

# 'The King's Death - a moving event

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[ 0 : 00 ] I wonder if you enjoy a good movie or story, you know, one that moves you. For example, when I was little I saw this movie Gremlins and it moved me to have nightmares! And to this day I cannot watch a horror movie because of that movie.

Or later when I was older and I watched a movie with my wife, this one, it moved her to tears and me to boredom. It was so, so, anyway. On the other hand, I quite enjoyed this movie, but my wife walked out before the ending. Clearly we have different tastes. But when the story is real, when the events happened in history, it moves us all the more, doesn't it? I still remember when this movie first came out, based on the historical events of World War II and I just left the cinema in absolute silence, gobsmacked at what one human could do to another.

Or even just this January, hearing how Iran's leaders executed their own peoples, some of them teenagers. We need to keep praying for them, don't we? On a happier note, back in 2017, Jim and Lara had already been married for 26 years when she was diagnosed with breast cancer and she had to have treatment and a bilateral mastectomy. And so a week after the treatment ended, Jim re-proposed to Lara, saying, I really wanted to give her a sign and a reminder of my love and commitment, not just in health but in sickness as well. That's pretty sweet, isn't it?

Well, back in 2015, a young deaf man called Maharin, who lived in a neighbourhood in Istanbul, had to sign and not everyone could understand. And so the whole neighbourhood learnt sign language just to include him in their community. That's pretty heartwarming, isn't it?

Stories move us, especially when the events happened in history like today. What we'll hear today happen in history, we have evidence that it is true. And so what I want us to do, or what I want to help us to do, is to hear it afresh, that we might be moved by this true story too. And to help us, we're going to watch segments of a movie made by the Bible Society, which only uses verses from the Bible for the dialogue. Yes, the picture is rather dated, but the script is straight from the book of Matthew in the Bible. And so Matthew, the narrator, will appear later in the movie. And I've added the verse numbers to the picture, so you can check it with your handout, where the Bible passage is also printed.

[ 2 : 53 ] We're going to pick up just after the Roman governor called Pontius Pilate has handed Jesus the king over to his soldiers to crucify him. And it's the soldiers who begin the mocking. So point one, verse 27.

Then the governor's soldiers took Jesus into the praetorium and gathered the whole company of soldiers around him. They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, and then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on his head.

They put a staff in his right hand and knelt in front of him and mocked him. Hail, king of the Jews! They said. They spit on him and took the staff and struck him on the head again and again.

After they had mocked him, they took off the robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him away to crucify him. It's a moving event, isn't it?

A company of soldiers was actually about 600 men, which I'm guessing the movie's budget couldn't afford. But they all crowd around Jesus for some entertainment and to mock him as king.

[ 4 : 05 ] And they mock him as a king by firstly giving him a red robe and then giving him a crown of thorns and kneeling before him and even hailing him king of the Jews.

They treat him as king. Of course, not genuinely, but mockingly. Yet the irony is that he is the king. He is God's chosen king, not just of the Jews, but of the world.

In fact, Jesus has proved this by doing some amazing miracles, which we also have evidence for. Yet instead of genuinely treating him as God's chosen king, they mock him, spit on him, and beat him again and again.

It's a moving event, isn't it? And then they crucify him. As they were going out, they met a man from Cyrene named Simon.

And they forced him to carry the cross. They came to a place called Golgotha, which means the place of the skull. There they offered Jesus wine to drink, mixed with gall.

[ 5 : 19 ] But after tasting it, he refused to drink it. And they forced him to drink it.

When they had crucified him, they divided up his clothes by casting lots.

And sitting down, they kept watch over him there. Above his head, they placed the written charge against him. This is Jesus, the king of the Jews.

Two robbers were crucified with him. One on his right and one on his left. Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads and saying, You, we're going to destroy the temple and build it in three days.

Save yourself. Come down from the cross, if you are the son of God. Save others.

[ 6 : 55 ] They said, but he can't save himself. He's the king of Israel. Let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him.

He trusts in God. Let God rescue him if he wants him. For he said, I am the son of God. In the same way, the robbers who were crucified with him also heaped insults on him.

It's a moving event, isn't it? After being on trial all night, Thursday night, and then beaten heavily by the soldiers, Jesus is understandably exhausted.

And so as they lead him to that place to be crucified, they have to get Simon of Cyrene to help carry the cross. And there they get to Golgotha, which means the place of the skull, because it was a place of death.

Outside Jerusalem's walls, in a public place, so that people who passed by could see. And here they offered him wine mixed with gall or myrrh, which was to dull the pain.

[ 8 : 06 ] And yet Jesus refused, determined to feel the full effects of suffering for us. And then around nine in the morning, around this time this morning, they crucify him.

And as he hung there naked, they cast lots for his clothes. Though obviously the Bible Society wanted to limit the graphic nature of their movie. But can you imagine there, being naked and on display for everyone to see?

Can you imagine the humiliation? Can you imagine doing that to another person? Can you imagine doing it to God's king? It's a moving event, isn't it?

But again, in the process of crucifying him, they call him the king. Because in verse 37, they put a sign above him that read, This is Jesus, the king of the Jews. It was meant as a charge, but it reads as a declaration.

And did you notice the crucifixion is passed over in Matthew's gospel in silence? Without comment? Verse 35, when they had crucified him.

[ 9 : 15 ] That's it. Rather, Matthew returns to the mocking, which comes at Jesus from all sides.

From fellow criminals to passers-by to the religious leaders, who were actually more likely to be up on that hill where Jesus was, talking within earshot of Jesus, so that he could hear their taunts.

And they probably had more of a Middle Eastern accent than those actors, who I think sounded South African. Was it South African? But I shouldn't mock their acting. But their mocking was again about Jesus being the king.

For in verse 38 to 40, they pass by and claim and mock him for being the son of God. Similarly, the religious leaders too mock him for claiming to be the son of God.

This phrase, the son of God, was originally another title for God's chosen king or Christ. And so a chapter earlier at the trial, the high priest asked Jesus by oath, tell us if you are the Christ, the son of God.

You see, the son of God was equivalent to the Christ, which means king. And at one point, the religious leaders straight out called him the king in the middle of verse 42.

[ 10 : 33 ] Of course, again, they don't mean it genuinely, but mockingly. And yet Matthew highlights all of this to show us that Jesus is God's chosen king, whether it's the mocking of the soldiers who treat him as king, or the sign above him that declared him to be the king, or even the religious leaders who call him the king.

In fact, what happens to Jesus here fulfills our first reading, which was written by another chosen king, David. I don't know if you noticed, but there were all those echoes from Psalm 22, like having their clothes divided and by casting lots.

They were both mocked, hurled insults at. People shook their heads at them. People said if they trust God, let God rescue them. And then, of course, they both of them cry out to God. What happens to Jesus is what happens to King David a thousand years before. And the point Matthew is making is that Jesus walks in King David's shoes because Jesus is the chosen king, like David was.

Only Jesus is the ultimate chosen king, who will suffer even greater mocking and affliction. Why? Well, for us. The leaders mockingly said he saved others.

[ 11 : 56 ] Why doesn't he save himself? The answer is by not saving himself, he can save others. By taking judgment for our sin in our place, which brings us to the darkness and death of Jesus.

From the sixth hour until the ninth hour, darkness came over all the land. About the ninth hour, Jesus cried out in a loud voice, Eloi! Eloi!

Lama sabachthani! Which means, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me? And some of those standing there heard this.

They said, he's calling Elijah. Immediately, one of them ran and got a sponge, filled it with wine vinegar, put it on a stick, and offered it to Jesus to drink.

But the rest said, I'll leave him alone. Let's see if Elijah comes to save him. And Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice.

[ 13 : 13 ] He gave up his spirit. It's a moving event, isn't it?

Can you imagine being there that day? Jesus had been hanging on a cross from nine till noon, and then from noon to three, darkness came over the land, such that people were sitting in it like we are now.

It would have been a moving event, and it should move us even more so, because we know from the Old Testament that this darkness represented God's judgment for our sin, being poured out on him.

For all the times we've ignored God, or forgotten God, or failed to love God, and our neighbor. As we'll sing soon, it was my sin that held him there.

That made him choose to reject the wine with gore, so that he might feel the full effects of God's judgment. And not just the mocking, the spitting, the beating, and even the crucifixion.

[ 14 : 29 ] But God's judgment for our sin poured out on him. Until at last, he cries out in forsakenness, then gives up his spirit dying for us.

It's a moving event, isn't it? But it's also an effective event. Whoa, that effective? Yep. But what happens shows his death really did pay for our sin, so that we could have life with God now, and even life after death later.

At that moment, the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook, and the rocks split. The tombs broke open, and the bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life.

They came out of the tombs, and after Jesus' resurrection, they went into the holy city and appeared to many people. When the centurion and those with him who were guarding Jesus saw the earthquake and all that had happened, they were terrified and exclaimed, surely he was the son of God.

Did you notice? It was at that moment. The moment Jesus had taken all of God's judgment for all our sin and died, then the curtain in the temple was torn from top to bottom.

[ 15 : 51 ] The curtain that prevented people from entering God's very presence because of our sin was now open, symbolizing that people can now come directly to God to enjoy life with God, all because Jesus had paid for our sin.

And the tombs broke open, and the bodies of many were raised to life, symbolizing that Jesus can raise us to life too, even after death. For if sin is what leads to our eternal death, then having paid for sin, he can then raise us from death.

Death is like the prison, and sin is like the warden. But once Jesus pays the sin warden, he can release us from the death prison, you see. To enjoy life eternal, after death, with a new body, in a new world.

This is why Friday today is called Good Friday. Yes, it was bitter and horrific for him, but sweet and good for us.

Yet only if it moves us to confess him as our saving king, like the centurion and those with him.

They knew their Roman emperors claimed to be divine sons of God, and they had seen loads of

people crucified before, but not like this.

[17:16] None of their emperors had died like this. And so they confessed, Jesus is the divine king, saying surely, or literally truly, he was the son of God, the king.

This time last year, a man named Matthew Strickland just celebrated his daughter's baptism, and they were out in the evening of that Sunday, fishing in the Cumberland River in the US.

He loved fishing with his family, and as they were, they heard screams coming downstream from a girl whose younger sister had been swimming in the river and was caught by the current.

And so Matt jumped in his car and sped down, jumped out, dived in, and managed to rescue this girl and swam her back towards the shore where there was quite a steep embankment.

And the guy, the guardian, who was supposed to be looking after these girls, finally arrived and helped lift this little girl out of the river. But by this time, Matt was exhausted from struggling against the current and ended up being dragged away and drowned.

[18:25] He drowned in the river to save this young girl's life who was a stranger. It's a moving event. How much more so this event today?

For Jesus is God's king and he was drowned in God's judgment for us who were not strangers, but actually worse, sinners. In fact, that story about Matt, his wife had joined him by this stage and she was screaming at that guardian guy who finally turned up to help her husband as she watched him struggle.

And that guardian guy just turned to her and said, I can't and walked away. Didn't call 911, didn't seek help for help, no rope, no branch, nothing. When I heard this or read this, part of me thought, well, that guy deserves the drown.

But that's the kind of person we have actually been to God. At times, we've all walked away from God, haven't we? And yet Jesus willingly drowned in the judgment we deserve to save us from it. But only if we confess him, believe in him, trust in him, make him our saving king. Have you done that? Will this event that happened in history move you to put your trust in Jesus as your saviour and king?

[19:50] If you haven't yet but would like to, please do talk to me after the service. Or there's that QR code in your bulletins. Email us and join that Discover course.

But for us who do believe, then will it move us to continue to honour him as our king with our lives? Last week, I think it was last Wednesday actually, the Chicago Cubs honoured Matt Strickland's sacrifice by giving his daughter Sadie, who was baptised, the first pitch of the game.

They were so moved by Matt's sacrifice they wanted to honour him by giving his daughter that first pitch, which is a moving event in itself, isn't it? Well, are we so moved by Christ's sacrifice that we want to honour him not with the first pitch of a game but with first place in our lives?

That we might keep living for him who died for us. Let's pray we would. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, today we especially remember the death of your chosen king, Jesus, that he willingly was mocked, beaten, crucified, and suffered your judgment in darkness and death for our sin.

That we might be saved from it for life with you. And so help us, we pray, not to take this event that happened in history for granted but to continue to be moved by it that we might live for him who died for us.

[21:25] We ask it in his name. Amen.