

Our Savior's Burial

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[0 : 00] Turn your Bibles this morning to John chapter 19, beginning there in verse 38. After these things, Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus.

Nicodemus also, who earlier had come to Jesus by night, came bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about 75 pounds in weight.

So they took the body of Jesus and bound it in linen cloth and with spices, as is the burial custom of the Jews. Now in the place where he was crucified, there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb in which no one had yet been lain.

So because of the Jewish day of preparation, since the tomb was close at hand, they laid Jesus there.

Let's pray. Father God, this morning as we take the Scriptures in hand, we are mindful that what we have in front of us, that which we read, that's which we rely upon, is the very words that you have chosen to reveal yourself to us, to help us understand the glory of your salvation, to help us gain a better affection and deeper appreciation for our Lord Jesus Christ, to help us have confidence in the life that you've called us to live as children of the Heavenly Father, to give us courage and faith that we, growing from glory to glory, through the working of your Spirit and the Word, may become more like Jesus today and in the days that follow.

[2 : 21] And we pray that you would give me your strength to speak as an oracle of God and that your people would receive the Word with gladness and that the Spirit of God would bear fruit in the lives of those that are here today that know Christ and that those that are here today that do not know the Lord Jesus, that today, by the power of the Spirit of God, would be drawn to the cross to understand there is no hope and no salvation apart from our Lord Jesus Christ.

We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Let me start our passage this morning by reminding you of the reason that I generally begin by reading Scripture.

It's not something that I was coached, per se, to do in seminary, and it is not something that the deacons have appointed and said, Pastor, whatever you do when you get started, please read the passage of Scripture, and I want to be careful that I communicate that it's not the necessary and automatic way that every pastor should always begin a sermon.

But for Tim Knoyer, I like to remind you from the very beginning that the thing that has put me here and has put you here is the Word of God that is infallible and absolutely reliable and sufficient, and that the starting point and the center point of our attention is what God has chosen to reveal to us. In relationship to that, I began reading in John chapter 19, but I want you to turn over to John chapter 20, verse 31 to frame another little piece here as we get into a reasonably complex passage.

[4 : 11] John chapter 20, verse 31 tells us why this is written. Incidentally, if you don't have a Bible, there's one in the pew or there's one in the chair by you, and we have those there so that you can follow along.

It helps to actually look at the text. So grab a Bible if you don't have one and at least go through the exercise of allowing that Word to interact with your thinking.

John chapter 20, verse 31, but these things are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name.

I remember reading at one point and I'm not positive of the one who said it. I think it was Zane Gray. Someone asked him at one of his, you know, author conferences type of things.

They said, so why does it take the hero five shots to kill any man? And Zane Gray, the author that he was, who wrote just a number of Westerns and pretty well redundant in every one of them, he

said, well, because I get paid five cents a word.

[5 : 32] Do the math. One bullet's five cents. Five bullets is always better. And I bring that to your attention because when you look at the Word of God, you are not looking at a document and you're not looking at words that were just put down either for entertainment or for some kind of economic value.

They are given to us that you and I might be transformed by the power of the Word of God. I think about 2 Corinthians 3, verse 18, where it says, we are changed from glory into glory.

And namely, that happens as we see the Lord Jesus Christ in the Scriptures and growing to understand Him and His love for us and His wisdom, we are slowly being transformed to be like Him.

And so, this morning as you take John chapter 19 in hand, we are looking at a passage that if you were just skimming along and speed reading, you probably would step over and not think very much about.

To amplify that characteristic, I want you to recognize that if you were to take all of John chapter 19 and think carefully about how much of John 19 actually has to do with the physical suffering of Christ in His crucifixion, you would be stunned to recognize John 19 has very little to say about His suffering.

[7 : 02] Far more attention is given actually to the related materials surrounding Christ's crucifixion and the effect that what was taking place had on those who were watching it and were witnesses to it.

And so, this morning as you look at this passage, we are actually looking at the very concluding moments of that evening on Friday when Christ actually died. You remember up in verse 30 when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, it is finished and He bowed His head and gave up His spirit.

Now, what we are dealing with here in verse 38 through 42 is further information that the Holy Spirit has chosen to give to us and to inform us about the nature of our Savior and the phenomenal work of His grace in saving us.

So, I want you, as you look at this passage, to recognize, first of all, that what we find here is Christ's power to change men. Christ's power to change men. As we take up the text, we can't miss some of the detail that John provides.

We're given the names of two men who willingly risked their reputations and their standing in the Jewish community to show an exceptional care for the body of our Lord Jesus.

[8 : 23] Generally, the bodies of individuals who were crucified were treated several different ways in Roman law or Roman discipline. Individuals that were crucified for some relatively common crime could be expected to be taken off the cross after they'd suffered and died however long it took and they would be thrown in a common grave, you know, kind of a hole in the ground and that's where irrelevant pieces of trash in the bodies of criminals went.

Individuals that were actually executed for sedition or rebellion against the Roman government were treated a completely different way. They were dragged out unceremoniously into a field and left there to be consumed by vultures and jackals.

And if you were to think with me just for a moment back through the Old Testament, you'll remember one of the despicable treatments of a body, God wants us to treat the dead with a certain amount of decorum and one of the despicable treatments of those who died exceptionally bad deaths, disobedient, etc.

Remember it says this, the son who is disobedient and rebellious against his father, what will happen? The vulture will pick out, the eagle will pick out his eye, an indication he's going to die a pretty tough death.

And so those who died as criminals treated one way, those who died as rebels were treated another way. And so you find here, here are two Jewish individuals who come to Pilate and they ask for a favor.

[9 : 57] Remember earlier when the Sanhedrin, the high priest, came to ask that Jesus be crucified, they wouldn't come in.

Why would they not come in? They didn't want to violate themselves and not be able to have the Passover. And so here are Nicodemus and Joseph actually coming into Pilate's presence and they're asking for the privilege of burying Jesus and caring for his body properly.

I would imagine that if you had asked the Sanhedrin, the high priests, if they were approving in any way of this level of respect that was being shown to the man they so vilely hated, they would have objected very strongly.

Remember, they wanted him crucified as a rebel and they also really were upset when Pilate put what sign over the head of Jesus? King of the Jews.

They said, don't do that. Just say he thought he was the king of the Jews. They hated him and the idea of Jesus being shown any respect whatever must have been highly offensive to them.

[11:03] So, imagine and understand that against the backdrop of the hatred of the Jews, two men of exceptional rank came to bury Jesus. Joseph of Arimathea came directly to Pilate into his presence and asked for permission to remove Jesus' body.

We know also from the text here in John that Nicodemus was involved as well. So, let's stop and think just a little bit more about these two men, Joseph and Nicodemus.

For one, we know from the Synoptic Gospels and will not turn there this morning, but we do know from the Synoptics that both of these members, these men, were members of the Sanhedrin.

They were the actual, kind of like the court of Israel and involved in making significant religious and practical political decisions that were outside the venue of the government of Rome.

We also know previously that Joseph and Nicodemus had been unwilling earlier to stand up and let their faith and relationship with Christ be known.

[12:12] The text here in John chapter 19, and look at it just for a moment, it says this, Joseph of Arimathea was a disciple of Jesus but secretly for fear of the Jews.

He had believed to a degree, but he had not been willing to make his faith known publicly and take a stand for the Lord Jesus Christ. Remember what Jesus said?

You who will not take a stand for me publicly, I will not take a stand for you. And here were individuals who had been drawn to Christ, were interested in Christ, oh man, he's pretty spectacular, but they'd not been willing to make a public stand at this point.

Now we also know about Nicodemus and we find there in the passage, Nicodemus in verse 39, who earlier had come to Jesus by night. Here was a man, interested, knew he was a prophet, knew that Jesus was somebody special, but again, he really didn't get, did not understand who Christ was or what he had come for.

And so now here we have, at the end, after the cross, after Jesus' death, anyway, we have Joseph and Nicodemus both coming boldly and publicly to Pilate and asking for the privilege of giving honor to the body of the Lord Jesus.

[13:27] What had happened? I think it's important for us to ask that question. What brought the change? Now I do want you to recognize, and it's fair to say, that we have no clear indication, ah, that Nicodemus and Joseph specifically in the construct of the cross had come to faith, but it would seem that at one time they had been afraid, we do know that, they'd been afraid to take a stand for Christ, now they were ready to do it.

They were no longer intimidated by the thought of being thrown out of the synagogue. They were no longer afraid of what other people thought about their readiness to be identified with the Lord Jesus.

You remember, when Jesus healed the blind man, they brought the parents in and said, so what happened? And they were afraid to bear any kind of testimony because they knew that the Jews had said, if you will confess Christ, you'll take a stand for Him, we're going to kick you out of the synagogue.

We'll disfellowship you. And so how do these two men come to this point of making this significant change? Well, it is evident as you look at the text that the death of Christ had had some kind of effect on these two high-ranking individuals.

And I would propose that it was only faith in Christ that could have drawn them out of the shadows where they had been kind of hiding and interested and curious and respectful.

[14:53] Now they were ready to step out and boldly make a stand and indicate their faith and confidence in the Lord Jesus. They had come to the place where they were willing to risk all they had for Christ.

I want you to recognize this as you think about this. Faith actually brings change to a person's life. Do you understand that? Faith brings genuine change to a person's life.

And one of the things that is important for me to draw to your attention, particularly in a fellowship like this, where there are some of you that have grown up learning the vocabulary, hearing the Bible stories, knowing all about the facts of Jesus, but you've never really come to the place where the grace of God and the power of the cross has drawn you from darkness into light and your life has been radically and forever changed by the power of salvation.

Paul said this in Romans chapter 1, I am not ashamed of the gospel. Why? Because it is the power of God unto salvation. And I think we need to recognize that those who trust in Christ, those who trust in Jesus, begin to think differently and act differently.

It's a fact. You look back earlier and Jesus made the statement in John chapter 12, verse 32, He said, and I, if I be lifted up from the earth, I will draw all men to myself.

[16:16] And the result of being drawn to Christ is that your life ends up being different than it was before. I want you to think with me just for a moment to another passage in relationship to this.

And I can't help but kind of tag along with what John was referring to earlier. Turn in your Bibles to 2 Corinthians chapter 5, verse 17. Let's look at this passage.

Turn in your Bible to John chapter 5, verse 17. Put your finger on it. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.

The old has passed away, behold, the new has come. If any man be in Christ, he is a different person. You're different. You have different affections.

You have different abilities. You have different interests. There is a significant change in the life of those that have been genuinely converted. And as you look at the life of Joseph and Nicodemus, you see two illustrations of individuals who in the proximity of the cross had their lives changed by Christ.

[17:26] Let me remind you of one other before we move on. You remember the thief on the cross? There he hung with Jesus, actually one thief on one side and another on the other. And at the outset, both of those thieves speaking ill of Christ and later, one of them comes to faith.

He rebukes the companion on the other side of Jesus and says, listen, we're suffering justly for what we've done. And this man between us, he is not suffering as a criminal.

He's not suffering for anything he's done. And he says, remember me when you come into your kingdom. And what does Jesus say to him? This day, those are sweet words, aren't they?

This day, you will be with me in paradise. I tell you, that was an encouraging word for the man that he was suffering there. You are going to be with me. So, I ask you a practical question as you think about the issue of the Lord Jesus Christ in this moment of his death.

Do you see the changes of salvation in your life as well? That's a practical question. You sit here this morning thinking about Jesus dying, dead, on the cross and in the immediate proximity of what had taken place in that moment in history, we find the thief, we find Nicodemus, we find Joseph whose lives had been touched by the power of the cross and their lives were not the same.

[18:49] And I want to touch on that and have you think seriously about it. Those who know Christ are not the same as they once were. Let's look at something else as we look at the passage.

It says there in verse 40, so they took the body of Jesus and bound it in linen cloths with the spices as is the burial custom of the Jews. Now in the place where he was crucified, there was a garden and in the garden a new tomb in which no one had yet been laid.

laid. So let's ask the question, what is the significance of this historical detail in the immediate surrounding information that we have regarding Christ's death?

Why is it there? And let me encourage you, in your Bible study, probably one of the most important questions you can ask with the enabling of the Holy Spirit over and over and over again is why did God choose to put it there?

And if you're not asking those kind of questions, the fact of the matter is, you're probably just kind of skimming across the top of things and not getting much of the substance of what God has there for you.

[19:58] Why is it there? Well, I want you to take a minute, keep your finger there in John chapter 19, but turn back to Isaiah chapter 41.

Isaiah chapter 41. I love this passage. Isaiah chapter 41. Beginning there in verse 21, here is one of the things that Isaiah loves to do, or loved to do, he's not doing it today, but he loved to do was kind of have smack down with people who believed in idols, you know?

I mean, do you understand how dumb idol worship is? I mean, we're all illuminated. There are none of you that walk into your house and bow down to a copy of Buddha and say, oh, Buddha, you know, we're way beyond that.

We're not into idols, right? Okay? Anyway, here we go. Yeah. Anyway, verse 21. Set your case, set forth your case, says the Lord.

Bring your proof, says the king of Jacob. Let them bring them and tell us what is to happen. Here's God saying to idolaters, why don't you have your God show up and tell me something that's going to happen in the future?

[21 : 22] Tell us the former things, what they are, that we may consider them, that we may know their outcome or declare to us the things that are to come. Tell us what is to come hereafter, that we may know that you are gods.

What's he saying? Isaiah is challenging idolaters, why don't you have your idol go ahead and tell us what's going to happen tomorrow? How many of you really know what the weather is going to be? Just a second, check, check, check. How many of you actually looked at your cell phone to kind of get a prognostication of what the weather was probably going to be? How many of you looked? Look, look, raise your hands. I mean, you know, we all checked it out.

How many of you have learned that weather prognosticators are people that get to lie 50% of the time? I mean, I don't care what it says is going to happen.

I remember a couple weeks ago, Greg and I were planning on a work day. Remember that? Where are you, Greg? You're out there somewhere. And we had it all planned and we were going to be working on the ditch out there and there was this, I mean, ugly looking cloud that was moving towards Columbus and it was just coming right along and we called it off at the last minute and within minutes of us calling it off, guess what happened?

[22 : 37] I was out in the parking lot actually working on something and we got about little three or four spritzes enough to get my glasses wet and it stopped. Can you predict tomorrow?

No. But God can. And what we find in this passage going back to John chapter 19 is that we find that God has the power to make a prophetic utterance and to fulfill it.

God intends for you to pay attention to the fact that he can make prophetic statements and that he can fulfill them.

First one is in the book of Isaiah chapter 53 verse 9 and I'm just going to refer to it in broad terms but in Isaiah chapter 53 verse 9 we find Isaiah the prophet about 700 years before Christ's coming and his crucifixion predicting two things in relationship to the death and burial of Christ.

One is that he would die with criminals. Did that happen? Did that happen? Yes. He would die with criminals. Number two that while he would die with criminals it also tells us where he would be buried.

[24 : 00] And so understand this the scriptures predicted who Jesus would die with and where he would be buried. Only a sovereign God can predict with that kind of accuracy with any kind of accuracy at all.

And so we have to recognize that that as you read the text the fact that it is here is given to you to remind you of the God that is our God and Savior and the one that we have to do with.

Now the fact of dying among criminals probably the probability of that happened is probably higher than the idea of Jesus being crucified with print criminals and yet being buried with rich men.

That really kind of stretched the thing. And I want to remind you of what had actually happened number one that in Christ's death his disciples had done what? Where did they go? They all disappeared.

They ran away. And furthermore none of Jesus' disciples could be categorized as being exceptionally rich. We know that. Fishermen and whatever else they were but being rich was probably not high on their list.

[25 : 12] And yet we see here the hand of God working in such a way that we find an exceptionally rich man coming by faith and asking for the body of Christ so that Jesus could be buried in the tomb of a rich man.

I want you to look at another passage. Matthew chapter 12 verse 20. Matthew chapter 12 verse 20. The first passage that we recognize is here is Jesus crucified with wicked men buried with a rich man.

But look at Matthew chapter 12 verse 20. What had happened is here is Jesus in conflict with the scribes and Pharisees etc. And they ask for a sign.

And what does he say? Verse 40. For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a great fish so will the son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. Now what if Jesus treated as a common criminal had been thrown in just a shallow depression in the ground? What if he had been dragged out as rebels were normally treated and just left with his body lying out openly in the public to be eaten by jackals and and vultures?

[26 : 35] No. In Matthew chapter 20 or 12 when Jesus is asked a question about a sign he goes on record and he says let me tell you something the the son of man is going to be three days in the ground and raise again.

And so here we have Jesus. He died on Friday. And he had to be buried by sundown in order for the day to count.

And so here we have remember isn't that strange how the Jewish leaders were really concerned that the body of these the bodies of these criminals were not left on the cross and so they check and Jesus is dead.

The others are are have their legs beaten and crushed and they die. And so Jesus has Nicodemus and Joseph ask for his body and he is in the tomb by Friday night.

He is in the tomb Saturday and what happens on Sunday? We have the resurrection don't we? So I want you to recognize here is Jesus back there in in Matthew prophesying that he would be dead for three days and he would rise again.

[27 : 44] Now I want to remind you again that neither you nor I can predict anything. I mean we try. Well we think this is going to happen or we think that's going to happen but the truth of matter is it's probably wise whenever we say we're going to do thus and so to remember what it says in James.

If the Lord wills. But here we have the Lord Jesus and we have Isaiah the prophet under the prompting of the Holy Spirit saying literally hundreds of years before Christ that certain things were going to happen.

And the fact that fulfilled prophecy should take make us take his promises for the future seriously. Let me make that point and have it settle in your mind. The fact that God shows his power both to make a prophecy and bring it about should prompt us to take his statements seriously.

Why do I say that? Why do I say that? Because here is what the scripture says. Whosoever believes in the Lord Jesus shall have what?

Everlasting life. That is essential to understand. And what does it say? Those who refuse him, what is the outcome and what is the consequences? Those who reject the offer of God of salvation through the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ will be judged forever and suffer for all of eternity.

[29 : 16] And so here you sit this morning as believers, some of you, and you are saying, wow, I am so thankful that the God I know, the one who's drawn me to the cross, is the one who makes promises and keeps them.

And there's so many things that we can thank him for in advance because we know how the story ends. I happen to love what it says. Different places in Philippians, but one of the things it says, he who has begun a good work in you will, he's going to pull it off.

How many of you looked in the mirror this morning and thought, well, I wish you'd do it a little sooner? Fact of the matter is, if he began a good work, he's going to finish it and trust him to get it done.

There are others of you that are sitting here this morning that do not know Christ, and I want to appeal to you on the basis of the fact that the God we serve is the one who makes promises and keeps them.

It says this, it's appointed unto man once to die, and after that, what? What?

[30 : 41] Come to grips with the darkness of your soul and understand you can't save yourself, not by works of righteousness, lest we all think we can pull it off. We can't.

It comes, faith comes by hearing the reality of the gospel, and faith brings us to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ in whom alone is salvation. Let me close in prayer, and John come to lead us in singing.

Our Father God, this morning, as we consider the reality of the power you have both to predict and then to fulfill, and we realize the power of the Lord Jesus Christ to take broken and ruined sinners and change them by grace to be saved and delivered from the burden of sin.

We revel this morning, we who know the Lord Jesus, we rejoice in the power of the cross, and we're thankful that you've saved us. And Father, this morning, those that are here that do not know the Lord Jesus Christ, my prayer is this, is that this morning your spirit would draw them to see that the bankruptcy of their soul has no remedy, no hope, apart from crying out to the Lord Jesus Christ and asking him to be their God and Savior.

We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. Let's stand together as we close, and if you're here today and the spirit of And this.