

His death

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Preacher: Adam Penwright

[0 : 00] Father, we praise you for this opportunity now to hear from me personally.! Lord, help us to have attentive hearts now, to be ready to receive your word, to see more of Jesus, to grow in our adoration.

And we pray that you'd help Adam to explain this passage to us faithfully for your glory. Amen. So John chapter 19, starting at verse 28.

Later, knowing that everything had now been finished, and so that scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said, I am thirsty. A jar of wine vinegar was there, so they soaked a sponge in it, and put the sponge on a stalk of the hissing plant, and lifted it to Jesus' lips.

When he had received the drink, Jesus said, It is finished. With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

Now is the day of the preparation, and the next day was to be a special Sabbath. Because the Jewish leaders did not want the bodies left on the crosses during the Sabbath, they asked Pilate to have the legs broken and the bodies taken down.

[1 : 28] The soldiers therefore came and broke the legs of the first man who had been crucified with Jesus, and then those of the other. But when they came to Jesus and found that he was already dead, they did not break his legs.

Instead, one of the soldiers hears Jesus' side with a spear, bringing in some twelfth light and water. The man who saw it was given his testimony, and his testimony is true.

He knows that he tells the truth, and he testifies so that you also may believe. These things happen so that the scriptures would be fulfilled.

Not one of his bones will be broken. And, as another scripture says, they will look on the one they have pierced. Later, Joseph of Aaron Ther, last pilot for the body of Jesus.

Now Joseph was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly, because he feared the Jewish leaders. With Pilate's permission, he came and took the body away.

[2 : 31] He was accompanied by Nicodemus, the man who earlier had visited Jesus at night. Nicodemus brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about 35 kilograms.

Taking Jesus' body, the two of them wrapped it with the spices and strips of vincent. This was in accordance with Jewish burial customs. At the place where Jesus was crucified, there was a garden, and in the garden, a new tomb, in which no one had ever been laid.

Because it was a Jewish day of preparation, and since the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there. Great. Thank you, Alistair.

I wonder whether you can relate to this little boy's feeling at all. When it's the last day of school, at the end of the week, or at the end of the term, and you think, Phew!

I'm done. It is finished. It's a good feeling, right? You can feel very, very happy and relieved when something is finished, and you can relax and rest afterwards.

[3 : 39] I remember when I was a university student and writing an assignment, and when you've handed in an essay, you can finally close all the tabs and return all the library books and say, Phew!

I'm done. It is finished. Or maybe you know that feeling from paying off a long-term debt. Or maybe you know that feeling from when you finally got the kids properly asleep, and you can say, Phew!

I'm done. It is finished. I wonder, maybe you could talk with the person or a couple of people next to you about this question. What's something that makes you happy when you've finished it?

Take a minute to talk about that with the person next to you. Thank you.

My god. My god. My god. My god. My god. My god. Would anybody feel brave enough to share something that they said?

[5 : 25] What is something that makes you feel happy when you've finished it? Bill? When you finally evolve a Pokemon, a Gabite. Nice. Anyone else? Something that makes you happy when you've finished it?

Getting my task list down at work to zero. Yeah, nice. Getting your task list down at work to zero. Yeah, nice. Anyone else? Yeah. When you finish working. Yeah, when you go home, you're happy. I know the feeling of this little boy walking home from school. You think, phew, I'm done. It is finished. In today's passage, we hear Jesus say some amazing words.

He says, it is finished. He doesn't say on the cross, I give up or get me out of here. But he says, it is finished. I've done it.

Today's passage describes Jesus on the cross when he dies. And now when we read it, we might think on the surface, that seems like a very, very sad day when your hero dies.

[6 : 32] That is really sad. But actually, we're going to see that today's passage, when Jesus dies, dies, it is a surprisingly very happy, a very triumphant day.

Why? Well, it's in those words. Because Jesus says, it is finished. And we're going to look at that in three points today.

The first, how Jesus finishes his work on the cross. Then, how we can see God's plan for the cross. And then, how we should respond to Jesus on the cross.

But it all comes down to this. That on the cross, Jesus finishes the work that God gave him to do. And that is the most important thing ever.

First, we're going to think, how Jesus finishes his work on the cross. Being crucified was horrible. And it's easy for us to miss that when we're quite familiar with Christian things.

[7 : 36] But think about what we've read Jesus has gone through the last couple of weeks when we've been reading it. Jesus was arrested, tied up, interrogated, beaten up, whipped, tortured, and crowned with horrible spiky thorns.

Then, he had to carry his cross up the hill. All that physical stuff is not even counting the emotional pain and the social shame. And most of all, the spiritual weight of what's going on.

And yet, through it all, Jesus doesn't lose focus. Maybe you notice this in the passage. Jesus, verse 28, he knows that everything has now been finished.

He's still very aware of what's going on. But it says this, knowing that everything had now been finished, and so that scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said, I am thirsty.

Now, on one level, we think, of course Jesus is thirsty. After everything he's endured, it's totally normal. But on another level, it's actually quite strange.

[8 : 47] Because all throughout John's Gospel, Jesus has said he's the one who can stop people from being thirsty. Maybe you remember these promises of Jesus.

Jesus said, whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. He said, whoever believes in me will never be thirsty. Or he said, let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink.

Jesus has promised all the way through John's Gospel that he's the one who can stop us from being thirsty. But now, he's the one who is thirsty.

In the Bible, thirst is a picture. And thirst represents when we are missing God.

You see, all of us are supposed to be, or we were made to be in a relationship with God, and to know him, and to be full of God's Spirit.

[9 : 51] And so, we're supposed to be like a glass full of water, knowing God with us, and how energising, and how that means we're not spiritually thirsty anymore.

And yet, every one of us has ignored God, and turned away from him, in all kinds of various ways, and at various times. And so, our sin, those turning away from God times, mean that actually, we have a separation between us and a holy God.

And so, instead of being like a glass full of water, we become like, well, this one, an empty glass. We become spiritually thirsty.

We have, well, not even any little drops. We become separated from God because of our sin. And we might try and fix our thirst, that thirst for God, with all kinds of other things.

But actually, because we were made to know God and be with him, and only God can stop us being thirsty. And yet, here on the cross, Jesus says, I am thirsty.

[11 : 04] Something massive is happening. Jesus, the one who promised he could stop anyone from becoming thirsty, has now become thirsty himself. So, what's going on?

It's because there's been a great big swap. Jesus, the one who promises he can stop anyone being thirsty, becomes thirsty in our place. The thirst quencher becomes thirsty.

I remember very, very vividly, the first time I ever read this properly, I remember being sat in a room in my university library, in a meeting room, with my friend called Sam, and we were reading John's Gospel together.

And when I read this bit, it was like a firework went off inside my brain, because we'd been reading John's Gospel together, and seen all these promises of Jesus, that he said he was the one who could stop someone from ever being thirsty.

And now, Jesus is the one who has become thirsty in our place. It's a bit like this. Jesus, who was full of God because he was God, actually takes all our sin on himself, and empties himself, so that he is the one who's thirsty.

[12:21] But as we're going to see a little bit later on, we can be full and forgiven. Our sin is taken away, so that we can know God, and be full of him again. It is really, really amazing.

I don't think I was over getting excited, when I was in the library with my friend that day. It is really, really exciting, that Jesus does this amazing swap for us.

We who are naturally thirsty, because of our sin that separates us from God, have swapped places with Jesus, the ultimate thirst quencher. And when on the cross, he says, I am thirsty.

His physical thirst, represents his spiritual thirst, as he takes our place. It's so, so wonderful. And Jesus does this amazing swap.

And then verse 30 says this, when he had received the drink, that some poor soldiers gave him, Jesus said, it is finished. With that, he bowed his head, and gave up his spirit.

[13:23] It is finished. John really wants us, to get a hold of this. In fact, maybe you notice, the word finished, comes up in those verses, three times.

And Jesus knows, that everything has now been finished. And he says, it is finished. And actually, where it says, scripture would be fulfilled, in verse 28, John doesn't actually use the word, he normally uses, to mean fulfilled.

He uses the word for finished. And it's really key. John wants us to see it. Jesus finishes his work on the cross. And all of John's gospel has been leading here.

In fact, all of history has been leading here. It's where the thirst of Jesus points us to. Jesus has taken our sin on himself. The thing that separates us from God, the thing that means we end up spiritually thirsty, puts it on himself.

He dies in our place. Why is that? Because Jesus loves you. Jesus chooses to do this. And remember, Jesus is the man who can walk on water.

[14:31] Jesus is the one who can raise people from the dead. And so Jesus could have very, very easily got down from the cross and escaped it. But he doesn't choose to do that. He chooses to stay on the cross, to suffer and die, so that he can finish the work God has given him to do.

Jesus wants to finish his work on the cross, because he loves you. He takes our sin, our separation, our thirst on himself, so that we can be forgiven and be with God again, so that our spiritual thirst can be satisfied forever.

It is fantastic news that Jesus finishes his work on the cross. And when we see this and understand it, we have to respond.

If you recognize this thirst in yourself, that need for God, that desire for him, you can say, Jesus, I see what you've done on the cross.

please forgive my sin, so that I can know God and be full of him forever. And if we ever feel like we're not doing well enough, and even if we are a Christian, that we keep needing to impress God, we can look back at these verses.

[15:46] Jesus did not say, it's mostly done, or it's 50% done. He said, it is finished. And so your relationship with God depends on his finished work, not on how impressive you are day to day.

You might think about it a bit like this, a bit like building an amazing Lego set. I think this looks like an amazing Lego set. And now, if you only 50% build it, and leave off the wings, and the top, and the sides, it's not very impressive, and it's not a very useful spaceship.

You would look at it and think, that is only half done. It's not finished. There is still a lot that needs to be done. But Jesus completes the work 100%.

And so we see it and think, wow, that's amazing. Jesus has done it. There's nothing left for me to do. And so I can enjoy knowing God, and enjoy a life forgiven of my sin.

Because Jesus has 100% finished the work. There's no little steps that we need to do left to impress God. And so, maybe you remember, like that little boy at the beginning, walking home from school, feeling triumphant, and we can look at what Jesus has done.

[17:02] And perhaps with Jesus, say, phew, I'm done. It is finished. Because of what Jesus has done for us on the cross. It's good news. Our sin is taken.

Our separation from God is removed. 100%. Jesus has done it. And so, as we see the cross, that's why we think, yeah, it is a sad day.

Because Jesus, our hero, dies. But also, it's incredibly good and important. Why? Because of this first thing we're seeing today. Jesus has finished the work he came to do.

And yet, even though actually at this point in John's gospel, Jesus has died, it's not the last thing he tells us about what happens on the cross. We need to keep reading. We're going to see how we can see God's plan for the cross.

And we see this from what happens to Jesus' body after he dies. I said it already. Crucifixion is horrible. And Jesus was horribly tortured before he was on the cross.

[18:06] But what's something perhaps even more gruesome? If the Romans wanted to speed up a crucifixion, what they would do is get a big hammer or something solid and break the people's legs on the cross.

And it was really painful. Because once your legs are broken, probably you lose some more blood. Probably you go into shock if you're not already. And you can't even lift yourselves up on your legs so that you can breathe properly while you're in the cross.

And it's a horrible thing to do. And the Jewish leaders asked them to hurry things along. Why? Because they don't want gross dying people on crosses during their holy religious day.

They're kind of missing the wood from the trees, I think. But verse 32 says this. The soldiers therefore came and broke the legs of the first man who had been crucified with Jesus, and then those of the other.

But when they came to Jesus and found that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. Why didn't they break Jesus' legs? Because they find he's already dead.

[19:13] He'd probably died faster because he'd been tortured so much already. And so rather than breaking Jesus' legs, what do they do? A soldier takes a spear and pierces Jesus' side.

Now, why does he do that? Well, on a practical level, it is just to check that Jesus is already dead. Some people try to explain away the resurrection of Jesus by saying that he never really died.

But when we read this, we can see that Jesus really, really definitely died. From what I understand, most likely the pericardium sac around Jesus' heart has filled up with extra fluid through the trauma of what he's been going through.

And then either that has burst or has been pierced. And so this fluid that looks like water flows out with the blood. And it's an absolute sign that someone has died, which medically we think we can understand more than when the time that John was writing.

But actually, there's a deeper level here to what's going on than just biology. Do you remember, as we've been thinking already, Jesus promised that he could give living water so that you never got thirsty again.

[20:34] And remember the cup of water. Because Jesus has taken our thirst on himself, we actually see here him pouring out his water.

And this little bit here, as the blood and water flows out, is a picture of Jesus pouring out his living water for the world. Jesus' blood is poured out to cleanse us from sin.

And the water flows out for a thirsty world. And yet here's something that has surprised me when I've been reading this passage over the last week or so. And it's at this point that John gets really, really, really excited.

This is the point that he draws all the attention to. And of all that he writes, he wants us to focus on this. He says in verse 35, this is the most important bit of the whole narrative.

Read it. He says, The man who saw it has given testimony. And his testimony is true. He knows that he tells the truth. And he testifies so that you also may believe. John is saying, I'm telling the truth.

[21:37] Honest, honest. Believe me, believe me. It's amazing. You'll never believe it. But I'm telling the truth. Why is he so excited about this? Why is he so excited in verse 35?

Well, because it shows us God's plan for the cross. Every Jewish person would know the story of the Passover.

Perhaps you know it. God wants his people, Israel, to be freed from Egypt. And so he punishes the Pharaoh who has enslaved the people to compel him to let the people go.

God does not like that his people are kept in slavery. And so the final punishment is the most horrible of all. And God is going to kill the firstborn son in every family.

Now, if you are the oldest child in your family, if you're a firstborn, stick your hand up. I am. Who else is the oldest child? It's probably about, you know, a third of the room or so.

[22 : 41] Or if your older brother or sister is here this morning, you can point to them so we all know who the oldest ones are. But if you imagine in every family in the whole country, the oldest child or the firstborn son was going to die that night, it would be really sad and actually really scary.

We might think that sometimes our older siblings are quite annoying, but it would be horrible to imagine that this night they might die. But God gives a way out for every family to do it if they want, if they listen to him.

And they have to kill a lamb and put its blood across the doorposts of their house. You can imagine probably the firstborn son or the oldest child wanted to make sure it was done very, very well.

He would be outside inspecting, yeah, maybe, maybe we need a little bit more blood on the top of the door just to check. But it's because the only question that matters that night is not how impressive you are or how cool you are or how much money you earn, but is there blood on the top of your door?

Here's the key thing, though, that blows our minds. The Passover lamb had to be a perfect lamb. Specifically, not one of its bones could be broken.

[24 : 07] And now look at Jesus. He dies right at Passover time. The other two men on either side have their legs broken, but Jesus' legs are not broken.

Why? Because he is the Passover lamb. He is the real and perfect and true Passover lamb. Jesus is the perfect sacrifice. And his death, his blood, means that God's judgment falls on him and passes over us.

Maybe we remember in chapter one, where John wrote of Jesus, Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Or what about the piercing of Jesus' side?

Well, this connects us with an old promise of the prophet Zechariah. There, one will be pierced, but a fountain will open up to cleanse God's people.

The blood and water flowing from Jesus' side is this cleansing fountain. His death washes away all our guilty stains.

[25 : 11] Every sin that haunts us is washed clean. Maybe now we're beginning to understand why John wants to highlight this so much. Because it's so exciting.

It shows us God's plan for the cross. Jesus is the Passover lamb. Jesus is the fountain. Or from Jesus comes the fountain to cleanse us.

We understand why John gets so excited. Because we understand what's going on at the cross. And that God has planned this very carefully. Maybe you can see in your Bible, on those verses, there are some footnotes which point us to these Old Testament passages, which tell us about this. And when we see Jesus on the cross, we begin to understand what's going on. And maybe you are a fan, I think there are quite a few fans actually, from what I picked up this morning, of the game Pokemon.

And maybe this morning, you think, I would love to catch a really, really cool Pokemon. And then you somehow see one off in the distance. And you think, it lives in the sea, yeah.

[26 : 19] It looks like a whale, yeah. It has red stripes, yeah. And it's super ancient, yeah. Which one is it, Bill?

Kyoga. And you think, wow, I've seen what it's like. So now I know which one it is. And in the same way, or in a similar way, when we look at the cross of Jesus, we see he is sent by God, yeah. He's killed, yeah. No bones are broken, yeah. And his side is pierced, yeah. And John says, wow, can you see what God has been doing here?

This is the one, long promised, that God has been planning all along, to take away the sin of the world. Wow, it's amazing. And that is why John gets so, so, so excited.

And now we can understand why John's so excited. Because what is happening on the cross is God's exact plan for our salvation. And here's the last thing that we're going to see this morning.

[27 : 24] How we should respond to Jesus on the cross. In the last section of our passage, we see Jesus' body gets taken down from the cross.

When someone dies, maybe you've experienced this. If you're a close family member, it's normally the close family's responsibility to look after the funeral and the burial and sort out all those kind of arrangements.

But with a crucifixion, it's very different. Because actually, the Romans would want the body, normally, to be left on the cross. Left for vultures.

Left as a warning sign for everyone. They don't care about the person's dignity. It's supposed to be a deterrence. They wanted, normally, bodies to be left up as a warning sign.

They didn't get a nice burial. And so what happens here is extraordinary. Two surprising men step forward. Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus.

[28 : 24] Both were important Jewish leaders. But up to now, they had been secret followers of Jesus. They might have been afraid of what other people might think of them.

And maybe you could remember in John chapter 3, Nicodemus comes to Jesus under the cover of night. But now, having seen what Jesus has done for them on the cross, they undergo a massive transformation.

They become the ones who look after Jesus' body. Because spiritually, they have become, like close family of Jesus, the ones to take care of him after he died.

I want you to put yourselves, oh, here's Nicodemus coming at night, and then he becomes one of the ones to look after the body of Jesus as it comes down from the cross. I want you to put yourselves imagining Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea for a moment.

And talk about these couple of questions with the people next to you. It says, why do you think Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus might have been afraid for people to know they were followers of Jesus?

[29 : 32] And then, what do you think seeing Jesus on the cross might have changed inside them? Why don't you talk about those questions with the people next to you for a couple of minutes and then we'll come back together.

Yeah. I think also just seeing him die in my life like associating with him might also just like Peter was scared from the cross.

So, yeah. Quite costly. But clearly they see something in him, right?

Yeah. See. Yeah, they kind of down through the eye was an accident. and accident. See what power and the man died.

Yeah, we got the spirit. Yeah. Let's come back together there.

[31 : 03] earlier on, Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea are like secret followers of Jesus. They don't want anyone to know and perhaps because following Jesus was really unpopular.

Perhaps you know what that's like at school or at work or in your family. Or perhaps they thought particularly because they were important political people it would be very embarrassing for them to be followers of Jesus.

But they undergo this massive transformation when they see Jesus die on the cross. Maybe it's because they think wow I finally understand properly who Jesus is and what he's come to do.

I don't need to be afraid anymore. Or maybe it's just because they think wow Jesus my hero has died. Nothing worse can happen to me. I'm willing to be bold for him.

Or maybe it's because they've seen at the cross just how much Jesus loves them. And it changes their heart to be full of love for him. And verse 38 Joseph of Arimathea uses his political influence presumably to ask Pilate for Jesus' body.

[32 : 15] And then verse 39 Nicodemus brings a staggering amount of burial spices. And together these two men who used to be afraid of following Jesus now acts like his family taking care of Jesus after his death.

And it's a moment of tragic but quiet beauty. These powerful respected men are now associating with a crucified criminal.

Imagine the scene. They take down his broken bloody body. They lovingly remove the blood stained scraps of cloth that are left.

The dirt. the splinters from his back. They carefully take the spiky crown of thorns off his head. They wash Jesus. They wrap him with the spices and strips of linen.

It's tragic but it's so tender. If you have something or someone that you really love how do you treat them?

[33 : 21] You treat them with care and tenderness and you make sure that they have the best. If you have a little hamster you want it to have the best food and the best cage because you love it so much.

Or like a mother tenderly loving her child you want to look after her absolutely the best because you love her. The horror of the crucifixion begins to give way to the dignity and beauty of this garden burial.

It's sad of course but it's a scene of respect and love. This scene of a man sleeping in a garden with a pierced side echoes something much older which maybe you'd want to think about more.

The garden of Eden where God puts a man to sleep and takes out of his side as he waits to be united with his beloved. Or perhaps this passage echoes the song of songs a man waiting in a beautiful garden full of spices for the one he loves.

And here Jesus lies sleeping in death but he will rise again to new life to meet the one he loves his people the church.

[34 : 43] And yet for now on the Friday and the Saturday before the Sunday Jesus is properly and totally dead. He's in this graveyard burial site he's in this garden burial site sorry and he's totally vulnerable and utterly helpless.

He is actually dead properly physically dead not just theoretically dead or momentarily dead Jesus is dead laying in a tomb dwelling among the dead.

Jesus burial is so important that Paul talks about it in his articulation of the gospel in 1 Corinthians 15 or it's in the Apostles Creed.

Jesus burial is really really important because it shows he is properly properly dead and yet what a burial he receives is reverent adoring dignified is fit for a king these two men have gone from fear to faith from secrecy to sacrifice they give Jesus the best this massive amount of spices this tomb that no one's been in before they ensure he's treated respectfully and for us I think that's the example that we're supposed to take as we see what Jesus has done on the cross as he has finished his work as we understand what God's plan was on the cross I think Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea give us the right response to worship Jesus to adore him to honour him with everything you have if you are not yet a follower of Jesus or you are doing so secretly

I invite you to follow the example of Nicodemus and Joseph step out of the shadows and follow Jesus openly because as we see how much he has done for us how can we do anything else if you are a follower of Jesus then too let Nicodemus and Joseph be your example for you they use their wealth their position everything they have to honour Jesus what would that look like for you to give your wealth your position all the potential you have to honour Jesus and maybe that's a challenge for your money to give generously to church maybe it's in your time to give generously to serve maybe it's in the position that you have to speak up for Jesus but I think the principle that we see from these men is as you've seen what Jesus has done for you and give everything in reverence to him so what have we seen today first how

[37 : 36] Jesus finished his work on the cross as he becomes thirsty he takes our sin and separation from God onto himself but then he declares it is finished because the price of our sin is paid completely and second we saw God's plan for the cross Jesus was the Passover lamb Jesus was the fountain to cleanse the world and like prophecy said Jesus was the one whom God had long promised and third we saw how we should respond to Jesus on the cross and like Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus when we see who Jesus is and what he's done for us we should respond with worship and love and honour and I want to say to you particularly today if you're not a Christian whether you're 13 or 63 or come to church with your family every week or you're just visiting for any other reason see what

Jesus has done for you on the cross he died because he loves you so trust in him and give your all to him you can do that today as we're going to pray together in a moment because for all of us when we see what Jesus has done for on the cross we should think wow Jesus I love you you have loved me so much when we see what Jesus has finished on the cross it's right that we worship him and thank him and so that's what we're going to do as we pray together now and in a moment as we sing so let's pray our loving gracious Lord thank you so much for the cross thank you so much that as Jesus dies our sin is paid for thank you that we can know you the living almighty amazing

