

John 19:1-11

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Date: 09 March 2025

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- [0 : 00] You are listening to a message from Southwood Presbyterian Church in Huntsville, Alabama. Our passion is to experience and express grace. Join us.
- It is good to be able to come and show you what I found in scripture. And so why don't we just start with the scripture. And it's John 19, the first 11 verses.
- This is the written word of God. Then Pilate took Jesus and flogged him. And the soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on his head and arrayed him in a purple robe.
- They came up to him saying, hail king of the Jews and struck him with their hands. Pilate went out again and said to them, see, I am bringing him out to you that you may know that I find no guilt in him.
- So Jesus came out wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Pilate said to them, behold the man. Let me just pause there for a second. I think one of the things that Pilate is trying to do is he had Jesus beaten.
- [1 : 12] He knew he was innocent. But he wanted to see if he could get the crowd to see something in Jesus. Like that, this innocent man was just beaten. And maybe the crowd would go, okay, yeah, let him go.
- But it didn't work. When the chief priests and the officers saw him, they cried out, crucify him, crucify him. Pilate said to them, take him yourselves and crucify him for I find no guilt in him.
- The Jews answered him, we have a law and according to that law, he ought to die because he has made himself the son of God. When Pilate heard this statement, he was even more afraid.
- He entered his headquarters again and said to Jesus, where are you from? But Jesus gave him no answer. And just another commentary here, because I can't really go into it.
- But you see somebody, Pilate, who has a very casual religion. He kind of believes in a lot of gods. And so here's something that maybe this might be a god. And he's hedging his bets because he's trying to figure out how to placate all the gods.
- [2 : 17] And maybe there's something he can do to leverage his own interests, his own priorities. And that's what we see in Pilate, right? He's saying, well, maybe this is a god here. But Jesus was silent.
- Gave no answer. Verse 10. So Pilate said to him, you will not speak to me. You will not speak to me? Do you not know that I have authority to release you and authority to crucify you?
- Jesus answered him, you would have no authority over me at all unless it had been given you from above. Therefore, he who delivered me over to you has the greater sin.
- Let's pray. Father, take this powerful word of yours, Lord. Lord, and may through what you have shown me, maybe, Lord, it could go from my mouth.
- And Lord, would you do a work in our hearts, including mine? Lord, I want to be at the foot of the cross. And I never want to be any further than the very base in the foot of the cross.

- [3 : 24] And I don't want to be any higher than your feet. I just want you. And I want your word to go out so that all of us here will want the very same thing. Just you.
- You be our only priority. You be the only thing that catches our attention, Lord Jesus. Holy Spirit, work that miracle in our soul. In Christ's name we pray.
- Amen. Amen. Okay, so it's 1971. I was in second grade. And my family and I, we were vacationing in Italy.
- And the only reason we could do that was my dad's job took us to Germany. And we lived in Germany for first and through third grade. And so we go to Italy.
- And so here's the deal. Now, if anybody ever asks me, have you ever been to Italy? I can say yes. But the problem is I was in second grade. And all the beauty and all the greatness of Italy was just lost on my second grade mind.
- [4 : 24] Case in point, we went to Florence. We went to see this Michelangelo's David. And it's the most memorable thing that we saw.
- But for second grade reasons. You know, I'm a second grader. Okay. Now, the first thing was the lack of clothes was very funny to me. And my second grade mind, that was hysterical.
- Second thing that was memorable was giant. It was huge. And so for about five minutes, I laughed. And I thought, wow, that's big. I was ready to go.
- I was done. Everything great and beautiful about Michelangelo's David was lost on me completely. Why? Well, I'm a seventh grade mind. That's for sure.
- But I had certain priorities. And my attention was fixed elsewhere. What had caught my attention a lot was the little towns and the stuff that we went through.
- [5 : 22] They all had markets. And they were all selling trinkets and toys and stuff. And I had some money. And my dad would give some because you could barter. And you could get these great little toys, little trinkets.
- I'm the youngest of five. My brother's 10 years older than me. This is 1971. He was kind of a hippie. And I just wanted to emulate him. So one of the things I could buy were like necklaces with peace signs.
- You know, like really cool. I wanted those things. And I loved doing that. That had my attention. That had another priority in mind. You see, when we went to Italy as a family, we camped out.
- My dad was able to bring over a pop-up trailer. And so we camped out everywhere. And so the rules of the family got relaxed a little bit. And what I mean by rules of the family was in my house, we could only have one Coke a week.
- You know, in the South, like one Coke a week. What? Yeah. We were northerners at the time. So we were kind of weird. But we could only have one Coke. On vacation, you could have one or two Cokes a day.
- [6 : 23] But not out. My dad had five kids. He was too cheap. He wasn't going to buy Coke out. We had to be back at the campsite. And you could have Coke. You know, I could have snacks, sandwiches.
- I just wanted to be there. I wanted to be part of the good life. I wanted the good life back at the camp. So everything about beautiful and the greatness of David was just lost on me.
- Now, my mom and my oldest sister, she was back from college. Both of them are artists. And so when they were there, they stood and watched and walked around and talked about what they were seeing.

It seemed like five hours to me. It was probably 30 minutes, maybe 45. But they would look and see and comment, like the way the brilliance of Michelangelo, the skill, the marble, the skin of David actually looks like skin.

There is enough there to marvel. In fact, the beauty and the magnificence of that work of art demands our attention. The authority of that work of art does just simply demand our attention.

[7 : 34] Every ounce of it. Unless you're a self-centered second grader. Right? Right? A self-centered second grader who had different priorities. So behold, Michelangelo's David.

I can say I saw it. But I can't say I see it. I didn't see it. I saw David, but I didn't see David.

It's completely lost on me. The transcendence. Everything. Because I was sort of captured by toys, trinkets, one to two cokes a day, snacks, the camping, good life.

Something similar is going on in our text. The people who are looking at Jesus when Pilate says, behold the man. They missed who Jesus was.

They missed the magnificence and the beauty of who Jesus is. What he came to do. Because something else had their attention. Something else had their priorities. And so I have to ask myself this too.

[8 : 43] But when Pilate says, behold the man, what do you see? Who do you see? Does the presence and transformative beauty and authority of Jesus feel lost on you?

Maybe there was a time when it warmed your heart, but now it's faded. Let me see if I can present a way where we can stand in his presence.

To sort of stand and gaze upon him. Do it together. Through the scriptures. Asking the Holy Spirit to show us the beauty and authority of Jesus.

Maybe for the first time. And maybe for the first time again. So are you ready? Let's see. I'm going to point out two things. I mean there's so much I'm skipping and so forgive me.

But there's just not time. But I'll tell you, these are the things that I pondered as I read through these 11 verses. There is a chain of betrayal. All right?

[9 : 45] I'll explain what that is. But there's a chain of betrayal in what's going on in the scene. Where there's all kinds of people that are missing who Jesus is. There's a chain of betrayal. And the second thing, there is a distraction of a dead-end priority.

All of which we participate in. Both of those. Let me talk about the chain of betrayal. Look at the last part of verse 11. Where it says, therefore, this is Jesus speaking.

Therefore, he who delivered me over to you has the greater sin. Now what does that mean? I think one of the things that I would ask you to sort of keep in mind. In Dante's Inferno.

Maybe you're familiar with that. I'm not super familiar with it. I've read enough to get some nuggets for this sermon. But this is really helpful. The deepest, deepest part of hell that Dante describes is the ninth ring, which is treachery.

Another way you'd say it, it's betrayal. In that deep ninth, deepest part of hell is a frozen lake. And in that frozen lake, there are people in various points of being stuck in that frozen lake.

[10 : 56] And there's four rings around the lake. The first ring are people who have betrayed their family. And that first ring is named after Cain.

That makes sense, right? Cain, he betrayed his brother. He betrayed his whole family. Then there's the second ring is the people that betray their friends or their guests. And this idea that, you know, you betray your friends.

The second is our people who betray their country. And the final fourth ring, the worst ring of all, are people who betray their Lord. And it's named after Judas. That ring.

So, when Jesus is saying, like, who has the greater sin here? You know, who has delivered me has the greater sin. And so we have to sort of see things like a chain that goes back in time.

Because you can start with Pilate. And you go, yeah, Pilate knows he's innocent. But he's still going to turn to Moses. He still, he doesn't, he just kind of washes his hand. I mean, he doesn't kind of, he actually washes his hands, right?

[11 : 57] But Jesus was betrayed and turned over to Pilate from Caiaphas, the high priest. You know, and that's sort of the religious part of the world. But Jesus came to them from Judas.

Judas. But what Jesus is pointing to is something that we have to think. Because this is cosmic treason on the biggest possible level. And we start to get some clues from, if we look at John 13, 2.

During supper, when the devil had already put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him. So we know, okay, it was the devil getting Judas to do this.

Certainly. But he had agency. And so he's responsible. Judas is a betrayer. There's no doubt. But we have to, what's going on is there's something even bigger. And we get a clue.

Because this goes back to the garden. Back to Adam and Eve. Back to creation. The first three chapters of Genesis. John 8 gives us a clue. Verse 44. You are of the father, the devil.

[12 : 58] And you will be, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning. So this gets us back to the garden. The beauty of Jesus has the potential and will be lost on you unless you see yourself as part of the chain of betrayers.

Because if you start with Pilate and you go back in time, you go back to Genesis. Then you turn around and come back. Through Pilate all the way to now, you and I have betrayed Jesus. It's called sin.

We have to see ourselves in this long line. Now, how do we think about it? We think about it because it goes back to the garden. What was going on in the garden of Eden?

See, your betrayal of God's love and his authority is at its most basic when you take the reins of God's authority and you decide for yourself what is good and what is evil.

In the garden, Adam and Eve reflected the image of God, but only to a point because God said, you shall not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. That's all.

[14 : 05] You reflect my image, but you don't get to reflect my image in determining what is good and what is evil. And that was the first sin. That was the sin. I see that it's good to eat.

I will eat it. You know, and Adam goes, yeah, me too. They were determining what was good and what was evil. And that is our struggle every day.

We want to be king. We don't want Jesus to be king. We want to be king. We want just a little bit of Jesus. We want something in what he said. But he didn't quite say that, but I'm going to determine what's good and what is evil.

You and I have betrayed Jesus. You and I have put him on the cross. You have to see that. You have to see your role in the death of Jesus.

You and I put him there. And what's our response? We need to repent. We need to return. We need to see ourselves putting ourselves first. We have to see ourselves as wanting to be God.

[15 : 08] And we can repent. See, God's plan is for us to trust, surrender, and enjoy him in communion with him, to know him. And the thing that's separating you is your desire to determine for your own life what is good and evil.

And you must surrender it completely through repentance. And when you do, there's forgiveness. And you can relax. I think Jack Miller said, cheer up. You're worse than you think. It's true.

See yourself in that chain of betrayal. You and I put him on the cross. That's key. It's so important. Now, that is the chain of betrayal. Now, the distraction of the dead-end priority of control.

One of the ways that ourselves putting ourselves on the throne is we want to control everything in our lives. And you can see it through everybody is missing who Jesus is.

And you will miss him too if you want to control everything in your life. And not surrender to Jesus. In this passage, you see all these people trying to maintain their control.

[16:16] Pilate wants to maintain control over the people. And he'll do anything to keep that control. He wants to control it. He wants to keep the people above him happy with his job and how he's doing.

And he has to control the people. And the religious people are trying to control everything else. And they want to get rid of Jesus because it's messing with their, you know, what they're trying to accomplish.

You can see it. It's all about getting and maintaining power. Keeping control. And that's how Jesus is just lost on them. That's how Jesus is lost on you and me.

We miss it. We miss him. Look at verse 10. So Pilate said to him, you will not speak to me? Do you not know that I have authority?

There it is. He's got control. I've got authority. And yet the irony of, you know, he's saying like, don't you know who you're talking to? That's irony, right? That word.

[17:15] Jesus, I imagine that Jesus would not have said another word. He would have stayed quiet if Pilate hadn't mentioned authority. Because the next time we hear Jesus speak after he speaks after this, it's from the cross.

But when Pilate says, don't you know I have authority? Jesus can't let that go. You can't let it go.

You know, that's the first thing that Jesus said before he gave the great commission. All authority has been given me. Now go make disciples. This is such a key word. And so verse 11, Jesus speaks up.

He breaks his silence. You would have no authority over me unless it had been given you from above. Therefore, he who delivers me over to you has the greater sin.

We know what that means. But what keeps you from seeing Jesus in your life, having a deep relationship with him, is your tendency and my tendency to hold on to control.

[18:14] In this picture of Jesus here where we see him, where Pilate says, you behold the man, it's possible Jesus was unrecognizable. He had been beaten so bad.

But he's standing there. And of all the people in this scene, and I dare say all the people in the world at that time, all the people that have ever existed, all the people that will ever exist, in that moment even, Jesus was calm.

And you can trace it back to the garden. Not so much the Garden of Eden, but yes, but the Garden of Gethsemane. Because the night before he was, in the night when he was betrayed, when he was in the garden and he was praying, he said, what's about to happen to me, Father?

He called it the cup, the cup of God's wrath. Take it from me, please. But not as I will, but as you will. Jesus is giving this picture of full surrender, absolute surrender to the Father.

And it creates in him a calm spirit, a very powerfully calm spirit, while everyone else is trying to maintain control.

[19 : 23] Jesus has turned it over, and he's the calmest one in the bunch. Do you think maybe you would see Jesus more clearly, powerfully, gratefully, wonderfully, if you stopped trying to control so much and trusted more?

We, because of the sin in us, because we're wanting to maintain control and be God and determine what's good and evil, we think if we can control everything, then we'll be calm.

That is not the way to a calm soul and spirit. The distraction and illusion of control is the battle of trusting God's wisdom over your wisdom, his power and authority over your sad power and delusional authority.

When you can see the power, authority, and wisdom, when you behold the man, fully God, fully human, when you behold him deeply, and the Holy Spirit begins to transform your soul, you will find the driving aim of your life will increasingly become to listen to him, to be with him, and not control your life, but it'll be a life of deep, deep surrender.

Oswald Chambers, my favorite quote, the secret of walking with Jesus is showing no concern for the uncertainties that lie ahead. It's a beautiful picture of surrender.

[21 : 03] It's a beautiful picture of discipleship. All right, so, if you want to see Jesus in a deep way, to know him, see yourself in the chain of betrayal and repent often.

If you want to see Jesus more clearly than you ever have and to know him more deeply, get rid of control, the illusion of control, and surrender and trust Jesus.

But let me say this. You can't. You have to, you can't. I know you're desperate for this, but the truth is you can't.

Let me see if I can explain. Let's go back to David. Let's go back to Michelangelo's David. This was the statue that was doomed from the very beginning.

Michelangelo was the third of, you know, three artists that were commissioned to create a David that would be part of the series of biblical characters. And so this is like sort of the late 1400s.

[22 : 11] The original artist that went to pick out the marble, he went up to the Alps, the Italian Alps in Tuscany, northern Italy, and he picked out the slab. And he wasn't very good at it because you come to find out later that it had too many imperfections in it.

And this artist made the work even harder because what you do when you pick out the slab, you sort of prepare it for the journey. You chip away at things. You kind of have this general idea of what you're looking to do.

And so you got to make it lighter. And so he began to chip away, not doing a really good job at that. In fact, he created an awkward hole right in the middle of this giant slab of marble.

One thing I read said this, it was hard to see how this stone was ever going to become a plausible human form. The journey of the 18 foot, 24,000 pound slab from the Alps in the northern region of Tuscany took two years to get this slab to Florence.

It's now a two and a half hour drive. Okay, so in the 1400s, it was hard to get this slab there. They had to go over rough terrain, go down the Mediterranean Sea, down the coast, go up the Arno River, get out of the river, travel even more slowly and end up in the Florence Cathedral.

[23 : 34] And once that slab was there, it was on its side and it sat in the Florence, in the courtyard of the Florence Cathedral for three decades, 30 years.

The people in the neighborhood called it the giant, like ironically, right? They knew it was supposed to be David, but there's the giant and it's winning. Because the people that came and looked at the slab, they noticed this is terrible.

There's too many things. This is unusual. There's nothing we can do with this slab. It was weather-beaten for 30 years, rain and hail. It experienced the disrespect birds show public works of art in our cars.

It was hardened in the sun, became brittle. Now, let's just pause there for a second. This is a picture of us. This is a picture of how it goes in our lives.

You know, we're in over our head most of the time. We feel rained on. We feel alone and don't know anyone who really can relate.

[24 : 34] Life can harden us. We become brittle. We fall apart. We become angry and bitter. We're giants too, giant messes. Listen to this opening.

Gosh, I love this. John Ortberg has a new book, and this is the introduction, and it's in it. And I thought, oh my gosh, this is beautiful. See if you can hear yourself in here. I can't fix my family.

I can't keep my job. I can't salvage my reputation. I can't protect those I love. I can't stand the pain. I can't stop drinking. I can't stop binge eating.

Binge watching. Binge spending. Binge working. Can't stop looking at porn. I can't find a spouse. I can't stay married. I can't forgive my ex.

Can't make a friend. Manage my temper. Save money. Be grateful. I can't get my skin, teeth, hair, thighs to look right. I can't cure my cancer with positive thinking.

[25 : 34] I can't please my parents. Can't have kids. Can't get the kids to leave. Can't get my child to come home. Can't open up. Can't shut up. Can't sleep. Can't stop worrying.

Can't quit comparing. Can't feel joy. Can't see my abs. Can't get enough likes. I can't understand what I do. For I have the desire to do good. But cannot carry it out.

For I do not do the good I want to do. But instead I do the evil. I do not want to do. I can't bear criticism. I can't stop criticizing. Can't believe.

Can't walk away. Can't make myself want to live. Can't fix the world. Can't fix myself. I can't run the show. No wonder we self-medicate. No wonder we try to forget the road.

The rough roads. The rough seas. The raging river. The long arduous journey that we have been on. Only to find ourselves sideways in some courtyard. Just feeling the pain of a life that we can't control.

[26 : 36] And we can't do. Sometimes we have been following Jesus for a good while. But maybe you have hit a wall.

And you feel like a slab stuck on your side. What used to thrill you about Jesus seems lost on you now. The way for Jesus to not be lost on you though is this.

Is to see him through the eye of desperation. All the I can'ts. I know you're desperate. I know you are. I hear it all the time.

I hear it in my own voice. But that's how you see Jesus. Is to be desperate. And to give up on all the things that you say you can't do. Absolutely surrender them.

You need to be rescued. And that's one thing we say. You could say Michelangelo rescued the slab. He sure did. You know he made it look like flesh.

[27 : 35] And that's what Jesus does with us. Right? He gives us a heart of flesh. We had a heart of stone. Yes. But there's one last thing I want to point out before we come to the table. Historically statues of David were done after the fight.

And so if you see statues prior to Michelangelo. You know they had him holding up Goliath's head. And David had his foot on the chest of Goliath. But Michelangelo has David looking over at Goliath.

Before the fight. It's a deep picture of trust in God. And that's where we want to be.

Here's David. I'm going to kill this giant. But I trust God. When you can put your hands down and say I can't. I can't.

And you turn and behold the man. Jesus the son of God. Fully God. Fully man. And see Jesus.

[28 : 44] See him. He has been staring down his enemy Satan. Since the garden. When the curse was pronounced. And so as you look at the man with the face of David.

This is a picture of who Jesus is. He is our king. King David. Jesus is our king. He's our warrior king. The warrior is alert but calm.

Equipped but patient. Daring but confident. That's our Jesus. Victory is certain. You can't. But he did. Jesus defeated death. Rose from the dead to give life to broken, brittle, flawed souls. Like Michelangelo. He gave us a heart of flesh.

But took away the stone. Our king rescued us. And he is sculpting us into his image. How? It's through the difficult roads. The rough and painful seas.

[29 : 43] The disorienting rivers that we experience in life. Sometimes a life of relative obscurity. You're stuck on your side. He takes all of that. To teach us that ultimately we are not in control.

And when we surrender. We get Jesus. And that's all you need is him. Suffering and waiting are all part of the journey closer to Jesus. He is our only priority.

Your only priority in life is to know Jesus. That is it. To know him. And he uses all of that for you to stand before him and see the beauty. And he can be trusted. He invites us to come and sit in his presence with all of our sin and our pathetic kingdom.

Come to me all you who are just exhausted from life and you will find rest. It's this notion of slowing down. Be like my mom and my sister. Be artists.

Be artists. Not patrons who are there to be served. No, you are an artist. And stand and look at Jesus. And see the beauty of him.

[30 : 46] Stop being a second grader. Wanting toys and trinkets. The casual good life.

Control. Go to Jesus. Be with him and say, take it Lord. You change me. I can't. Slow down or you will miss him. You will miss him. Do this.

Ask God to show you an area of your life where he is inviting you to trust him more deeply. Just start there. Go before him. Be quiet before him. Lord, show me an area of my life. I need to trust you more clearly.

And you will see yourself there trying to maintain your little kingdom. And he will strip it from you. Because the deeper the trust, the deeper you know Jesus. The deeper the trust, the deeper your surrender of your control.

The deeper the trust, the deeper the ability to slow down. Don't let all of this get lost on you. See Jesus. Be with him. You can't.

[31 : 45] He can. Behold the man, Jesus Christ, the son of God. Amen. Okay. We get to come before Jesus.

We get to see him. He has created a picture more beautiful than David. And this picture is one of a meal.

And this meal is something he invites us to as a means of grace. Something to shape our soul so that we put our hands down and we surrender more to him.

These are the words of the institution of the Lord. Paul writes them in 1 Corinthians 11. I received from the Lord that which I passed on to you.

That the Lord Jesus on the night in which he was betrayed took bread. And when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, take and eat. This is my body which is broken for you. Do this in remembrance of me.

[32 : 45] In the same way after supper, he also took the cup saying, this cup is a new covenant in my blood. This do whenever you drink it in remembrance of me. For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you show forth the Lord's death until he comes.

So here's the thing. As a follower of Jesus, we want to go after him. And Jesus says the way that we go after him is we deny ourselves. We see ourselves in the chain of betrayal and we deny ourselves because we don't want our way.

Deny ourselves and we die. We pick up our cross daily. And we follow Jesus. And the way that we can feed our souls is just remember how he rescued us.

What it cost him. And the blood and the broken body is what cost him a way to redeem us and rescue us. And there's something else though. Jesus gives this picture.

We see all the way through scripture and in Revelation that there is a marriage supper of the Lamb. There is a feast that will be more magnificent than we can imagine. But as we take part of this, as we enjoy these elements, that one day when we're in heaven, the marriage supper of the Lamb, we'll be able to say, I know this.

[34 : 03] I know this. I know this meal. I know this feeling. I know this sense of just absolute joy that comes from surrender because I'm feeling it in a greater way.

But there are days I know those times. This is what this is. It points to that day. He can be trusted and you can surrender all to him. But I would say this.

If none of this, if this is being lost on you, you don't quite know Jesus, stay where you are rather than coming up. And just tell Jesus that I repent.

I repent of anything that I thought I would do to earn your favor. However, just ask God and he will forgive you and he'll tell you, cheer up your worst than you think. But do that work.

But this is for people who know this meal and want that meal one day in heaven. But more importantly, they just want Jesus. That's what we do. And so, Father, thank you for this.

[35 : 03] Thank you that we see Jesus. I pray that's even more clear in our hearts and our souls. And, Father, as we take this meal, as we look forward, and as we need things in our lives, we need you in a deeper way.

Father, just bless our souls. In Christ's name, amen. For more information, visit us online at southwood.org.