

AM John 19:16b-30

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[0:00] So, John chapter 19, and we take up the reading in verse 16. So, just to kind of set the scene, John records how this is on the, what we call Good Friday.

Then in chapter 17, his prayer for his disciples.

And then in chapter 18, and the first part of chapter 19, the events of Jesus' arrest. And then his trial, his trial before Pilate.

And then in verse 16, we read that he, that's Pilate, the Roman governor, delivered Jesus over to them, to the soldiers, to be crucified.

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.

[1:17] 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 that this man said, I am King of the Jews.

Pilate answered, what I have written, I have written. Pilate said, 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. But the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom.

[2:32] 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 the 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.

[3:53] When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, it is finished. And he bowed his head, and gave up his spirit.

May God bless to us that reading of his word. Let's see the passage that we read in John chapter 19. And if we want a real sort of focus, just three words from verse 18.

They crucified him. Today, the cross is a almost universal symbol. Often it's ornamental.

People wear it as jewelry. It's often on churches, or inside churches. And I don't want to knock that, but an ornamental cross can maybe distance our minds from what the cross originally represented. The cross was originally a Roman instrument, and a symbol of Roman power, and just its ability to crush all dissent, all perceived opposition.

[5:06] And the details of Jesus' crucifixion were in many ways similar to many others who suffered that fate within the Roman Empire.

Now, for the first readers of John and the other Gospels, there was no real need to supply details. They all knew what happened at a crucifixion.

Most of the readers would have seen a crucifixion at some time. It was particular. It wasn't originated by the Romans, but the Romans adopted this form of torture and execution. It wasn't always used. It wasn't the only instrument of execution. It was used for slaves who revolted against their masters, and also for those who committed crimes against the Empire, against the state.

And for us, there is a danger that crucifixion is culturally remote. But here, John tells us that the soldiers took charge of Jesus.

[6:18] In Mark's Gospel, we're told that that involved flogging, severe flogging, with whips that had strips of metal or bone in them. That was part of the brutality, the torture.

And then Jesus was made to bear, to carry his own cross. cross. That was probably not the whole cross, but the cross beam. And that was just a way of humiliating the victim to carry their own instrument of execution.

And he carried it. He was taken to the place of the skull. Perhaps call that because it was the place of execution.

And we're told in verse 20 it was near the city. Elsewhere we're told it was just outside the city wall. And the actual crucifixion itself took place on a wooden cross.

The victim was made to lie on the ground. His wrists would be nailed or tied to the cross beam. And then he would be hoisted up and it would be fastened to the vertical beam which was already in the ground.

[7:36] And the victim's feet would be tied or nailed to the vertical beam. Sometimes there was a small platform or seat which actually just prolonged the agony.

Because the victim had to push with his legs and pull away with his arms in order to breathe. And it was a death that was calculated to just maximise both pain and humiliation.

Disgrace. And often it took days. It was an agonising prolonged death. Josephus the Jewish historian writes that crucifixion was the most wretched of deaths.

Cicero the Roman historian describes it as a most cruel and terrible penalty incapable of description by any word for there is none fit to describe it.

In fact it was a form of execution that was reserved for non-citizens. Roman citizens were not put to death. However bad their crime they were not crucified.

[8:50] It was reserved for those who were not citizens crucifixions. The Roman Empire and on this particular Friday there were three crucifixions.

We're told that there were two others and Jesus was in the middle. But then John points our attention to certain details of what happened on this particular crucifixion the crucifixion of Jesus.

Jesus The first thing is the notice that was attached that Pilate had attached to the cross an inscription in verse 19 Pilate also wrote an inscription and put it on the cross it read Jesus of Nazareth the king of the Jews.

Now Pilate probably his motivation was just mockery he was mocking the Jews the Jews were a subject race and it's as if he's saying this is the only king you produce you can produce and look at him now.

But John notes the irony in this that Pilate wrote more than he knew Pilate wrote more than he understood because what Pilate writes in a way that's just to mock the Jews the Judeans there's a truth in there a reality that Pilate himself was oblivious to that Jesus really is the king of the Jews and in spite of the protest of the chief priests and the officers they protest that just write that he claimed to be the king of the Jews Pilate says what I have written I have written and the notice and the truth that it proclaims remains on the cross this theme of Jesus as king appears throughout John's gospel right in the beginning in chapter one when

[10:57] Nathaniel encounters Jesus and becomes a disciple his words his exclamation is truly this is the son of God this is the king of Israel and both of those terms really relating to the Messiah the long expected king in chapter 12 John recounts how Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey the triumphal entry into Jerusalem and how there he is acclaimed as king and then just shortly before this in his trial before Pilate Pilate says are you a king then and Jesus says my kingdom is not from this world it is from another place and so this theme of Jesus as king appears throughout John's gospel as it does elsewhere in the New Testament but it points to

Old Testament prophecy and expectation of the Messiah the king who would come and deliver his people and there are many passages in the Old Testament probably the first is in 2 Samuel 7 where

God promises David that his sons would reign after him and that from his line there would be a king who would reign forever and there are other passages Isaiah 9 Micah 5 and many others too so the Messiah the king would be one who would rule and reign with authority and Pilate unwittingly proclaims that and it's written the notice is written in Aramaic which was the local language of the people there the Jews the Judeans it was also written in Latin the language of Rome it was the legal language of the empire and it was written in

Greek which was the language that was spoken all over the empire the Mediterranean world and that in a way is suggestive it suggests that Jesus kingship extends beyond just the Jews that it is a universal kingship that he is the king of all nations and I think John is also pointing to the fact that and this is it's deeply counter intuitive deeply paradoxical that this actual this moment when Jesus is being crucified when he is being hung on a cross in some strange ways is coronation that this is his most kingly act that the Messiah would come and deliver his people would liberate his people and paradoxically strangely Jesus in his death on a cross is liberating he is saving his people as their king and for us today

Jesus is king he is lord his kingship is vindicated and proved true by his subsequent resurrection from the dead the challenge for each one of us here is is he your king have you recognized him as the king and as the lord of all the second thing that John draws our attention to is fulfillment of scripture in verse 23 and following we read of the soldiers dividing Jesus garments that was common it was one of the perks of the job that they divided the garments and it was an extra thing that they took home and the crucified victim was crucified naked and that was part of the utter humiliation of it the crucified victim suffered exposure and disgrace in that way they come to the tunic and it is seamless so instead of tearing it they cast lots and

John records this as and sees in it the fulfillment of scripture in particular Psalm 22 verse 18 and John quotes that here this was to fulfill the scripture which says they divided my garments among them and cast lot and for my clothing they cast lots and John is writing this as an apologetic to the Jews he's not giving an apology but as we often use that term today but he's giving reasons why how showing that demonstrating that Jesus is truly the Messiah and John points to Old Testament scripture for the Jews of his time it was a great stumbling block that the Messiah would be crucified that was just a contradiction in terms that wasn't meant to happen in their thinking in their thinking the Messiah was meant to be triumphant and so a crucified Messiah for them it just seemed to point away from him being

[16:19] Messiah at all and so John is giving reasons to show that and showing pointing out demonstrating that the suffering of this Messiah was actually foretold in the scriptures from long long before including this particular part of the proceedings of them dividing his garments and casting lots for his clothing John points to how these are fulfilled that Psalm 22 is fulfilled in the experience of Jesus and John is pointing out and it's so important to emphasize that Jesus death is not something that just happened as some random accident out of the blue sudden and unexpected but this was in the plan and in the purpose of God from the very beginning it was foretold in Old Testament scripture from even a thousand years earlier which was when David lived who wrote

Psalm 22 and these are trailers of the events of Jesus suffering and death and resurrection it points to us to the unity of the Bible as God's supernatural revelation of course on one level the Bible is many different books written by a whole array of very different and varied writers all who you know they have their own reasons for writing what they write and yet also at the same time it is one book because it is God's book there is a divine author to the scriptures and we see that here in the fulfillment of scripture well then the third thing that John draws our attention to is really the compassion of Jesus in verse 25 to 27 we read that of a group of people who are standing nearby standing observing the events unfold and he lists them there's Mary well there's

Jesus' mother who was Mary and his mother's sister so Jesus is aunt his mother's sister is possibly Salome who is mentioned by name in Mark 15 and who is mentioned in well and possibly also equates to the mother of James and John in Matthew 27 and then there's Mary the wife of Chlophas and Mary Magdalene and also the disciple whom Jesus loved who is the author of this gospel whom we know as John and John sees his mother bereft and distraught previously Jesus would have been the breadwinner of the family and would have cared for his mother and so he says and even the way he says it is very brief because he would be struggling for breath he was thirsty so he just says woman behold your son and to the disciple behold your mother now we might wonder why this why does

John the author of the gospel have to take Mary into his home that's what we're told happens and that's what he understands is meant by Jesus well of course Jesus had brothers but we're told in chapter 7 verse 5 that Jesus brothers did not yet believe in him and so there may be an element of providing a spiritual home somebody with whom Mary could have fellowship with a fellow believer it also may be temporary it's possible that Jesus brothers were in Galilee whereas John possibly has a home in Jerusalem also if John's mother is Mary's sister that's an if it's not definite but that would make John cousin of Jesus and Mary would be his aunt so John is taking his aunt under his wing into his home and that would also help explain this but

I think the truly remarkable thing about this is the display of Jesus love and compassion for his mother if we are suffering something we tend to be self absorbed I know that I am that if I have got some physical pain or some emotional pain or anxiety it's difficult to think about anybody else and even if it's something relatively minor I tend to be just absorbed with my own problem my own situation and here we see someone who is suffering in a way that is utterly extreme beyond our imagining he's hanging on a cross in overwhelming pain suffering utter humiliation dying a most brutal agonizing death imaginable and also in that suffering he's bearing the sins of the world and yet he is not absorbed by his own suffering he's looking out even at this moment looking out for the needs of others and responding and we see the amazing love and compassion of the

[22:05] Lord Jesus and it's really just a kind of microcosm of the love and compassion of Jesus that took him to that cross in the first place John chapter 3 verse 16 speaks of the love of God the Father that God so loved the world that he gave his only son and also he speaks of the love of Jesus the son beginning of chapter 13 Jesus having loved his own he loved them to the end or loved them to the full extent that can be translated as and here we see that love in microcosm his love for his mother Mary which also is a love that is for each one of us for his disciples he loved us he loved us to the extent of going to that cross of suffering in that intense way for our sakes for our salvation as John the Baptist declared he is the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world and in doing that he reveals his immense love and compassion for us well the fourth thing that

John draws attention to is Jesus thirst in verse 28 after this Jesus knowing that all was now finished said to fulfill the scripture I thirst now at one level there's nothing out of the ordinary in this it was one of the effects of crucifixion was severe dehydration the victim would lose a lot of blood and sweat and in the climate there they would be extremely dehydrated and would experience a burning thirst it was kind of normal but John also in writing this he's emphasizing it's not the first time he's done this he's emphasizing the humanity of Jesus the full humanness of Jesus Christ right at the beginning

John introduces his gospel by introducing us to the word in the beginning was the word and the word was with God and the word was God and then a bit later on he speaks of how the word became flesh and made his dwelling among us as Jesus Christ in and as Jesus Christ and throughout the gospel John highlights the human experience of Jesus Jesus gets tired he suffers grief and sorrow he needs friends and companions and here Jesus is thirsty it's a very human very physical experience and John is emphasizing that the total humanity of Jesus that he is totally human he is 100% human and it reveals this great fact that God became human in the person of Jesus revealed in his suffering and his death and of course if God had not become human in the person of Jesus then there would be no salvation he could not die he could not die for our sins only as a human can he die and redeem us but John also draws our attention in this to the Jesus own awareness that he is fulfilling the scriptures the Old Testament other people who took part in these events also fulfill the scriptures but they do so unwittingly Judas Pilate the Jewish leaders the soldiers they're all fulfilling scripture but they all do it they don't realize it they're doing it unwittingly but Jesus is fully aware that he was fulfilling scripture and part of that is this just statement this declaration I thirst or I am thirsty and again there's reference to

Psalms 22 verse 15 where that psalm which in such amazing ways predicts these events and in that psalm the sufferer says my strength is dried up like a potsherd my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth and that psalm in its entirety prophesying the suffering of the Messiah and then his coming through that suffering and then also Psalm 69 verse 21 where the sufferer there says they gave me vinegar for my thirst thirst and this points to Jesus own self consciousness self awareness that he's aware that he is the one who fulfills the scriptures that he is the Messiah the one in whom all those different lines of Old Testament prophecy converge he knows that they are fulfilled in him but thirst is also suggestive of the torment of hell there is possibly no greater physical torment and pain than

extreme and severe thirst

[27 : 42] Henry Pottinger was an early 19th century British explorer who travelled in the deserts of Baluchistan that's on the border between modern day Iran and Pakistan and he speaks of his experience going through many different trials and he says a person may endure tiredness or hunger heat or cold and even the total lack of rest for a long time but to feel one's throat so parched and dry that you breathe with difficulty to dread moving your tongue in your mouth because you feel you will suffocate these are the extreme of a traveller's suffering and that maybe gives an insight into what Jesus was suffering physically here in his thirst but in Jesus earlier teaching he told the story of the rich man and

Lazarus the rich man who died and went to Hades to hell and the particular aspect of suffering there is his thirst the rich man was thirsty in hell and Jesus extreme thirst!

here symbolizes the torment of that suffering of hell and we might ask why because we might ask that at any point in this why why is this innocent man this righteous man this man who lived a perfect life that is recorded for us in the gospels why is he of all people suffering this well the reason is as we sung in my place condemned he stood he is doing it for you and for me earlier in John Jesus gives that great invitation to the thirsty if anyone is thirsty let him come to me and drink and Jesus offers that because he himself suffered thirst that extreme terrible thirst in our place they offer him bitter wine vinegar now that's not the same as the wine mixed with gall that Matthew speaks of in his gospel that was offered earlier on that

Jesus refused that probably because it contained a kind of anesthetic to dull the pain and Jesus goes through this experience fully conscious but he receives this now probably because his mouth is so dry and he needs to say two final things only one of which is recorded in John's gospel the words it is finished the last words that John records the last words of Jesus that John records in Greek it is just one word tetelestai and it is not a comment on the end of Jesus life he is not saying I am finished nor is it a cry of defeat my cause has failed it is finished it is over rather this is a cry of victory it could be translated it is accomplished what is

Jesus referring to well I guess we don't know exactly what was on his mind but I think we have hints and clues in the wider gospel of John one thing that Jesus accomplishes is his obedience to God the father's will John throughout stresses Jesus relationship with the father Jesus says I and my father are one and he speaks of his equality with the father he is no less God than the father is and yet there is a relationship of dependence on the father and obedience to the father in John 4 verse 34 Jesus says to his disciples my food is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work and it Jesus has finished and accomplished Jesus life was one of perfect obedience and now that is completed as he breathes his last and

[32 : 10] Jesus also has accomplished the salvation of his people he has finished the work that he came to do near the beginning of John John's gospel John the Baptist announces and introduces Jesus as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world it's the language of sacrifice sacrifice so familiar throughout the Old Testament and now the ultimate and supreme sacrifice has been made that really and truly removes the sin of God's people Jesus Christ has died for our sins he has taken the punishment for our sins he has borne our guilt so that we might be redeemed that we might go free and these words it is finished proclaimed by

Jesus in his dying words are ultimately demonstrated by God in raising him from the dead on the Sunday immediately following and we tell that with that Jesus died he bowed his head and gave up his spirit we have no control over the time of our death but Jesus in control voluntarily deliberately gives up his spirit lays down his life as he said earlier in John 10 I lay down my life no one takes it from me I lay it down of my own accord but we leave the narrative there and I want to give two words of application the first word is faith John in the next chapter says that he records all the things that he's recorded in the gospel in John 20 verse 31 that these things are written so that you may believe that

Jesus is the Messiah the Son of God and that by believing you may have life in his name and if you want life life that is full that is abundant that is eternal life that is everlasting life this is the only way that is open to you it is by believing in Jesus the Messiah and in his death and resurrection for you and the second word is love we have noted the love of God for us the love of Jesus Christ for us and as Isaac Watts the hymn writer puts it love so amazing so divine demands my soul my life my all may God bless his word to us but but