

Fulfillment: The Cross

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[0 : 00] I want to ask you, if you would, to open your Bibles to John chapter 19. John chapter 19, and the series that we've been in on encountering God, we've looked at God as the creator of the spirit world, the physical world.

We've seen Him as He has established this world for His own glory. And then we've seen the fall. We've seen how sin is arrogant and how it's pervasive and how it just is devastating to the relationship between God and men.

And we've seen what God has promised in the middle of that, His covenant as He has established how He is going to deal with the sin problem Himself. He doesn't leave it to us to deal with.

And in that covenant, we've seen Him promising a kingdom and a king. And then we've looked at the fulfillment of these things. And as we come to today, we get to what I feel like is the first part of the center of everything, the death and next week the resurrection of Christ.

This is where everything is culminating to in all of history. He is the center of all of history of everything. And so I want us to read from John chapter 19.

[1 : 11] We're going to read verse 17 through verse 37. It's an extended passage. And I want us to just take some time with it to just read it. This is the word of the Lord. This is about our Lord's crucifixion, the centerpiece of His work that He did.

And so I want us to read it and just take it in. And from it, hopefully, we can gain a few lessons from it this morning. So beginning in verse 17.

Pilate also wrote an inscription and put it on the cross.

It was written, Jesus the Nazarene, King of the Jews. Therefore, many of the Jews read this inscription. For the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city and was written in Hebrew, Latin, and in Greek.

So the chief priests of the Jews were saying to Pilate, do not write the King of the Jews. But that he said, I am King of the Jews.

[2 : 36] Pilate answered, what I have written, I have written. I just want to pause for a second and just sort of help us make sure we get the scene of this.

Pilate, they've led Jesus out to this place called the Skull, Golgotha. Calvary is what we know of it as we sing some of our songs and that kind of a thing. It's close to the city.

And the reason it's close to the city is because this is where they would crucify. They would execute criminals, slaves, people of other nationalities. Romans never crucified Romans unless they had just completely obliterated their citizenship.

And so Jesus is being treated like a common criminal or a slave or someone like that. And he's having to carry his own cross. And it's a good thing it's close to the city because he's been beaten with the cat of nine tails.

And he has lost so much blood. He has suffered so many things from the beatings that he's carrying his own cross. And when they would carry their cross, it would be perhaps most of the time just one of the two bars.

[3 : 47] And in Jesus' case, this came up so last minute. It's possible that he had to carry his entire cross. We're not entirely sure. But the crosses came in three shapes for the Romans.

There were crosses that were X's. There were crosses that were T's. And then there were crosses like we're used to thinking that looks like this. And the reason you would have one like this is they would take and they would actually put your crime that you were guilty of above your head.

The ironic thing is that Jesus' crime is that of being the king of the Jews, which was true. It was written in Latin and in Hebrew and in Greek.

And the reason for the three languages is because Latin was the official language of the Roman Empire. Greek was the language of the marketplace. And the Hebrew was the language of the Jewish people.

It's almost as though he's saying this man is the king of the Jews, but he's also the king of the world. He's dying not just for the Jews, but he's dying for the whole world.

[4 : 57] The other thing about the cross that you kind of miss here is that the cross is an execution by suffocation.

The reason that you suffocate is because as your hands are nailed and your feet, one on top of the other, are nailed to this thing, you are stretched out so that you're hanging and you can't breathe. And to breathe or to say anything, you would have to pull up on the nails and push up on the nail on your feet, take a deep breath, say something, and then go back to hanging again.

It was said that there were many men who lasted even 48 hours there upon the cross. Jesus was there for six hours. And their feet were about three feet off the ground.

We have this sort of image from Hollywood that these crosses were really high, and they were really high up there, but that's not the way the Romans did it. They would not want to hoist anybody up that high. I mean, that's just difficult.

[6 : 03] And so they found the evidence that these crosses were actually pretty low to the ground. So feet being at about three feet, the head is at eight to nine feet, depending on how tall Jesus was.

So it's easy to hear the mocking. It's easy to hear the laughter and the ridicule. It's easy to hear when he pulls up and he says something to those who are standing there.

And at this point, the text goes on and says, Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took his outer garments and made four parts, a part to every soldier, and also the tunic. Now the tunic was seamless and woven in one piece, so they said to one another, Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it, to decide whose it shall be.

This was to fulfill the scripture. They divided my outer garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots. Therefore the soldiers did these things. But standing by the cross of Jesus was his mother and his mother's sister, Mary, the wife of Cloapas, 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.

[7 : 20] From that hour the disciple took her into his own household. You see, this is such a great picture here of Jesus. These women who are here, there's four of them.

It's kind of hard to tell in the text. But you've got Mary, his mother. You've got his mother's sister, his aunt. And then you also have Mary, the wife of Cloapas. That's a different woman from his aunt. And then you have Mary Magdalene. And what I find interesting is that these disciples who said that they would be there for him have all run. The only disciple there is John, the apostle. But these women did not run.

They did not run. Jesus is really elevating the status of these women. They've supported his ministry. He has been there for them and they've been there for him.

And now in his last breath, his love for his mother comes out because he's saying to this disciple, Take care of my mother. Take care of my mother.

[8 : 20] The text goes on and says, After this, Jesus, knowing that all things had already been accomplished, to fulfill the scripture said, I am thirsty. A jar full of sour wine was standing there.

So they put a sponge full of the sour wine upon a branch of hyssop and brought it up to his mouth. It's interesting that he says, I am thirsty and it fulfills scripture.

The reason it fulfills scripture is because David, the psalmist, was writing in one of his psalms, I think it's Psalm 69, where his enemies hated him so much and were after him so much that they gave him poison for food and vinegar for drink.

And Jesus is quoting from that psalm. His enemies have given him vinegar to drink. It wouldn't quench the thirst. It wouldn't help him to not be thirsty any longer. And they give it to him upon a hyssop branch.

And hyssop is one of these plants that was supposed to be used in the spreading and the sprinkling of blood in the altars. And so here they are giving him this sour wine. And he says, Therefore, when he had received the sour wine, he said, It is finished.

[9 : 29] It is finished. And he bowed his head and gave up the spirit. This, it is finished, is one Greek word. It's tetelestai. It means paid and full.

And it is there that he finished and accomplished his goal, his purpose. And he bowed his head and he gave up his spirit. Sometimes, sometimes I will say that Jesus was murdered upon the cross because there is a sense in which the malice and the scheming and the mischievous nature of all that took place has that feel of a murder.

But at the same time, it's not a murder, right? He gave up his own life. He yielded his own life up to the Lord as a sacrifice willing. He goes on and says, It says, Then the Jews, because it was the day of preparation so that the bodies would not remain on the cross on the Sabbath, for that Sabbath was a high day, they asked Pilate that their legs might be broken and that they might be taken away.

So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first man and of the other who was crucified with them. But coming to Jesus, when they saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. And I'll just pause here again. That was at the Jews' request because they're about to participate in Passover. It's so ironic.

[10:51] It's so ironic. They're about to participate in Passover, about to celebrate how God, by the blood of the Lamb, delivers them from bondage. And so they don't even recognize the Lamb of God upon the cross.

And they just want it over. Just get it over. Just break their legs. Make them die faster. Because if the legs are broken, obviously they can't keep pulling themselves up to get air. But when they come to Jesus, he's already dead.

He's already gone because he gave up his spirit. And the reason it's important that he didn't have the broken leg, as we'll see in just a moment, is because he is the sacrifice of God.

And the sacrifice is to be without blemish, not to have a single broken bone. So when they come to Jesus and find that he's already dead and they don't break his legs, one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and immediately blood and water came out.

And he who has seen has testified and his testimony is true. And he knows that he's telling the truth so that you also may believe. For these things came to pass to fulfill scripture.

[12:02] Not a bone of him shall be broken. And again, another scripture. They shall look on him whom they have pierced. Let's pray together.

Father, we thank you for your word. We thank you for Christ. And I just pray, Father, that you would teach us what we need to see and know from what your son has done for us.

And we pray this in Christ's name. Amen. I just want to share with you four quick lessons, I guess you could say, we could learn as we just take a look at the cross.

The first is that Christ was truly humble. We see his humility demonstrated. He had to carry his own cross.

When he couldn't carry it anymore, they had to press someone out of the crowd to carry it for him. That was Simon of Cyrene. He was treated like a wicked criminal.

[13:00] He was crucified as a slave. He was crucified with two other criminals. He was mocked. He was ridiculed. He could hear it from the cross.

As a matter of fact, his ridicule was so much that the soldiers had gambled for his clothes and taken it away. And it is very likely that he was either hanging there in nothing but a loincloth or nothing at all.

And so you almost get this image that where Adam and Eve experienced shame over their nakedness because they sinned, Christ experienced this nakedness and shame to pay for our sin. And the thing is, is that he could have wiped them all out. He could have called legions upon legions of angels saying, enough, we're not doing this.

But instead of humility, he submitted himself fully to the process that his father had started. And what this should do for us is it should help us really understand how revolting our sin is.

[14:05] And I think that in modern day, we do not hate our sin enough. We do not hate sin enough. And one of the things that the cross does for us is it helps us to answer the question, what does sin look like?

And what sin looks like is that it looks like a disfigured human man beaten beyond recognition, cut and bleeding. Sin looks like the smug laughing mockery of the crowd as a man is stripped down to his undergarments, exposed before the world without any way of covering himself.

Sin looks like a dying man thirsting and yet is given vinegar to drink out of spite. This is what sin looks like.

And the question is, do you see the wretchedness of your own sin? Our sin against God. What it looks like is the sinless, perfect, guiltless, loving, merciful Son of God wrongly nailed to a cursed tree all so that we could say, I want to be my own boss.

He's there because we want to be our own boss. And so Christians, look at your sin.

[15 : 34] Look at the crucifixion. Look at how horrible your sin is. And what I want you to do is remind yourself of this truth. Remind yourself of this truth that your sin looks like the crucifixion because that helps us to hate our sin and hating our sin is a necessary first step towards a true change of heart about our sin.

He doesn't want you to stay in your sin. He wants you to come out. So we see that Christ was truly humbled. We see, secondly, that Christ truly died.

he truly died. There's a, there's a lot of people that like to talk about who don't, don't want to talk about Jesus being Lord of their lives that, well, maybe he just swooned or he passed out.

The swoon theory is something that always cracks me up. Yeah, he just passed out from all of this and then the coldness of the tomb woke him up and he rolled the stone away and walked out himself.

Hmm, I just don't think so. I mean, they were tougher back then than we are today but I'm just not thinking that's possible. You know, you got to remember that he's already been awake for 24 hours.

[16 : 55] He was at an illegal trial. At this trial, he is beaten. He has his beard plucked out. He has all these things happen to him. He's beaten with the cat of nine tails. He's, he's there upon the cross and when he cries out, it is finished, we just have to understand and believe he really died and to make sure that this man was dead, they stab him with a spear and blood and water flowed.

That's this idea that the blood had already began to separate right into the coagulation and the serum and there is the blood and water flowed. He is really dead. These soldiers, they are experts at execution.

He truly died and this is important because if he had not died, died, then why are you sitting there? You know what I'm saying?

I mean, if Jesus did not really die, then what we're doing right here where you're sitting there for an hour, you know, 45 minutes of it listening to this crazy man talk, you just gave up prime time on a Sunday morning to do something else and in a moment we pass the offering plate and you're going to pay for it too.

the lost person, this makes no sense to them at all. Why would you do this? And we do this because Christ died.

[18 : 24] But if he did not really die, then none of this makes any sense. Let's just turn it off. Let's just go. Do what you want to. It doesn't matter. Right? Because if he didn't really die, then there's no such thing as sin.

And if there's no such thing as sin, then there's no such thing as judgment. And if there's no such thing as judgment, then we can go do whatever we want to do. And so many people live that way. As though he didn't really die because they don't understand how revolting their sin is. But if he did really die, then there is sin.

sin. And if there is sin, there is judgment. And if there's judgment, there is an afterlife. And if there's an afterlife, there's a God in charge of it.

And if there's a God in charge of it, we will give an account of our lives to him. And let me just say this, that a Christian is someone who honestly, fully, deeply believes that Jesus lived, died, and rose.

[19 : 38] Physically, bodily. If you don't believe that Jesus really lived, died, and rose physically, bodily, you're not a Christian. And you just need to get that and understand that.

As Christians, we believe he really died. The third thing is that Christ truly redeemed. Christ truly redeemed.

His death caused something to happen upon the cross. His death transacted something there upon the cross. So I want to ask you a question.

Did Jesus' death truly save sinners, or did Jesus' death just make sinners savable? savable? Did Jesus' death truly save sinners, or did Jesus' death just make sinners savable?

Was something truly transacted at the cross? Did his wrath, did his life truly satisfy the wrath of God?

[20 : 52] God? Did he just potentially satisfy the wrath of God? He came as a king, and as a king in charge of all things, and he had a plan as he came.

He fully accomplished his plan. This is why he says upon the cross, paid in full. You say, wait a minute, where does he say paid in full?

It is finished. It's interesting, I told you it's a one word, Greek word, and they have found that word on invoices and receipts from that time. It's stamped at the bottom when someone paid their bill. Tetelestai. Tetelestai. Paid in full. He paid a debt. You see, what happens is that we sin, and we violate the law of God.

We violate the law of a holy God, and because of that, restitution has to be paid. Restitution has to be paid to God. He has to be paid back for the laws, his laws, to be broken.

[22 : 01] There's a fee, there's a fine, if you will. And God demands of us that we pay that, because we've inherited the sin of Adam, and we have both the corruption and the guilt, and so we've sinned against God, and we have a debt.

It's an infinite debt, because God is an infinitely worthy God. And so there are only two options to pay this debt back. One is that you have to spend eternity under the wrath of God to pay back the violation of his law that you have done, or the infinitely perfect, holy, righteous Son of God in a moment paid this debt on the cross, and that can be yours.

It reminds me of a song that I used to sing at camp all the time. He paid a debt He did not owe I owed a debt I could not pay I needed someone to wash my sins away That's what the cross does, is it truly redeems, truly saves.

Christ took that punishment there upon the cross for us to fully satisfy the wrath of God on our behalf. And the only proper response to that is to turn from your sin and trust in Christ.

That is the only proper response. You have to turn from your sin and trust in Christ. Years ago, I was pastor of a church near Lufkin, Texas, and one of the gentlemen in our church, he had a swimming pool.

[23 : 44] It was a fantastic swimming pool in his backyard. But all of his family had grown and gotten older and they only came in every so often and so the pool was only used maybe once every other month.

But he liked to keep it up and told us anytime you want to swim, please come. My pool needs to be used. So okay, three or four times a week in the summer, we were there.

I wasn't always there, but Michelle was there. But you know, this is when the time frame of our kids were little and I remember this idea that you're standing there and you've got your kid on the side outside the pool and you clap your hands for them to jump to you and they jump to you because they have no fear.

They think you got them, this kind of a thing. And the older they get though and they want to try to get in the deeper waters, want to swim, they're hanging on to the edge of the pool and you come up and they want you to take them so that you can go around in the deeper parts.

Now Michelle would take them around in the deeper parts because, well, we'll just leave it at that. And so as you would take this kid, invariably every single one of them did the same thing.

[24 : 48] Hanging on to the side, mommy I want you, hanging on to the side, daddy I want you. So you come over, you grab them, they grab on to you and as you start to move, they hang on to the side. I'm like, okay, I can't take you if you don't let go of the side.

You've got to let go of the side for me to take you. And that's the same thing with what it means to repent and trust in Christ. Is that Christ is standing before you today, you're headed off into the wrath of God and he tells you let go of your sin.

Let go of your self-effort. Let go and trust him. Hold on to him. Trust that he is the one who will save you, not you yourself.

In trusting yourself to Christ, you are uniting yourself with him and you have this relationship with him that saves you. But you cannot hold on to Christ and grip to your drunkenness.

You cannot cling to Christ and also your lust. You cannot cling to Christ and your family. You cannot cling to Christ and your baptism.

[25 : 57] You cannot cling to Christ and your church attendance. Your hands cannot hold more than one thing and it is either Christ or nothing. And if he truly redeemed, then today, let go of whatever it is you're hanging on to and trust in Christ.

The final part of this or final lesson you could say is that Christ is truly sovereign. He's truly sovereign. Sovereign means he has the power and the right and the wisdom to do what he wants to.

And in the death of Christ, we see that God, the Father, has a meticulous plan that controls everything that happens to the Lord Jesus Christ. All you have to do is look at the scriptures and see how many times it says fulfilled according to the scriptures.

Right? John chapter 19, verse 18, he was crucified with two other criminals. That's Isaiah 53, 12. He was numbered with the transgressors. John 19, 23 and 24, they cast lots for his clothes. That's Psalm 22, 18. John 19, 28 through 30, he says, I thirst and they give him sour wine to drink. That's Psalm 69, verse 21.

[27 : 20] John 19, 33, he didn't break his bones, but he was pierced. That's three passages. Right? That's Exodus 12, 46, Numbers 9, 12, and Zechariah 12, 10. And just so we tie all this together, John chapter 19, verse 30, where he says he gave up his spirit.

You need to understand theologically what we're saying here is that Genesis 3, 15, Satan bruised his heel. Because he doesn't stay dead.

He is in charge of all things. The plan for Christ to be crucified, for him to truly redeem and save your soul, is controlled and sovereign.

He is sovereign over that whole thing. He is strong and powerful because he makes it all come about. He died at the hands of men, but he died by the plan of God.

That's what I'm trying to say. And so he's worthy of our total dependence. He's worthy of our full loyalty. I mean, just think about this. He knows what it's like to live in the flesh.

[28 : 32] He knows what it's like to suffer loss. He knows what it's like to suffer heartache. He knows what it's like to be under the weight of sin.

And he knows, even better than all of us, what it's like to suffer under the wrath of God. God. And so he is a high priest who can sympathize with our weakness, and yet he is without sin.

And so think about, think about just how glorious that is that our salvation is secure because nothing stops God.

God. Our salvation is secure because nothing stops God. He never fails to do what he plans to do. And the most important thing in your life is where will you spend eternity when you die? And if that, if in that we see his power demonstrated because he leaves nothing to chance, then I want you to think about something for just a second.

[29 : 47] I want you to think about all the heartbreaks, all the trials, all the suffering, all the depression, all the anxiety, from birth to today that you've experienced.

And then I want us to visually or maybe in our imaginations for just a second, just right out here in this grassy area, just stack all of those troubles.

And let's stack our troubles together. And let's build a massive pile of the baggage that we carry of our sufferings and of our trials and our heartaches, our losses and our griefs.

Let's make a big pile of the baggage of our depression and our anxieties and our fears and our dreams that have been crushed and everything else and all this stuff that we would then look at somebody with tears in our eyes and just say, I don't know if I can go another step and just pack it all out there.

And look at how tall and look at how big and look at how massive that pile of baggage would be that we all collectively in this room could pile up out there.

[31 : 21] And it is nothing compared to the awesome power of God who planned and ordained the death of His Son and that He accomplished this death and saved us.

because here's the thing, if He can save you and not fail to save you because He has all power in all things, then the most important thing in your life, He's already taken care of.

And all of these other things, their child's play to Him in His power and His ability to handle. I guess what I'm saying is that if you trust Him for your salvation, why are you struggling to trust Him in the sufferings of your life?

And I'm not saying that to you to say, listen, you need to be more like me because I'm trusting Him in my sufferings. No, no. I'm actually sitting here feeling quite chastised because here's the truth. the truth is is that when I'm not trusting Him, what I'm doing is I'm worrying. I'm worrying about my kids.

[32 : 42] I'm worrying about the future. I'm worrying about you. I'm worrying about me. Little things happen and I can't trust and worry at the same time. Or maybe, maybe it's a fear.

our fear just begins to boil up and we have all these anxieties that we just begin to verbalize and I mean, you can't trust and be afraid at the same time.

Or maybe, it's our complaining. Suffering comes to us, the difficulty comes to us and we're just sitting in our minds maybe or maybe out loud. We complain, gripe and whine about the difficulties that come and those things just come out and we can't be trusting and complain at the same time. It sounds cliché but like, here's the application. You're going through difficulty, looking at the cross of Christ should say to you, we'll just trust Christ.

And I really hate it when people say that to me because like, I know that but like, I'm struggling to do it. And part of it is, I believe, I really do believe that part of it is that we don't believe enough that Christ really is in charge.

[34 : 00] Because when we honestly, truly believe something, it impacts and affects the way we live. 1994, we're living in Lufkin, Texas. I was a youth minister. We're in the parsonage. The parsonage is facing opposite direction from the church.

The neighborhood had gone down. It was kind of a sketchy neighborhood but I remember one night, I think we had already had our first child and Michelle had gotten up with her and then fallen asleep on the couch and I was still in the bedroom and Michelle hears this jiggling of our doorknob on our front, at our front door.

She comes in, wakes me up, get up. And it's like, you know, you wake me up out of a deep sleep like there's trouble. Like I just come up swinging. Like I'm just, I'm just like, ah, full on.

If I wake up like that and I hear her say, front door, somebody's jiggling. So I reach and I grab my baseball bat and I flip on every light in the house and I open the door and I run out yelling. Like I, like I just knew somebody was standing on that porch.

They probably heard some crazy man inside and ran but what I'm saying is that I really honestly believe that when I opened that door I was going to engage immediately because somebody was there because I totally believed what she said.

[35 : 16] And she wasn't lying. Somebody had been there. But you and I both know that when we truly, deeply, honestly believe something we get into action. And the action of believing Jesus in the middle of all this suffering the action is go to Him in prayer.

Look at the cross and let it draw you to trust in Christ. Let's pray. Amen.