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[0 : 00] The reading is taken from John chapter 19, beginning at verse 16, and that can be found on page 1091 of the Church Bibles.

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.

There they crucified him, and with 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, this man said, I am King of the Jews.

[1 : 21] Pilate answered, what I have written, I have written. Pilate answered, what I have written.

Pilate answered, what I have written. 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.

Pilate answered, what I have written. Pilate answered, what I have written. 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. Pilate answered, what I have written. Pilate answered, what I have written. After this, Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said to fulfill the scripture, I thirst.

[3 : 00] Pilate answered, what I have written. passage open. As Marcus said, my name's Andy, the assistant pastor here at Grace Church.

It's great to see you. Let's pray as we start. Heavenly Father, as we meditate now on the events of the first Easter, please give us clarity on who the Lord Jesus is and why he died on the cross. Amen.

Amen. If you want to follow along, there's a sermon outline on the back of your sheet and on the screen with me here. Let me start by saying that history is full of moments when people were present at world-changing events yet failed to realize their significance. Just think about November the 9th, 1989, the day the Berlin Wall fell. There behind me, can't quite see it. Some people saw it nothing as a few protesters chipping away at concrete. But those who understood history realized it was an end of an era. The collapse of communism in Eastern Europe and a beginning of a new world order. It's why now you can go to the army museum in Chelsea, which I've done, and see it for yourself and touch it. I mean, if it wasn't significant, that would just be a lump of concrete with graffiti on it in a museum. I mean, it still is a lump of concrete with graffiti on it.

My children weren't that enthralled by it. But it represents something of great significance. But I guess as it came down, some stood there watching, but had no idea how history was shifting right before their eyes. Well, the same thing happened at the crucifixion of Jesus.

For the Roman soldiers, it was just another Friday, another criminal, another execution, nothing more. Verse 23 of our passage, they divided his clothes, they mocked him, they went about their business, disinterested and oblivious to the fact they were standing right at the center of the most significant event in human history. The chief priests, the religious leaders of the time, they were just as blind. In verse 21, in their minds, they just silenced a troublemaker. They had preserved their power.

[6 : 13] But in reality, they had just overseen the fulfillment of prophecy, God's great plan of salvation unfolding before their very eyes. And then there's the disciples. Jesus follows. Where were they?

Well, most of them abandoned him. Afraid of being associated with a condemned man, they kept their heads down, fearful of the consequences. And yet we encounter similar reactions today, don't we?

People like the soldiers going through life disinterested and oblivious to Jesus. They've perhaps heard the Easter story, but it makes no difference to them.

They haven't stopped to consider what Jesus' death really means. Others, like the chief priests, actively rejecting Jesus. They dismiss him, argue against him, even ridicule those who follow him. They see Christianity as a threat to their way of life, just as the religious leaders did back then. And then there are those like the disciples who believe in Jesus, who follow Jesus, but when it comes to it, are tempted to choose silence over boldness. At school, perhaps you're the only Christian in your class. At work, among friends, we're tempted to keep quiet, not wanting to face the criticism or conflict blending in rather than standing out. Well, John, our gospel writer, wants us to see the truth. He wants us to see the significance. Because in verse 35, he pauses in his crucifixion account to remind us why he's writing all this down. So if you look at verse 35 in chapter 19, he who saw it has borne witness. His testimony is true, and he knows that he is telling the truth that you also may believe. John is saying, I was there, I saw it. And I'm telling you all this so that you won't miss the significance, that you won't miss what so many others did.

[8 : 26] Notice he doesn't really go into much detail about the physical suffering of Jesus. Perhaps people knew what was going on. He didn't need to go into the gory details of what that would look like. People knew how barbaric it was.

Instead, he zooms in on a sign, some gambling, and the final words of Jesus. In the event of a gruesome crucifixion, they are completely irrelevant, aren't they? They seem trivial.

But actually, they're crucial to understanding the significance of Jesus' death. And so as we look at the crucifixion account in John over the next three weeks, the prayer is for all of us that we would have a confident belief in the events and the significance of that first Easter.

So we're going to take those three things that John wants us to believe about the sign, the gambling, and the words. And firstly, let's look at the sign. So we are to believe that Jesus' death proclaims God's king.

Believe that Jesus' death proclaims God's king. Jesus' kingship runs throughout the whole account here. At the start of the chapter, though we didn't have time to read, the soldiers gave Jesus a crown of thorns, a purple robe, sarcastically shouted, Hail, King of the Jews!

[9 : 46] And now, verse 17, Jesus carries his cross out to Golgotha, and he is crucified. And as he is dying, the cameras zoom in on this sign. So look at verse 19.

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.

It was the Roman custom of the day for crucified persons to have fastened above them the crime that they are crucified for, for all to see.

It was a warning from the Roman Empire for those who wanted to follow suit. So Pilate has this sign inscribed, Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.

Now that's not Pilate personally coming to his senses about who Jesus is. It's probably no more than a taunt to the Jews. But Pilate still spoke better than he knew.

[10 : 55] And in writing this in three languages, Aramaic, Latin, and Greek, God's King is being proclaimed to the world. So Jacob from Judea passes by, and he reads it in Aramaic, the language of the locals.

He thinks that's interesting. Luigi from Rome is on holiday, and he reads it in Latin, the official language of the Roman Empire. And Ariana from Athens is on a business trip.

She walks by, she reads it in Greek, spoken by throughout the Roman Empire. All of them can see the sign. All of them can read. All of them can see Jesus on the cross.

And why he is there. Jesus' death proclaims God's King to the world. Now the coronation of King Charles in 2023 had a peak UK television audience of 20.4 million.

It attracted a global audience of 2 billion people. All across 125 countries. It was a global event. An international event.

[12 : 05] And here we see Jesus being crowned God's King. This is a global event for all time. Jesus' kingship proclaimed to all nations. But instead of walking up a red carpet in Westminster Abbey, the God's King walks up a hill to Golgotha.

Instead of a throne, a gold crown, and a crowd of subjects, there's a cross, a crown of thorns, and a crowd of mockers. Soldiers, not statesmen, surrounded him.

And so Jesus stripped and nailed to a cross. He looks anything but royal, doesn't he? But John wants us to believe that we've got the right man. Because to the world, a true King reigns in power, not suffering.

A true leader, global, international leader, reigns in power, not in suffering. Yet this is exactly how God's King establishes a kingdom. Not by might and military conquest, but by Jesus laying down his life.

As we go through life believing in Jesus, we may encounter the same views in others as the chief priest had. Verse 21, if you look down, so the chief priest of the Jews said to Pilate, do not write the King of the Jews, but rather this man said, I am the King of the Jews.

[13 : 27] You can't say this is true. This is just an opinion. It's just your interpretation. But no, John wants us to believe with confidence that Jesus is proclaimed God's powerful King right at the moment of his death.

His victory comes through sacrifice. So to the world, and maybe to some of us here this morning, Jesus and Easter are utterly irrelevant to life now.

No more than a chance to have a long weekend off work and breaking up the school calendar. But if Jesus really is God's King, then he is totally relevant to today and to everyone if he is God's King to the world.

All of us need to decide what we make of him. And if he is God's King, then the right response is to come to him and submit to him as King. So that's the sign.

We are to believe that Jesus' death proclaims God's King. And then the camera pans away from the sign to some gambling. And John wants us to see that Jesus' death is what God has been building up to through all of history.

[14 : 44] So secondly, we are to believe that Jesus' death fulfills God's plan. Jesus' death fulfills God's plan. Now it makes all the difference in the world to know something was planned, doesn't it?

Here's a picture of Captain Witold Pelecki. He was a Polish man and he found himself in Auschwitz concentration camp in World War II.

And as he arrived there on the train, pushed along by the soldiers, you might think it hasn't worked out for you. another person arriving at a horrific place.

But actually, you'd be wrong. Because Captain Pelecki was a member of the Polish resistance and quite a remarkable guy who volunteered to be arrested and he planned to get himself into Auschwitz.

And once there, his plan was to improve morale, organise resistance within the camp and try to give people hope to hold on. In fact, he himself escaped two years later and he was, I guess, I think, one of the first to break the news of the horrors going on in Auschwitz.

[15 : 57] You see, it makes all the difference to know that it wasn't that things had turned against him, but it was going exactly to his brave and courageous plan.

He wanted to be there. He wanted to be arrested. He had a mission to go through. Well, the same is through of Jesus. As we read these verses, we discover that rather than the events taking a turn for the worse and us looking at Jesus saying, it's not worked out for you, has it?

Actually, God's plan is on track. Look down at verse 23. When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they took his garments and divided them into four parts, one part for each soldier, also his tunic.

Now, one of the perks of the soldier's job was that you get to keep the clothes of the people you kill. And if the person you're killing has nice clothes, well, that's a work bonus for you.

But we read on in verse 23, but the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom. So they said to one another, let us not tear it, but cast lots for it to see whose it shall be.

[17 : 12] Nobody wants a quarter of a tunic, do they? That's just a piece of cloth. So let's play dice. Let's see who wins. And then they can have the whole thing. I said at the start, for this, for the Roman soldier, this is just another day work.

This is a normal Friday. Perhaps they got to knock off early and have some work drinks afterwards. We don't know. But something bigger is going on here. And John tells us, verse 24, he wants us to join the dots.

This was to fulfill the scripture which says, they divided my garment among them and for my clothing they cast lots. Now this is remarkable because this verse from Psalm 22 has been in the Jewish scriptures for a thousand years.

Roman soldiers, they didn't know anything about Psalm 22. They don't care anything about the Jewish scriptures. They're just going about their job. They're totally disinterested in Jesus.

And yet we discover they're doing exactly what God said would happen. What was predicted that would happen. It's good to look up Psalm 22 where this came from.

[18:22] So keep a finger in John 19. Turn to Psalm 22 which is on page 548. Psalm 22 it's a psalm of King David written during a time of intense personal distress.

Big themes of abandonment by God suffering that turns into victory. It was written a thousand years before Jesus before the cross was even invented and yet strikingly it sounds very much like Jesus' crucifixion.

So Psalm 22 if you look at verse 1 my God my God why have you forsaken me? That's a cry of Jesus on the cross that is picked up in Matthew and Mark's accounts of the crucifixion.

Then verse 7 all who see me mock me they make mouths at me they wag their heads he trusts in the Lord let him deliver him let him rescue him for he delights in him.

Again very strikingly similar to what Jesus went through with everyone mocking him. Then verse 15 my strength is dried up like a pot's herd my tongue sticks to my jaws and you lay me in the dust of death for dogs encompass me a company of evildoers encircles me they are pierced my hands and feet isn't that interesting?

[19:57] I can count all my bones they stare and gloat over me and then verse 18 which John quotes they divide my gardens among them and for my clothing they cast lots.

As we've seen in our Bible overview in our growth groups the Old Testament promised God's people peace and security and a right relationship with God and it focused on one man who would achieve it a king descended in the line of King David and at the cross we see God orchestrating events to fulfil that plan through Jesus God's king in the line of David coming back to King Charles I'm not a massive fan but coming back to him when he was crowned he sat on King Edward's chair dating back to the 14th century and he was given the symbols of kingship the orb the scepter and the crown they are they are symbols that King Charles is following in a long line of kings and queens before him and the same is happening as Jesus dies on the cross with Jesus his suffering is a symbol that he is following in the line of King David and yet he's just not another king in the line like King Charles is but the whole of human history has been building up to this moment in this place in John chapter 19 as Jesus is strict humiliated clothes divided he's dying in agony

John wants us to believe Jesus is that promised king who died to deliver peace and security and a right relationship with God for his people all this presses home that Jesus death was not a mistake or that Jesus could have somehow engineered these events you can't engineer soldiers gambling for your clothes when you're nailed to a cross no this is the set plan of God fulfilled in the minute detail of history well then lastly the camera zooms in on Jesus himself his final words we are to believe that Jesus death finishes God's rescue that's our last point Jesus death finishes God's rescue look down at verse 28 after this Jesus knowing that all was now finished said to fulfill the scripture

I thirst probably linking back to Psalm 22 again 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 when Jesus had received the sour wine he said it is finished and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit at three times in these verses we get finished fulfilled finished all these words are actually the same original word tetelestai it's one of the most popular Christian tattoos actually young people here in the room if you want to get a tattoo when you're a bit older maybe start this conversation with your parents maybe tetelestai is a great one to go for maybe you can have that conversation over lunch tetelestai it means it is finished Jesus is not saying my life has ended game over he's rather saying job done mission accomplished it is finished now this mission goes right back to the start of chapter 3

I'll put these verses on the handout that Jesus said as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness so must the son of man be lifted up that whoever believes in him may have eternal life Jesus come to be lifted up he has come to be glorified so that we can have eternal life and that rescue mission is

alluded to in chapter 18 verse 11 so Jesus said to Peter put your sword into its sheath shall I not drink the cup that the father has given me we heard about the cup earlier in our children's talk the cup of God's judgment on sin that Jesus has come to drink on the cross so others who died on a cross suffered for longer than Jesus but no one suffered more as Jesus takes on the full weight of God's judgment on our sin and so Jesus and so verse 28 Jesus knows it's mission accomplished scripture is fulfilled the cup is empty and he remains fully in control of events as he bows his head and gives up his spirit the price is paid now in

[25 : 07] Egypt archaeologists once unearthed papyrus fragments dating back to the second century it turned out to be just boring fragments of tax receipts actually paid by people transporting goods across a desert road and again we're not going to talk about tariffs but across these receipts was written TETEL short for TETELESDA signifying that the tax has been paid in full the account is settled well as Jesus died on the cross he shouts that same word TETELESDA sin has been paid in full the way back to God is secured and so if we are a Christian today then that is a wonderful truth to believe and go on believing that John wants us to see as Charles Spurgeon minister said there is no mortgage on the saints there's no future repayment to be demanded our sin has been fully paid for through

Jesus death when we come to him our account with God is settled perhaps Charles Wesley put it best in the words of his famous hymn we will sing later it is finished the Messiah dies cut off the sins but not his own accomplished is the sacrifice the great redeeming work is done and so John 19 is not just a record of history it's an invitation to believe John's purpose again verse 35 he who saw it has borne witness his testimony is true and he knows that he is telling the truth that you also may believe history is full of times when people are present at world changing events yet fail to see their significance well if you wouldn't call yourself a Christian here today

John wrote his gospel he wrote this down the event of Jesus death so that we wouldn't make the same mistake and so the blunt question is what will we make of him what will we make of this death and if we would call ourselves a follower of Jesus this morning a Christian John wants us to go on believing these truths and the significance of Jesus death even especially as loads around us don't we are surrounded by people who go through life disinterested and oblivious like the soldiers they're not murderers but they're just totally not interested in Jesus and so John wants us to continue to trust that Jesus is God's king even when the world ignores him when we face people like the chief priests who are vocal in their opposition to Jesus well we must stand firm we are to believe that

Jesus death fulfilled God's plan even when he is mocked even when we are mocked and rejected and when we feel like the disciples were tempted to keep our heads down for fear of what others might think we must remember that Jesus has finished God's rescue and that there is nothing more important than standing with him in confident belief Jesus has died his work is finished we are to see that significance and keep believing let's pray together when Jesus had received the sour wine he said it is finished and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit heavenly father we thank you for the Lord Jesus coming to die for us as your king fulfilling your great plan to die for the forgiveness of sin and to secure eternal life for us please help us to go on believing amen to to him to him to him to him to him to him to him!