

## 3/1/2020 - John 1:29-37

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- [ 0 : 0 0 ]     The following sermon is from Grace and Peace Church in Chattanooga, Tennessee. Grace and Peace is a new church that exists for the glory of God and the good of the northeast suburbs of Hamilton Place, Collegedale, and Ottawa.
- You can find help more by visiting [gracepeacechurch.org](http://gracepeacechurch.org). I am starting a new teaching series this week, and it lines up well with the Lenten season as we turn and prepare for the 40 days of preparation for Good Friday and for Easter Sunday.
- And so how do we as a body want to go about preparing for Easter? Here's what I want us to do. I want us to focus upon the cross.
- I want us to look more deeply at the cross of Jesus. I have this coffee mug that I carry around and I bring sometimes on Sundays. And it's a picture of the great theologian and pastor Charles Spurgeon.
- My children sometimes make fun of me because he has better hair and a better beard than me. Which is fine, but on the back, this was given to me as a gift. It has this quote from him on it, and it says this.
- [ 1 : 1 4 ]     My entire theology can be condensed into four words. Jesus died for me. Jesus died for me.
- There's wonderful simplicity to that. And it's absolutely true, and it's absolutely wonderful. The only thing is, it's a little bit incomplete. It's a little bit simplistic.
- And a lot of our beliefs about ourselves, and of course Charles Spurgeon was brilliant. He had all sorts of depth. And it takes an incredibly brilliant mind to be simple.
- But some of us live with an overly simplistic view of what was happening at the cross of Jesus. If I asked you, what did Jesus do at the cross? You would say something like, Jesus died for my sins.
- And that's true. But there's so much more going on. It's like a kaleidoscope when you were a kid. And as you turned the kaleidoscope, the images changed.
- [ 2 : 1 2 ]     The colors came out. They were bright. They were unexpected. You didn't know what was going to come next. There was something beautiful about it. In fact, there are these amazing videos of kaleidoscopes on YouTube.
- You should just Google that sometime and go into that wormhole. It's pretty great. But there's something about the cross that has that kind of aspect to it.
- It's like a kaleidoscope that you can look at it from different angles and it changes. Its beauty becomes more and more magnificent, more and more inexhaustible as you look at it.
- That's part of what is going on with the image on the front of your bulletins that is here. It's the cross, but it's kind of a stained glass kaleidoscope cross.
- It's attempting to display for us the inexhaustible riches of the cross. So every week I want to look at a different aspect of the cross.

[ 3 : 08 ] And today I want you to see that the cross is deliverance. The cross is deliverance. So I'm going to take a few minutes just to look at what it means that we are delivered in the cross.

And then I want to look at two particular things that we are delivered from in the cross. So to do that, I want to start by reading this passage from the Gospel of John, the beginning of John.

It concerns John the Baptist. John the Baptist, not the one who wrote the book. John the Baptist was a prophet and a baptizer and a preacher. John the Apostle is the one who wrote this book.

And it concerns Jesus and what John saw of him. So, the next day, he, meaning John the Baptist, saw Jesus coming toward him and said, Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

This is he of whom I said, After me comes a man who ranks before me. Because he was before me. I myself did not know him, but for this purpose I came baptizing with water, that he might be revealed to Israel.

[ 4 : 24 ] And John bore witness. I saw the Spirit descend from heaven like a dove and it remained on him. I myself did not know him, but he who sent me to baptize with water said to me, He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.

And I have seen him, and I have borne witness that this is the Son of God. The next day, John again was standing with two of his disciples.

He looked at Jesus as he walked by and said, Behold the Lamb of God. The two disciples heard this, heard him say this, and they followed Jesus.

Friends, this is God's Word and He gives it to us because He loves us and He wants us to know Him and to love Him. So when I say the word deliverance, when I say that the cross is a deliverance, perhaps you, as we read about earlier, perhaps your mind goes to that great deliverance that came in the biblical story of the Exodus.

The Exodus. The people of Israel had gone down and were slaves in Egypt for 400 years. God raised up Moses who brought them out with those great plagues. They passed through the Red Sea and they were delivered out of slavery and bondage.

[ 5 : 44 ] And this story is the master story for both Jews as well as Christians. Not only was it a true story, not only was it a story that has huge impact for the ethnic people that we now call the Jews, but it's the story that becomes a paradigm for what it looks like for God to save humans.

It's a heritage for us as Christian people as well. We are inheritors of the Exodus story. Now, if you ask Jewish folks, Jewish folks would probably not, they don't like it when Christians say that.

They say, hey, look, that's our story. That's our corner. You know, stay off of that, please. That's our history. You can't have it. But as we look at the New Testament, you have to remember that Jesus was a Jew, as we're reminded in Meet the Fakers, if you remember that movie.

Jesus was a Jew. And so were all of the New Testament writers. And so for them, they would have been at those Passover seders in their own homes. And when they read the passages like this, they would not have said they were slaves in Egypt.

They were delivered by God. They would have said we were slaves in Egypt. We were delivered by God. They were participants in that story. It wasn't just something from long ago.

[ 7 : 09 ] It was something present, a present reality. And when the New Testament writers began to talk about their own history, we talked about this in the book of Ephesians, that the great mystery of the gospel is that outsiders have been brought in.

That non-Jewish people are now given access to the story of the people of Israel. We are now Exodus people. We are people who are part of the grand story of God's redemption.

And so, Exodus becomes the paradigm, the pattern. It teaches us something about how it is that God accomplishes the salvation of humanity.

How it is that there would be a link between the ethnic people of Israel and the people of faith in Christ that come from every tribe and tongue and nation.

That we are all Exodus people because we are united by faith into this story of deliverance. Now, the center of the Exodus story that every Jewish person would have known was the sacrifice of the spotless lamb whose blood was spread over the doorposts of the people of Israel.

[ 8 : 31 ] And so, when the angel of God came to judge the wickedness of the Egyptians, the angel passed over the Israelites who had the blood spread over their door.

And the people of Israel were delivered. Right? They were freed from slavery. Every Jewish child would have known this story.

In fact, they would have known the centrality of the lamb. That's the purpose of what Mark read just a few minutes ago. At the very end it says, so that when your children come and ask you, what's the meaning of all this?

Why are we doing this? You can tell them, this is our story. We were slaves. We've now been freed. We've been delivered. This is our story.

So, with that as the background, can you imagine what it would have been like for a bunch of Jews who were gathered around John the Baptist and John the Baptist stands up and says, hey, that guy, that one right there, he's the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

[ 9 : 38 ] Now, what you have to remember is, John the Baptist was a pretty weird dude. First of all, he lived in the wilderness.

And people came out to him to go get baptized in this muddy little river called the Jordan River. And he would baptize them. He was a preacher. He was kind of one of your hellfire and brimstone kind of preachers. He was actually more like a street preacher.

And not only that, he was dressed like the Old Testament prophet Elijah. Now, Elijah came about 800 years before John the Baptist.

So, can you imagine somebody nowadays dressed like somebody from 800 years ago? Or let's take 500 years ago. Somebody who dresses up like Martin Luther, you know, who like, you know, has the weird monk bald spot on their head and weird long hair and has like a robe on with a rope, a belt, and is going around to all the parts of the city that nobody really wants to go to and is a street preacher.

That's John the Baptist. And here's the thing. Thousands of people were going to see John the Baptist. There was something about him that was magnetic that people couldn't get away from.

[ 10 : 49 ] So, imagine all these Jewish people who feel like they've gone out to follow some crazy dude out in the wilderness and then he points to this one random normal looking Jewish guy and says, that guy, that's the one.

He is the Lamb of God. Immediately, all the Jewish people are thinking, whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa. Lamb of God, Passover lamb, blood over the doorposts, freedom from slavery.

This is our story. This is our history. But this guy is the one we ought to be looking for? It would have been shocking to say the least.

Now, the imagery of the Lamb gets expanded in the Old Testament. Isaiah talks about the Lamb that is like a lamb led to the slaughter. Every day in the temple there was one Lamb that was shed for sin.

So, there's all these themes that kind of get squished together when you start talking about the Lamb. But the people of Israel, the point is, the people of Israel knew what John was talking about.

[ 11 : 59 ] And it would have been shocking to them. And it was shocking to John. Did you catch in our passage that he says, verse 33, I myself did not know him, but he who sent me to baptize with water said to me, he on whom the Spirit descends and remains, this is the one, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.

Jesus didn't even look like something special. It took the Holy Spirit opening the eyes of John the Baptist for him to even know that's who it was. So, what do we do with that?

Jesus is the true Passover Lamb. And everyone united to Him by faith is delivered because of Him. What does that mean? That's a nice biblical fact.

What does that mean? Well, I think what we want to say is that you are delivered because of that fact. Oh, I should also say something else. The Apostle John, when he writes the story of Jesus' crucifixion, he goes out of his way to tell you that when the very hour that Jesus was crucified was the day of the preparation for the Passover meal.

So he wants you to see that Jesus was crucified on the cross at the very same time that families were sacrificing a lamb.

[ 13 : 31 ] and preparing it for the Passover meal. At the very moment, John wants you to see that Jesus Himself is the Passover Lamb. What does that mean?

Okay. What that means is that you have been delivered from two things that are very important because of the work of Jesus on the cross. The first one is you've been delivered from the wrath of God.

The second one is you've been delivered from the slavery of sin. Okay? So first of all, you've been delivered from the wrath of God. That was the purpose of the Lamb in the Passover.

The people were delivered from God's wrath by the blood of the Lamb. The sacrifice of the Lamb in the Passover wasn't... wasn't... it wasn't a sacrifice for sin exactly.

In that story, the purpose of that story is not to show that people's individual sins were being paid for. The purpose of that story was to show that God's righteous wrath was coming down upon the Egyptians and that the blood of the Lamb saved the people from God's wrath.

[ 14 : 40 ] Now, we see throughout the Bible that God punishes people for sin. He punishes both His people as well as the enemies of His people.

And the reason for that is because all of us are guilty before God. all of us have had a part in the destruction of this world that God has created.

Each one of us has had a part of destroying the people whom God has created in His image. Each one of us have turned with rebellious hearts against God.

And God's righteous anger falls upon people because of that. and yet and yet there is grace.

And the grace that we see in the Passover is that God provides a way for His people to be free from the wrath of God. From the anger of God.

[ 15 : 41 ] So, in Jesus on the cross His blood poured out for us saves us and delivers us from the wrath of God. What does that mean? That means very simply this that God is no longer angry with you.

He's no longer angry at your sin and rebellion. That because of the blood of Christ His wrath has passed over you and He is no longer angry with you.

I saw a movie recently and there was a woman who was on her deathbed and the question that she asked her son in that room was do you think that God is angry with me?

And I thought you know that's really that's true. One of the one of the difficult things and one of the great joys of being a pastor is you get invited into sacred spaces like hospital rooms when people are dying.

And the kinds of emotions and the kinds of fears that people experience in those moments are things that they would never show outside of that. And they begin to express those things that most of the time most of us don't access those kinds of thoughts and feelings.

[ 17 : 08 ] They're way in the background. We've got way too many distractions. We've got way too many things. We're putting up way too many fronts to actually talk about what we really fear. But in those moments people ask questions like do you think that God is angry at me?

There's something very human about that question because every single one of us lives with the reality of knowing that our lives are unbelievably broken.

That if somebody was to look in behind the curtain of our lives we fear that they would be absolutely appalled by what they see. And none of us are going to show it. And the cross of Jesus says to you, is confirmation to you that God says, I see it and I've passed over it.

I am no longer angry with you. You know, some of you come to church every week every week and yet when you are alone with your own thoughts you feel this accusation that comes over you.

You remember all of those things that you regret. You remember all of those things that you wish you hadn't done. You remember all of those failures and pieces of rebellion that you are ashamed of and embarrassed by.

[ 18 : 33 ] And they just come into your brain. You don't want them there, but you don't know what to do with them. The cross of Jesus gives you the opportunity to see that as he hung on that cross, he hung on that cross with your very sins nailing him to the cross as we just sang.

It was my sin that held him there until it was accomplished. His dying breath has brought me life. His dying breath has brought you life.

God is not angry at you anymore. Now, don't get me wrong, there is still discipline for sin. Your rebellion will still get you discipline and consequences, but it's the difference between the discipline of an enemy, the righteous wrath upon an enemy, and the discipline of a son.

And that's fundamentally different. That God looks upon you as his beloved son or daughter whose wrath no longer is sitting over their head.

And he says, you are free. You are delivered. That's the first thing. You're delivered from the wrath of God. The second thing is, you are delivered from the power of sin.

[ 19 : 50 ] Of course, we know that there is the power of sin in this world, but what you need to see in this passage, when John the Baptist proclaimed the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

There's something that isn't exactly obvious in that statement. John doesn't say that he is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, plural, the kind of individual, particular pieces of rebellious actions that we do.

That's not what John is talking about. What he says is, he is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. The power of sin in the world has been defeated by Jesus.

He has come to take that thing that is the root of brokenness that lives inside each one of us. The root of sin has been removed by Christ so that the fruit of our individual sins is removed of their power.

What that means is that Jesus has come as the deliverer from the power of sin for this entire world. That's what he talks about here.

[ 21 : 04 ] Jesus, the Lamb, is the liberator of the world from the power of sin. Every one of us has known the enslavement of sin and death in Satan.

I mean, just look around you, everybody you meet, every institution that we're a part of. I mean, just think about the way that something like wealth weasels its way into everything.

You know, wealth gives us the illusion of control over our lives. It gives us the illusion because we can choose how to spend our money to give us the kind of comfort we want.

We can buy the kind of clothes we want. We can possess the kind of beauty that we think we want if we spend enough money for it. It gives us the illusion that we can insulate ourselves from pain and discomfort, from loss.

But it weasels its way into our hearts. It changes the way we deal with people. It changes the way we work. It changes the reasons why we work. It takes over our lives.

[ 22 : 10 ] And not only for us on an individual level, but look at the way that it becomes part of our society, that you begin to be subject to the wealthy in the world.

the wealth and power go together and it finds its way into institutions even like the church. How many churches have been destroyed by battles over how to spend the money that they have?

Even wealth shows the power of sin and what the cross says is that Jesus has come to deliver us from the taskmasters of the world and the flesh and the devil.

Just let me read through some of these passages in the New Testament. They're amazing. In Galatians 1, Jesus gave Himself for our sins to deliver us from this present evil age.

Hebrews 2, Jesus likewise partook of the same things that through death He might destroy the one who has the power of death. That is, the devil. And deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.

[ 23 : 18 ] 2 Thessalonians, that we may be delivered from evil and wicked men. 2 Corinthians, indeed we felt that we had received the sentence of death but that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead.

He delivered us from such a deadly peril and He will continue to deliver us. 1 Corinthians 1, He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and He has transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son in whom we have redemption and forgiveness of sins.

You have been delivered from the power and the slavery of death. One of the things I've been doing this, I don't know, the last six or eight months is I've been listening on Audible to a couple of books that I have read in the past but wanted to refresh myself and they were kind of all in a bundle.

It's Booker T. Washington's Up from Slavery and Frederick Douglass' A Life, his autobiography, and W.E.B. Du Bois' The Souls of Black Folks.

All wonderful books. I'd highly recommend them. Frederick Douglass' story, the way he thinks about his own deliverance from slavery is fascinating.

[ 24 : 39 ] Because what he did was, when he escaped from slavery, he escaped from Maryland, from a couple of different plantations in and around Maryland and Baltimore, and escaped to New York City with the help of some people who were helping him emancipated slaves move more.

But here's what he did. He made the decision, as soon as he was freed, he made the decision that he wanted to marry, because he was never given the opportunity, he never had the agency, the choice, to be able to choose a spouse while he was enslaved.

And so he married a woman named Anna Murray. Second thing he did, he changed his name. He chose his own name because he was freed. freed. And nobody could tell him who he had to be anymore.

The third thing he did was, he went and got his own job. And he worked hard. They moved to Connecticut and then to Massachusetts, where he worked just on the docks for a little while and then began to write and become the public figure that we know him as today.

He chose his own work. He lived in a new way because he had been delivered from the power of slavery. He was a slave to no one anymore. It's one of the best examples of what it looks like for us to be freed from the power of sin.

[ 25 : 59 ] Now you might wonder, middle of the 19th century in America, there was still racism. There was still a deep sense of discrimination.

There was still violence that he had to contend with. And yet, the presence of sin, the presence of violence did not change the fact that he was free from its power.

He was no longer a slave to it. In the same way, the cross of Jesus has removed the power of sin. We are no longer a slave to sin.

The presence of sin is still there. And it will be there until that great day that Jesus comes and removes all of that together. But the power of it has been removed. And you see, here's the thing.

When you live as though you are a victim to your own habits and to your own impulses, you buy into the lie that you are a slave to sin when Jesus has declared by the power of his cross that you are not.

[ 27 : 08 ] You are not. And to live that way actually undercuts any opportunity that you have to grow into everything that he wants you to be. What you must do is remember to gaze back upon the cross.

This is why we're looking at the cross this season. It's to remember its power that God has delivered us from his wrath and from the power of sin by his cross.

You are not a slave to sin. You are not. Don't live that way. That's what Paul says in Romans chapter 6. Don't live that way anymore. You're free.

During this season, I want to invite you to look at the kaleidoscope that is the cross. This week we're just talking about deliverance. There's so much more to go.

But I want to invite you to deepen your persistence in days of the cross. So that you might be confident about the work that God has already done in you and what he will do to complete that work of redemption in you.

[ 28 : 18 ] Okay, let me pray. Our Father, help us to do that work. We ask in the great name of our Savior Jesus. Amen. One of the things that we're doing in this season is that I've moved our time of prayer until after the sermon and here's why.

I'm going to start our prayer and then every week we put a couple of things in the bulletin. We put a couple of reflection and response questions here and those are designed to get you thinking about what I've just talked about.

We also have a place here on page 4 where you can ask questions. You can text them to me. There is a, this QR code will take you to a sermon series page.

I will tell you I have not updated it yet today for this sermon but it will, this series will be up there. So I'm going to pray for us and I'm going to give you just some quiet moments to reflect on what I've just talked about.

And then at the conclusion of my prayer, we're going to join in the Lord's prayer together as it's written. We're going to use debts as opposed to trespassers. So, you know, be aware of that.

[ 29 : 30 ] Not that there's one right way to do it. Just, you know, that's how we do it. So let me lead us in just a season of prayer. Our God, we don't really know what to do with this idea of deliverance because we feel like slaves so much of the time.

Feel like slaves to our own shame and sin. Feel like slaves to our circumstances. Feel like slaves to our own habits and our own histories.

Father, I pray now that as I give us just a few seconds of silence, that you would draw to our minds a particular place that you might show us a new deliverance in this season of preparation for Easter.

Father, would you deliver us?

would you bring deliverance and peace for those who are for those who are dealing with physical pain, emotional anxieties, relational stresses, particularly be with those, particularly with Mary, with Mandy, with Ryan, with many others.

[ 31 : 05 ] Father, would you bring deliverance for people dealing with the weight of their own sin, the shame over their past, their sense of guilt, the failures that they replay in their mind, the habits that seem out of control.

Father, would you bring deliverance in this season and a new obedience? Would you strengthen us as a people? Might we be a people that lives out of the fullness of the life that you have given to us?

Father, would you make us so secure in the deliverance that you have provided for us that we would be free to become the servants of other people, not out of being dominated, but out of a freedom to give our lives away.

Would you make us those who sacrifice for the good of others? Father, would you be our children or our spouses, our roommates, our friends, our co-workers, our parents, our neighbors, people who live in the community?

Father, give us a love for other people. Might this church be known as a church of people who seem unbelievably free? free of themselves, free to love, not worried about the consequences, but worried about how they would go forth in freedom.

[ 32 : 42 ] Father, make us free, not for selfishness, but for the good of others, for the good of this world. Father, we pray that you would hear all of our prayers in the darkens.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen.