

# The Crucifixion of Jesus

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[ 0 : 00 ] Duncan, thank you. Verse 33, verse 43. Jesus answered the criminal, truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise.

! What I want to speak about this morning is having sure and certain confidence in the face of death. I want to speak about having sure and certain confidence on your dying day.

We live out our days, as you know, as we know, in the shadow of death. And we live out our days in a society that is so scared stiff of death and dying that we do all we can to pretend it won't happen. I recently, and a while back, read a little book by Douglas Copeland called *Life After God*, which is a collection of stories exploring late 20th century life with God out of the picture.

Listen to this scene from it. Once in the early evening, Donnie and Kathy and I walked past a fortune teller, a grizzled old soak sitting forlornly behind a card table clutching a deck of tarot cards.

[ 1 : 17 ] We kidded Donnie and said he should have his fortune read, but he freaked and refused flat out. I'm not having some old rubby tell me my fortune. We didn't press the issue, and if the fortune teller had heard Donnie's comments, he gave no indication and we walked on.

It was only a few weeks later that I saw Donnie cheerfully being told his fortune by the same old fortune teller. I walked up to him and said, Hey sport, I thought you didn't want to have your fortune told to you.

And Donnie said matter of factly, Hey guy, didn't you see the sign here? He pointed to some words lopsidedly felt penned on a sheet of packing cardboard, which read, I promise I won't tell you you're going to die.

That's all it takes, man. It's all I ever wanted to hear. Keep on reading, mister. But actually, that is make-believe.

And fairy world. And unreal. Because I am going to die. And you are going to die. And part of the shock of coronavirus really, is that death has come very much front and centre, and you can't avoid it.

[ 2 : 33 ] Every single day now, if you're like me, we wait for new figures. The death toll rising. Death rates compared. Life and death decisions being made.

More ventilators needed, or more will die. Constantly dripping into our news feed. Death. And the truth is, no amount of box-set bingeing, or having another drink, or sharing funny memes, or thinking happy thoughts, can smother the truth.

We will die. And that brings panic. Well, in our passage today, Duncan just read for us, we've arrived at the crucifixion of Jesus Christ.

And in these verses here, we're invited to fix our eyes on one man, actually two men, who are able to die this day, not scared stiff, but with sure and certain confidence.

Through Luke's gospel to this point, Jesus the Messiah, our God-sent King and Saviour, has prepared both himself and us for the events that take place on the first Good Friday. Back in chapter 18 and verse 31, quote, Jesus took the twelve aside and told them, we are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that's written by the prophets about the Son of Man will be fulfilled.

[ 4 : 01 ] He will be handed over to the Gentiles. They will mock him, insult him, and spit on him.

They will flog him and kill him. And on the third day, he will rise again. And so, so very bravely, Jesus led the way up to Jerusalem, and allowed himself to be arrested, mocked, beaten, insulted, and accused.

And with the whole crowd shouting, crucify him, crucify him, finally, in chapter 23, verse 25, do you see Pontius Pilate surrendered Jesus to their will, like a lamb handed over to the wolves.

In our verses this morning, as we arrow in towards the moment of his death, in the midst of all this shame, and pain, and horror, you're meant to know, this is the Son of God.

This is the Messiah, enduring all this. If you've got your Bible open in front of me, follow it through with me. Verse 26, as the soldiers led him away, he's now on the public walk to his death, he's carrying his cross, it's a public shaming.

Jesus, we presume, so battered and weak at this point, from how they treated him, that they seized Simon from Cyrene, who was on his way in from the country, and put the cross on him, and made him carry it behind Jesus, like a disciple.

[ 5 : 34 ] As they process along, a large number of people followed him, including women who mourned, and wailed for him. You're meant to see and hear that.

They beat their breasts, and cry out loud, and wail in sorrow and grief, at the sight of him. But, verse 28, Jesus turned to them, and said, daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me.

Isn't that amazing? That even now, he looks away from himself, to the needs of others. Don't weep for me.

Weep for yourselves, and for your children. As I wept over this city, which rejects me, so you now weep, for yourselves.

For the time will come, when you'll say, blessed are the childless women, the wombs that never bore, and the breasts that never nursed. Such a time of terror, and destruction, this city will endure.

[ 6 : 38 ] And then they'll say, to the mountains, fall on us, and to the hills, cover us. For if people do these things, when the tree is green, what will happen when it's dry? Now, two other men, both criminals, were also led out with him, to be executed.

And when they came, to the place called, the skull, so from the heart of Jerusalem, they're outside the city gates now, and cast out to a place of death, the skull, they crucified him there, along with the criminals, one on his right, and one on his left.

We should know, because Luke's first readers do, what happened here. They held his body down, most likely they stripped Jesus naked, they drive nails through his hands, wrists, into the cross piece, they nail his feet to the upright, and then they raised the cross up, for Jesus to hang there, in front of all.

It's said of crucifixion, it's the most cruel method, of execution ever practiced, for it deliberately delayed death, until maximum torture, had been inflicted.

Here, simply in the text, they crucified him, there. You're to see him, in this moment, publicly hoisted, and naked, and nailed, at the place called, the skull, along with the criminals, one on his right, and one on his left.

[ 8 : 19 ] There's shame, and horror here. But don't be mistaken, about Jesus. To be numbered, with the transgressors, that's how it's meant to be, for God's servant king.

And listen to him, this righteous son of God, even as he hangs there, he prays, for those who crucified him.

Father, forgive them, for they do not know, what they're doing, and they divided up his clothes, by casting lots. In Psalm 22, 1,000 years beforehand, great King David, God's chosen one, had written, in some sense, of his own suffering.

Psalm 22, verses 16 to 18, dogs surround me, a pack of villains, encircles me, they pierce my hands, and my feet, all my bones, are on display, people stare, and gloat, over me, they cast, they divide my clothes, among them, and cast lots, for my garments.

So incredibly, precise that, so crucifixion like, as though, public suffering like this, for the King of the Jews, is written into the script, because it is.

[ 9 : 42 ] Verse 35, the people stood watching, and the rulers, even sneered at him, they said, he saved others, let him save himself, if he's God's Messiah, the chosen one.

Not playground banter, that, but cruel, and savage, taunting, with cold eyes, like merciless men, with an injured, helpless animal, on purpose, goading him.

Is he God's Messiah? Is he the chosen one? He's meant to be, a powerful saviour. They're right. So let him save himself.

But the thing is, he won't. He could. I mean, he could, strike down, every sneerer. He could, come down from the cross, because every molecule, of creation, and every person, is within his grip.

But he doesn't. The soldiers also came up, and mocked him. They offered him wine vinegar. Would you like a drink? And they said, if you're the king of the Jews, save yourself.

[ 10 : 52 ] And there was a written notice above him, which read, this is the king of the Jews. Even one of the criminals who hung there, hurled insults at him. Aren't you the Messiah?

Save yourself, and us. You're meant to see him in your mind's eye. Outside the city walls, at a place of death, naked and exposed, and lifted up amongst criminals.

He's suffering. He's shamed and surrounded. He's despised and rejected. God's Messiah, the chosen one, the king of the Jews, the Savior. And I wonder if, seeing the crucifixion afresh, well, it should, or it could, make you say, why?

Why would he allow himself to go up to Jerusalem, and walk into this? Why would he allow himself to be treated so savagely, and shamefully?

Why would the Son of God not save himself? The answer to that question is the most glorious thing in the world, and takes us right to the heart of the gospel.

[12:16] See, the Son of God came into the world not to live for himself, and not for his own safety, and not for his own skin, and not to save himself.

The reason he came into the world was to save men and women and boys and girls like you and me.

Twice in Luke's gospel, from his own lips, Jesus tells us the reason for his coming. In Luke 5, verses 31 and 32, It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but those who are ill.

I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. Second, Luke 19, verse 10, For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.

Sent by his Father, the Lord Jesus Christ came into the world for sinners. He came for people like you and me, who've turned away from our maker and run from him and lived for ourselves.

[13:31] He came for people who are riddled through with this moral disease called sin, the things that we've thought and said and done, making us dirty before God.

We who find ourselves sin-sick and guilty and dying and lost. And he came into the world not to condemn us and not to beat us up.

He came into the world as the Messiah, the chosen one. He came as a saviour to seek us and to save us, to forgive us and mend us and save us from sin and death and turn us back that we might be restored to our creator.

That is the good news mission of Jesus Christ and the thing is that is exactly what he's doing and accomplishing right here in his crucifixion in all its shame and savagery.

He is not saving himself. He is saving the lost. Like this criminal.

[14:42] In verses 39 to 43 see this with me the people and rulers and soldiers all fade into the background and we focus now on the crucified ones and a conversation that is life and eternity changing for a sinful lost dying criminal.

one of the criminals verse 39 who hung there hurled insults at him aren't you the Messiah save yourself and us can you believe that this criminal about to die and yet even here he stands with the world raging at Jesus but the other criminal rebuked him he stands apart from all others in the world and listen to what this criminal says first off he admits his own guilt don't you fear God he said since you are under the same sentence we are punished justly for we are getting what our deeds deserve it's an amazing confession that like Simon Peter on the shores of Galilee like the prodigal son like the tax collector we are sinners

I've sinned and done wrong I'm guilty and I deserve to die can I say it is such a breakthrough when that happens in a person's life when I stop pretending I'm good when I stop defending myself when I stop blaming my circumstances or my childhood I've sinned I'm lost I deserve to die he admits his own guilt second see this he acknowledges who Jesus is we are punished justly for we're getting what our deeds deserve but this man has done nothing wrong remember me when you come into your kingdom you are God's Messiah you're the innocent one you're our king and you'll come into your kingdom he admits his own guilt he acknowledges who Jesus is and third he asks

God for mercy in verse 42 he turns to his king and saviour and names him Jesus remember me when you come into your kingdom it's a bare request he's not bartering he's not trying to lever his way into heaven he's a sinner deserving death and he has nothing to offer and he simply casts himself on the mercy of King Jesus remember me have mercy on me a sinner he admits his own guilt he acknowledges who Jesus is he asks Jesus for mercy and in reply he hears the sweetest words the sweetest words that any guilty dying sinner could ever hear look at this verse 43 Jesus answered him truly I tell you today you will be with me in paradise paradise in the bible it's like the garden of eden it's a place of abundant life and rich blessing where you're safe and accepted and loved and you walk and live in the immediate presence of

God himself paradise is heaven and to this repentant sinner about to die a cast iron promise from the king of kings truly I tell you today you will be with me in paradise his sins wiped away his guilt dealt with found and forgiven and accepted by God the Lord Jesus saves him and as this criminal's eyes close in death this day he has nothing to fear because as he dies he will leave behind pain and shame and find himself straight away and immediately in paradise in the kingdom forever this is where I wanted to get to this morning these words here because these words of salvation here from Jesus Christ on the cross are not just a promise for this criminal but they're a promise for every sinful person who repents in our dying world today what should we do what should our world do we who live in the shadow of death one admit your own guilt

[ 19 : 50 ] I have done wrong I deserve to die under your judgment my God two acknowledge who Jesus is you're our king the innocent saviour I believe in you Lord Jesus three ask God for mercy you know me you know what I'm like I deserve nothing have mercy on me a sinner for having turned to Jesus Christ and that is what repentance is we too will know the relief and joy of our sins wiped out and our guilt taken away and the free mercy and grace of God flowing into our lives as we're restored to God all of that now and along with it a sure and certain confidence for our dying day that is to all sinners saved by Jesus there is no need anymore to be scared stiff of dying and there's no need anymore to panic living out our days in the shadow of death for as to this criminal so to you the Lord Jesus declares truly I tell you on the day you die you will be with me in paradise can you imagine that can you imagine that in your own life there's a Canadian guy called Don Carson who wrote a book about his father

Tom and the book is called An Ordinary Pastor and right at the end of the book he writes about his dad's death listen to this when dad died there were no crowds outside the hospital no editorial comments in the papers no announcements on television no attention paid in his hospital room there was no one by his bedside there was only the quiet hiss of oxygen vainly venting because he'd stopped breathing and would never need it again but on the other side all the trumpets sounded dad won entrance to the only throne room that matters not because he was a good man or a great man but because he was a forgiven man and he heard the voice of him whom he longed to hear saying well done good and faithful servant enter into the joy of your Lord today you will be with me in paradise you know this salvation that Jesus gives to us this place in paradise it's not by magic and a click of his fingers you know it is through his crucifixion on this day that he saves you it's through his suffering in this moment that your sin and guilt and the eternal death you deserve are dealt with and taken from you the apostle Peter writing years later in 1 Peter 3 18 for Christ also suffered once for sins the righteous for the unrighteous to bring you to God that's what's taking place here this first good Friday

Jesus the saviour suffering to bring you to God Christ the righteous sufferer suffering for the sins of the unrighteous bearing on himself all that you and I deserve in verse 44 it was now about noon and darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon for the sun stopped shining noon day darkness the fierce anger and judgment of God against sin poured out on the head of Jesus in your place and the curtain of the temple was torn in two opening the way to the presence of God to paradise at which moment his saving work completed Jesus called out with a loud voice father into your hands I commit my spirit such trust and confidence on his dying day as he committed himself into the hands of his father and when he had said this he breathed his last this is our king as you see him expiring this is our crucified saviour who did not save himself but gave his life in death to save the lost and he did it so that you and I you and me could face our coming death with sure and certain confidence today you will be with me in paradise because of his work for you

I'm going to lead us in a prayer and then we're going to sing together let's pray our lord and god and father we stand this morning amazed in the presence of Jesus the Nazarene such bravery such cruelty he endured lord what a king what a saviour that he would save us the lost in this way we bow before you in humility speechless almost at the saving work of Christ on our behalf and we humbly thank you that he has won for us and granted to us a place in paradise in heaven restored to you through life and through death and into eternity make us please men and women who grip tightly to our saviour Jesus Christ and make us those who do not fear and do not panic but holding tightly to Christ know this sure and certain confidence through life and even on our dying days we pray in Jesus name amen