

The Crucifixion

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[0:00] Welcome back to week 11 in our series entitled Good News.! I'm Steve Frenzenmeier. I'm one of the pastors here at First Christian Church. And I'm so glad that you decided to be with us today.

Now, normally when I preach, I would like to start off telling a sermon with a Steve story. You know, something to get a laugh out of everyone and to draw a parallel to the scripture that's being read on this whatever day it is I'm preaching.

But not today. Today is going to be totally different. Because today's scripture is totally different. In fact, there's truly nothing humorous about today's message whatsoever.

Today's message may make you squirm a little bit. It may make you feel uneasy. And you may think that it's being cruel and maybe even a little graphic. But I believe this is so necessary to fully appreciate the extent of what Jesus has done for us and just how far God will go to save his children.

If you would, before we get started, let's pray though, okay? Father God, thank you for today. And Lord, I just thank you for the time that we have together. And Lord, I just ask that you would speak to us today.

[1:21] And allow us just to see the extent of your love for us. God, we thank you. And it's in Christ's name we pray. Amen. So let's just start off real quickly here in Luke, the 23rd chapter, starting in verse 26 and 27.

As the soldiers led him away, they seized Simon from Cyrene, who was on his way from the country, and put the cross on him and made him carry it behind Jesus.

A large number of people followed him, including women who mourned and wailed for him. Now, let's just go ahead and stop right there, okay?

And let's just go back a little bit. You see, earlier in Luke chapter 23, we read that Jesus has had his last supper with his disciples. He goes to the garden to pray, had one of his closest friends, Judas, betray him, and allows him to get arrested.

And then all of his disciples, I mean, all of them, every single one of his closest friends, leaves him. And then Peter, one of his closest friends, totally denies that he even knows who Jesus is.

[2:40] Three times. And then on top of that, he goes through illegal court proceedings where witnesses totally lie about Jesus. And then after all this, Jesus is turned over to be crucified on the cross.

Now, crucifixion, it was the most inhumane and painful method of killing someone that the Roman Empire could ever use.

And the torture for Jesus started long before Jesus was even put on the cross. Before the actual crucifixion even began.

Because you see, Roman law required that the person who was to be flogged first. Now, I've had my fair share of whoopens in my lifetime, and all of them were deserved, well-deserved.

Sometimes my dad's hand, sometimes his belt, sometimes a yardstick. But nothing, nothing like what Jesus went through. But this was no ordinary whipping.

[3:46] Jesus was stripped. His body was bent over a post, hands tied to stretch his body out. And then a cat of nine tails was used.

And what this was, it was a whip with nine separate strings of leather coming from the handle. And in each piece, in each string, was glass or pottery that was embedded into each leather braid.

And then two guards would take turns whipping Jesus. Each time, using the leather, would sear the backside of Jesus. And every time, they would just pull the whip back quickly.

Those pottery and pieces of glass would just rip into his flesh. And tearing it out and pulling it. Thirty-nine lashes of the whip.

Almost half of those that were flogged never made it past this point. But Jesus did. Because Jesus had to finish.

[4:52] So when we pick back up in our scripture, we find Simon from Cyrene, just a random guy, just came into town watching what's going on and gets pulled out of the crowd to carry the cross of Jesus.

You see, by this point, Jesus was probably about to go into physiological shock. He's lost blood from all the beatings. And the pain never subsides.

And carrying the cross, Jesus probably kept falling, kept stumbling, dropping the cross. And the crowds. The crowds gathered and packed in so tightly to slander him and mock him.

And many of those were present just a few days earlier as Jesus entered Jerusalem. And that time, they were there singing his praises.

It's about a half mile that Jesus and Simon from Cyrene carried the cross. The main beam of the cross weighed approximately 125 to 150 pounds.

[6:04] Can you imagine carrying something that heavy for a distance of almost a half a mile? I complain about carrying in the grocery sometimes. But then again, on top of all that was all the scourgings of beatings, the lashings, being hit.

At this point, the Bible tells that Jesus was unrecognizable. But yet, Jesus did not give up because he had to finish.

Verse 32 starts off and says, Two other men, both criminals, were also led with him to be executed. When they came to the place called the cross, there, there they crucified him along with the criminals, one on his right and one on his left.

You see, crucifixion was one of the most painful and cruelest methods to cause death that was ever invented by mankind. The Persians invented this method of crucifixion probably three or four hundred years before Christ ever came along.

It was reserved for the vilest and meanest of criminals. And yet, here's Jesus. So here's what happens during the crucifixion process.

[7:27] In 2002, Dr. Caitlin Schreier, a professor at Azusa Pacific University, wrote a paper entitled The Science of the Crucifixion.

And in this paper, it depicts what the human body endures during the crucifixion process. When they got to the Golgotha, Jesus was thrown to the ground, reopening all the wounds on his backside.

And Jesus was placed over the top of the cross. They used eight-inch nails and drove one into each of his wrists. Here, the nail would have severed the median nerve in the wrist, causing excruciating pain all through his hand and up and down Jesus' arm.

And then, as the bar was lifted into place, causing both of his shoulders and elbows to become dislocated. Again, causing excruciating pain.

And then, once in place, with Jesus' body hanging there, his knees were flexed at about a 90-degree angle, and the third nail was driven into both overlapping feet.

[8:42] The nail would have caused even more nerve damage to his foot, severing or severely damaging the dorsal pedal artery. But then, in verse 34, verse 34, Jesus said, Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they're doing.

And they, the guards, divided up all of his clothing by lots. Forgive them? Are you crazy? Did Jesus remember what all he's been happening to him?

But yes, yes, he remembered all that. But Jesus was forgiving those who put him on the cross until the very end. You see, Jesus never gave up on his mission.

And that mission was offering forgiveness for all of our sins. He never stopped. He never stops forgiving. And he's still offering that same forgiveness for our sins today.

records show, and the Bible tells us, that Jesus hung on the cross for about six hours. Each breath he took required tremendous effort.

[10:02] In order to breathe, the chest cavity needs to expand. And the diaphragm must lower to allow the lungs to take in fresh air. To exhale,

the diaphragm rises and forces the air out.

But hanging on the cross, the weight of Jesus' body pulls down on the diaphragm, not allowing air to freely escape. In order to exhale, Jesus must push himself up on the cross with his hands and his nailed feet, pulling himself up.

Each breath that he took is painful and very labor-intensive for anyone. With the difficulty breathing, carbon dioxide builds up in the blood.

And as the carbon dioxide continues to accumulate, fluid begins to build up around the heart and the lungs. With his lungs collapsing, his heart failing, he's dehydrated, he's suffering tremendous blood loss, his body begins to suffocate.

With ongoing oxygen deprivation, Jesus most likely died from a heart attack. And probably in severe cases, the heart will also burst, called a cardiac rupture.

[11:28] For six hours, Jesus endured pain and agony while he was nailed to that cross. Picking back up in the scripture, verse 35 says, the people stood watching and the rulers even sneered at him.

They said, he saved others, let him save himself if he's the Christ of the God, the chosen one. And the soldiers also came up and mocked him.

They offered him wine vinegar and said, if you are the king of the Jews, save yourself. And there was written a notice above him which read, this is the king of the Jews.

The Romans and the Jewish officials were making the crucifixion to be a mockery of all that Jesus had claimed himself to be. And they were trying to make a statement, not only to put Jesus in his place once and for all, but also to put an end to this new movement that Jesus had created.

Now, if I were Jesus, I would have said, all right, enough's enough. I'm putting an end to all this stuff right here and right now. I'm not going to allow you to twist things, to mock me, nothing.

[12:48] I'll show you even. But you know, that's me. And probably you would have done the same thing too. But Jesus, he didn't.

He could have. In Matthew 26, verse 53 and 54, Jesus says, Do you think I cannot call on my Father? And he will at once put at my disposal more than 12 legions of angels.

But how would the scriptures be fulfilled that say it must happen in this way? 12 legions of angels. angels. That's 72,000 angels. At a moment's notice, ready to come and stop this whole thing right here and right now. That's the route I would have taken.

I would have said, I'm the son of God. No one's going to treat me this way. I'll show you my power. Or I even would have said something like, I didn't leave heaven to come down here to be mocked, ridiculed, beaten.

[13:59] And also, I probably would have said something like, I didn't sign up for this. I did not want this. But Jesus doesn't act that way.

He still loves and forgives. In the midst of how he was being treated, we see that in the next passage. Starting in verse 39.

One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him. Aren't you the Christ? Save yourself and us. But the other criminal rebuked him.

Don't you fear God? He said, since you are under the same sentence, we are punished justly for we are getting what we deserve. But this man has done nothing.

And then he said to Jesus, Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom. And Jesus answered him, I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise.

[15:04] Again, up until the very end, Jesus is still offering us mercy and grace. You know, that's a good thing to know.

Jesus is always reaching out to us, even to the very end. Verse 44 says, it was now about the sixth hour or about noon and darkness came over the whole land until the ninth hour or three o'clock.

For the sun stopped shining and the curtain of the temple was torn in two and Jesus called out with a loud voice, Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.

And when he had said that, he breathed his last. Do you remember a couple years ago when we had the solar eclipse?

Remember when that happened? For about ten minutes the sun was shaded behind the moon and caused kind of a very eerie darkness. On this day for three hours the sun stopped shining.

[16:21] Can you imagine? Total and complete darkness at noon. Think of the chaos that would have caused. People panicking, maybe writing, what

in the world is going on here?

What? And as the sun began to shine again the curtain in the temple is torn in two. And now this wasn't your average curtain.

It's not like the one we see over our normal windows. This curtain was about sixty feet high, thirty feet wide and four inches thick. Top to bottom completely torn in half.

Why is that so significant? Why was the curtain significant? Well in the temple this curtain separated the main temple from an area that was called the Holy of Holies.

A very sacred place that only a few of the high priests would ever go into. By it being torn this meant that we had all access to God.

[17:26] That we that nothing separated us from God at all. on the cross Jesus our Lord our Messiah our Savior after having been betrayed by his closest friends beaten and tortured beyond recognition enduring one of the cruelest forms of execution he takes his final breath and the lifeless body of Jesus hangs there.

In Matthew 27 it tells us that the earth actually shook and the rocks were split in half at the moment Jesus died. Picking back up in our passage starting in verse 47 the centurion one of the guards seeing what had happened praised God and said surely this was a righteous man.

When all the people who had gathered to witness all this saw the sight that had taken place they beat their chests and went away. But all those who knew him including the women who had followed him from Galilee stood at a distance watching all these things.

The centurion one of the Roman guards who's on the detail possibly one of the guards that whipped Jesus earlier at the trial within just an inch of his life with the Canaanite tails possibly the one who drove the crown of thorns over his head maybe he was the one that grabbed Simon of Cyrene and ordered him to carry the cross for Jesus maybe he was the same guard that put the nails in his hands maybe he was the same guard that hurled insults at Jesus get down off the cross this guard who had witnessed everything that had gone on stops and says this has to be a righteous man there is something truly special about this Jesus and we killed him we killed a righteous man I killed him you know actually I killed him my sins my disobedience it killed him but that's why Jesus came to here to earth was to save me from myself to save me from my own sins to save you from yourself to save you from your sins we all know the verse for God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life people often forget verse 17 for God did not send his son into the world to condemn the world but to save the world through him Jesus left paradise paradise as he told the thief next to him on the cross and came to earth on a mission a rescue mission a mission to save the world from sin a mission to save you a mission to save me from our own sins so to a Christian what does all this mean

[21:24] I love the way John MacArthur puts it he says what does it mean to be a Christian that Jesus Christ is my life Colossians 3 3 says for you died and your life is now hidden with Christ in God when Christ who is your life appears then you will appear with him in glory so what does it what does it mean I died I'm still here kicking but Paul Paul puts it this way I have been crucified with Christ and it's I who no longer live but Christ who lives in me the life I now live in the body I live by the faith in the son of God who loved me and gave himself for me being crucified with Christ is not a physical death like Jesus did for us it means that we are no longer under the penalty of law and of death the penalty of sin our spiritual death was paid by Jesus when he died on the cross and because he paid that debt a debt that I owed

Jesus took my debt a debt that he did not owe and paid it for me and because of that I've been set free because of what Jesus has done you have been set free so why is my sin such a big deal for the wages of sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord according to Romans 6 23 you see there's a consequence to our sin and it's death and not just a physical death but also a spiritual death so why did Jesus have to die for my sins he was the one that could he was perfect blameless spotless sinless he he himself bore our sins in his body on the tree so that we might die to sin and live for righteousness by his wounds you have been healed for you were like sheep gathered astray but now you have returned to the shepherd and overseer of our faith 1st

Peter 2 24 25 you see Christ did what we couldn't do for ourselves we get eternal life something that we couldn't buy something that we could never earn and in fact it's kind of like this when we get to heaven and the angels ask us why are you here our response should never start with I or with me or my because I believed because of my faith because of my service because of my works no our answer should only start with he him because of what he did on the cross for me because of him I am here I love the way that Alistair Bag puts it I'm here because the man on the middle cross said I could come right now we should be letting out a huge sigh of relief a relief knowing that your future my future is in

Christ's hands and that our salvation is in his hands our sins have been paid in full but even more relief that we should have this immense humbleness and gratitude for what Christ did for us that's why we talk so deeply about what Christ went through the punishment and the crucifixion there's nothing pretty or glamorous about Christ's punishment and crucifixion on the cross in fact it's quite horrific bloody and ugly but then again there's nothing glamorous about our sin even if the world glamorizes it we see the consequences always lead to death and if we look at the cross in any other way it only allows what was called cheap grace cheap grace is what takes away from what Jesus did on the cross and minimalizes it so what if you don't know

Jesus how does the cross affect! me you know I heard this story once it is probably one of the best illustrations I have ever heard about the cross and the story goes like this there was once a king who was a very good king that was considered the most loving and one of the most just kings ever and in his kingdom he discovered one day that someone had been stealing from the kingdom's treasury well this of course made the giving them a death sentence well the stealing continued and then one day the perpetrator was caught and found and was brought to the king it was his own daughter his own daughter had been stealing from him so rumors began to swirl around the kingdom what would the king do would he have his daughter flogged and then be questioned about how loving he is or would he pass the king and thus questioning how just he was the king ordered that his daughter would have the sentence carried out and to proceed with the flogging the guard brought the king's daughter into the courtyard and tied her over a stump the guards one of the guards tore off her shirt to expose her bare back the executioner raised the whip and just in time the king jumped up and yelled stop stop the king stepped off of his throne came into the courtyard!

[28:33] ripped his own shirt off and proceeded to stretch out his body over his daughter's back he turned his head to the executioner and told him to proceed but the executioner was dumbfounded but sir I cannot flog her without hitting you the king looked back again at the executioner and ordered begin and the executioner began completing 40 lashes on the king's back eventually killing the king justice was served and the king's daughter was lived but she was also forgiven that's exactly what Jesus Christ did for you on the cross justice for your sins was served your sins were forgiven Christ died in your place and you lived

I love the old hymn Jesus paid it all all I hear the savior say thy strength indeed is small child of weakness watch and pray find in me thine all in all Lord now I indeed find thy power and thine alone can change the leopard spots and melt this heart of stone Jesus paid it all all to him I owe sin had left a crimson stain he washed it white as snow but the great thing about all this is my friends is the cross wasn't the end it wasn't the end for you or for me or for Jesus at the cross

Christ wasn't finished and neither were you and me because for us for you and me it's only the beginning it's a new beginning so I want you to hear the good news of today sin had left a crimson stain he washed it white as snow let's pray father god i just thank you i thank you so much for your love for carrying us the way that you do and forgiving us of all of our sins all of our sins you forgave us!

God thank you and lord i just pray now that we can just give our lives to you so that we can live according to your will and honor you with all that we do god thank you for the cross and it's in your name we pray amen thank you for being with us today and i ask that you if you don't have a church home that you please come consider first christian church here in greensburg next sunday which will be easter we'll be having our big easter service out at north decatur gymnasium at the high school and ask!

you would please come and worship with us on this beautiful resurrection sunday it's 930 in the morning and we would love to have you thanks again for being with us if you're looking for a church

home again first christian church of greensburg you can find us on the web at fcc greensburg dot com or you can call us here at the church 812 663 8488 God bless you have a great day