, to be in his presence.

It's what happened with the garden in the first opening chapters of the Bible in Genesis. But we, like our first parents, Adam and Eve, we chose our own way that was bent and broken at the expense of God's way, which we were designed for.

We went out searching for a home by leaving the only true home that we could ever hope for. We are restless because we don't have our rest in God.

It's a paraphrase from St. Augustine in his confessions. And this is sin. This is sin. And it's not just that we go our own way. And it's like God's way is fantastic.

But our way, I mean, it's not fantastic, but it's pretty good. No, no, no. God's way is the only good way. And when we go our own way, there is destruction and despair.

[19:17] There is brokenness. People get stomped on and betrayed. Lying and gossip become the norm. We covet. We live destructive lifestyles.

We do. And maybe if your lifestyle isn't very destructive, maybe somebody else's destructive lifestyle has wreaked havoc on your life. When we go out searching for a home from the home that we were meant for, brokenness is the result.

And this is sin. So the penalty for sin is death because God in his perfection cannot be united with imperfection.

There would be no choice for us to go back home. That ship has sailed. However, God in his kindness and love and long suffering made a provision for the sin by creating a sacrificial system. You can read about that in Leviticus. That would atone or pay for our sinfulness. An animal like a lamb was put in our place to pay for the sins of individuals.

[20:27] The thing is, the offering system was never designed to cope for the scale of wrongdoing committed by God's people, let alone the entire world. It was never meant to.

Rather, it was meant to point to something greater. You see, a lamb cannot die in a human's place, but a perfect human could. And if that human is also God, he could die for every human sin once and for all.

The atonement for sin that was required by God could only be satisfied by God. No one, nothing is perfect except for God himself.

The thing is, no one can pay the penalty for a human except the human. This is why it is so vital that we understand that Jesus being fully human and fully God is actually great hope for us.

Because there's no other way for us to be made right with God. Where God's justice and mercy meet together. Jesus, the suffering servant, both fully man and fully God.

[21:42] It's a great comfort for us. I wasn't sure if I was going to share this, but I think it's appropriate. We are separated from God.

We are down here. And philosophies and spiritualities, religions, secularism. I mean, you name it. The hope is to do good, to achieve good, to be good in such a way as to climb some kind of spiritual ladder, some kind of social ladder, some kind of ladder.

Up to the God, to Allah, to the heavens, to nirvana, to the good life. It is a futile way to live our lives because this chasm is jimongous.

It's huge. How can we possibly bridge it? Years ago, I helped out at a basketball camp. And this family that we knew in the neighborhood, we invited them to come.

They're two boys. And they're around 10. One was like 11 or 12. The other one was 9 or 10. And they were from Iraq. This was before all of the craziness happened in Iraq.

[ 22 : 58 ] And they were just fresh back from Iraq. And they spent a number of months in a madrasa. A madrasa is an Islamic school. And for whatever reason, their parents allowed them to come to this Christian basketball camp.

And it was a full week, Monday to Friday. And by Tuesday, Karar, one of the boys, he came up to me. And he said, why aren't you Christian? Or sorry, why aren't you Muslim?

And I said, do you want to talk about this? He's like, yeah, yeah, yeah. This was the older brother. And he was hearing the gospel for two days straight. And I think it was eating at him.

Because he was just freshly back from all of this Islamic teaching. And he was moved. And he was crying. And I said, Karar, how do you get to heaven in Islam?

And Karar said something to me that I'll never forget. He said, every good deed is like a strand of hair. And we build a staircase to Allah, to heaven, by strands of hair.

[ 24 : 00 ] I said, Karar, how are you doing? Is that even possible? And he was a bit gobsmacked. But that is what life is like for spiritualities and religions and philosophies and secularism.

It's trying to build the staircase to heaven by strands of hairs. Good works being the hairs. I mean, that sounds unbelievably futile. So what does God do?

He condescends. He comes to us. He clothes himself in humanity. In the mud and the experience and the heartache of what it means.

And also the joys of what it means to be a human. His tongue is dry because he's thirsty. He feels thirst. His belly rumbles because he's hungry.

His feet ache from walking. He gets tired. He has to sleep. Jesus, God, the son of God, comes into humanity to the human experience.

[ 25 : 08 ] He condescends. He breaches the chasm. Fully God and fully man. He is our sacrificial substitute for sinful humanity.

The servant here. If we go back to our text. The servant here. It says that he carries a burden that is not his own. And we're on our second point here that the suffering servant is a sacrificial substitute for broken and sinful humanity.

The servant carries a burden that's not his own. We see this in verse 4. Surely he, the servant, has borne our griefs. By the way, an easy way to kind of handle this text is if you see he in the singular, it's talking about the servant.

If you see a plural we, our, it's talking about humanity. So again, surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows. Not his own. Not his own.

The suffering and crushing that he experienced was actually supposed to be ours. In verse 14, if you go back in chapter 52, verse 14 to 15, it says, As many were astonished at you, his appearance is so marred beyond human semblance and his form beyond that of the children of mankind.

[ 26 : 24 ] So shall he sprinkle many nations. Kings shall shut their mouths because of him for that which has not been told them. They see. Anyways, it continues on. But that, especially in verse 14, that he was crushed and beaten so that he was almost unrecognizable.

Not because of what he did, but he did that on our behalf. He was crushed. It goes on.

Return with me to chapter 53, verse 5. But he was wounded for our transgressions, our sins. He was crushed for our iniquities.

Upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace. And with his stripes, again, whips, we are healed spiritually.

Jesus, in the account that George read in the other gospel accounts, Jesus suffers incredible torture. He is beaten almost to the edge of death.

[ 27 : 26 ] He is whipped in such a way as to expose his flesh on his back. Not because he was the criminal, but because he did that for us.

For us. But why would God be angry? Why wouldn't he just be forgiving? Because he's a God of justice. And because our sin was so grievous, it was real.

It wasn't a little white lie. It was a combination of all of the brokenness of humanity. It had to be dealt with. Because if God didn't, he wouldn't be just.

If you struggle with this idea of a wrathful God, God cannot be loving unless he is wrathful. If somebody attacks a child and there's no cries for justice, then that is not a loving reaction.

The loving reaction is to bring the perpetrators to justice. Wrath is a good thing. If it is a just wrath. And God satisfies his own desire for justice by himself.

[ 28 : 37 ] That's what we talked about in the first point. Jesus, the suffering servant. Let's continue on in verse 6. All we like sheep have gone astray. We have turned everyone to his own way.

And the Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all. Sheep without a shepherd are powerless and defenseless completely. Sheep need a shepherd.

Without a shepherd, their lives are always just inches away from falling down a cliff. Jesus innocently dies for us because we were going our own ways with death just around the corner.

Verse 7. It says that the suffering servant and that Jesus, he does this voluntarily. This is what it says. He was oppressed and he was afflicted.

Yet he opened not his mouth like a lamb that is led to the slaughter and like a sheep that before it shears is silent. So he opened not his mouth. Jesus, in the accounts, does not, when he's standing trial before the Jewish leaders and before Pilate, he is not trying to justify himself, saying he got the wrong guy.

[ 29 : 55 ] He silently does this. In the garden, he says, not my will, but yours be done to God the Father.

That he voluntarily did this. And that ultimately he innocently died with wicked people, those that truly did deserve death, and was buried with a rich man.

In verse 9, this is what it says. And they made his grave with the wicked and with a rich man in his death, although he had done no violence and there was no deceit in his mouth.

Jesus hangs on the cross between two criminals. And then he is buried in a wealthy man's tomb. This was written centuries before Jesus would suffer all of this.

And here we're reading about it. It's remarkable. Verse 8, it says that to his sufferings was added the pain of a total lack of sympathetic understanding from those around him.

[ 30 : 59 ] In verse 8, it says this, Jesus was abandoned by his best friends.

He was completely, completely disowned and maligned by his people. He was given an unjust trial. It was a kangaroo court. He experienced no sympathy at all. Yet he voluntarily did this. And what was the result?

It was victory, complete victory. Now, this is Good Friday, so I'm not going to talk about the resurrection at length. George will be here Sunday morning, 10 a.m.

Live doing that. But nevertheless, Isaiah 53 talks about the great victory of the suffering servant. There's no usage of the term resurrection in this passage.

[ 32 : 04 ] But verses 10 to 12 see that this suffering servant is actually alive after he dies. So in verse 9, he is dead.

In verse 10, he is alive. In verse 8, he is condemned. In verse 11, he's righteous. In verse 7, there's helplessness. In verse 12, there is victory.

Clearly, there is something wonderful that has happened to the suffering servant. That he no longer is dead, but that he is alive again.

Praise God. All of this was God's plan. All of it. Verse 10, it says this. Yet it was the will of the Lord to crush him.

He has put him to grief. When his soul makes an offering for guilt, he shall see his offspring. He shall prolong his days. And it opens up, verse 10, with the will of the Lord.

[ 33 : 07 ] And it closes, verse 10, with the will of the Lord. The will of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. It was never God's will simply to crush the suffering servant.

To crush Jesus, God, the Son of God. And leave it there. That wasn't his will. It was his will to do that. But why? So that he would prosper him.

This idea is prosper, not like I did really well in my RSPs. Or I'm, you know, I'm kind of moving up. I'm prospering. It's this victory.

That the suffering servant would destroy and be victorious over death itself. And that it was the will of the Lord to prosper him. And all of this was God's plan.

And he knew that we as sinful people could not even begin to pay the penalty for our sin. And yet from the beginning of time, this is not a plan B. From the beginning of time, God had a plan to redeem us.

[ 34 : 05 ] Even though he knew that we would go our own way like sheep without a shepherd. That we would leave our home to find a better home. Even though there is no better home than the one we left.

Although we strayed like sheep, verse 6, we return as his offspring. This is what it says in verse 10. I don't know if you guys caught this. He shall see his offspring.

He shall prolong his days. This idea that we go off as lost sheep, but we return as sons and daughters. We are in communion with God.

Again, we are united to God by virtue of the suffering servant, Jesus Christ. Because of what he has done on the cross. Hanging on the cross.

Dying. Rising again. So, the suffering servant is fully God, fully man. Is a sacrificial substitute for the sinful humanity.

[ 35 : 06 ] Is completely victorious in what he has set out to do. But the fourth thing. And this is what is remarkable and fantastic and glorious and beautiful.

Is that the fruit of his victory is universal blessing. What do I mean by this? The fourth servant song is followed by like a tale, so to speak.

And that takes up two chapters, verses 54 and 55. And for people that are reading the suffering servant from a non-believing Jewish background.

They see the servant as a representative of Israel. Not as this ultimate messianic figure. And most definitely not a picture of God himself.

And the messianic figure was to save just the Jewish people. Simply the Jewish people. But here we actually don't see that.

[ 36 : 04 ] We see that, of course, that the suffering servant was sent to win the victory. And ultimately to save the exiled Jewish people. But this blessing is universal.

Why? Because it gets extended to the entire world. So look with me in chapter 54, verse 1. We'll kind of jump around a little bit.

But it opens up in verse 1, chapter 54. Sing, O barren one who do not bear. Break forth into singing and cry aloud. You who have not been in labor.

For the children of the desolate one will be no more than the children of her who is married, says the Lord. Lord, enlarge the place of your tent and let the curtains of your habitations be stretched out.

Jump down to verse 4. Fear not, for you will not be ashamed. Be not confounded, for you will not be disgraced. Remember, the Jewish people are disgraced. And here, the servant, the ultimate victory, the fruit of his victory, will be the erasing of the disgrace of the Jewish people.

[ 37 : 10 ] No more shame. But not just them. Look with me in verse 55, starting in verse 1. Come, everyone who thirsts. Come to the waters. And he who has no money, come, buy and eat.

Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Verse 2. Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread and your labor for that which does not satisfy?

And jump down to verse 5. Behold, you shall call a nation that you do not know and a nation that did not know you shall run to you because of the Lord your God and of the Holy One.

That is the suffering servant of Israel, for he has glorified you. Verse 6. Seek the Lord while he may be found. Call upon him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way and the righteous man his thoughts.

Let him return to the Lord that he may have compassion on him and to our God. For he will abundantly pardon. Ultimate blessing. Ultimate blessing.

[ 38 : 10 ] That those of every tongue, every ethnicity, every background, every culture, if they confess their sin, if they look to God for pardon because of what Jesus has done because of the suffering servant's ultimate victory, they will be made right with God.

They will be brought back home. The only home that they were made for. It is a wonderful, wonderful, incredible picture of the ultimate salvation of God through his son, Jesus Christ.

So how should we live in light of this? We should think upon and pray upon the image of Christ on the cross.

Think about him. See him bear. Picture him. Read in the gospel accounts of how he hung on the cross, bearing your sins, bearing your shame, bearing all of the brokenness that has ever come about in this world.

Dying in our place once and for all. Our salvation, our hope, our return home was purchased at a great, great cost. It was done for love.

[ 39 : 32 ] It was done so that we would be made right with him, that we would enjoy God. We would worship him forever like we were made to do. We should praise him because he has not left us like sheep on the edge of a cliff.

Because his son descended into the cliff on our behalf so that there's actually no more cliff for us. No more ultimate cliff. Jesus tasted all there is to taste of death and sin.

So that we don't have to. The thing is, if death and famine and disease no longer have their eternal bite.

Do not linger over us in an eternal way. What's there to truly, eternally, ultimately fear? Our search for true home is over.

That's why we can't put our hope and trust, our ultimate hope and trust in things and people. We can't find our meaning in these things. And quite possibly, because they're quite possibly gone today, or they might be here today but gone tomorrow.

[ 40 : 41 ] They might be. Our life is not guaranteed. Instead, let us put our hope and trust and find our eternal meaning in and through and for the suffering servant, Jesus Christ.

What would happen as God's people, if we truly grasp this, we could then suffer with great meaning.

We could live a life that when we engage with suffering, that there would be great meaning to this suffering. That when it is our time to breathe our last, we can die in such a way that echoes the words of the Apostle Paul.

That to me, for me to live is Christ and to die is gain. That all of a sudden, death has meaning. That is a wonderful, wonderful thing.

Friends, I encourage you today to think about the cross. Think about Jesus hanging there. Dwell on it. Meditate on it. Let it rip you up a little bit inside.

[ 41 : 52 ] But remember that in three days, he rises again from the tomb. I'm going to close with this. In light of everything we just looked at, of everything we thought about and meditated on, take these words from Romans chapter 8, verses 38 and 39.

For I am sure that neither death or life, angels or rulers, nor things present or things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all of creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Friends, those of us that are saved and those that are yet to put their hope and trust in salvation, know that today is the day that we can call upon the Lord and be saved.

Lord God, thank you so much for your goodness and kindness that you have written about your son centuries before he was born to Mary in Bethlehem, that he lived a sinless life.

He died an unjust death. He went into the grave. He rose again. Lord, thank you so much that that is our reality, that we are in union with you because of your son.

[ 43 : 18 ] And today, as it is Good Friday, help us to think about Jesus hanging on the tree, suffering all of our brokenness, all of our sinfulness.

Lord, help that to go deep in us by your Holy Spirit. And on Sunday, let us come back and rejoice in your salvation.

In Jesus' name, amen.