

Matthew 27:45-54 "Truly This "Was" the Son of God?"

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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.

Good Friday. What makes this Good Friday good? Is it candy? Certainly plenty of that to come. Not that. Maybe it's people. Maybe it's the focus. But more than that, it's the cross of Christ. This is good in the purest sense of the word. Not an enjoyment sense, but a holiness. The cross. The vertical relationship between man and God, which changes every relationship that we have here on earth.

If one is right, the other is affected. So we have an opportunity to focus tonight. So let's do that.

[1 : 08] Let's look at Matthew chapter 27, verses 45 through 54. Now from the sixth hour, there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour.

And about the ninth hour, Jesus cried out with a loud voice saying, Eli, Eli, lama sagbaktani? That is, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me? And some of the bystanders hearing it said, This man is calling Elijah.

And one of them at once ran and took a sponge, filled it with sour wine, put it on a reed, and gave it to him to drink. But the other said, Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to save him.

And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice and yielded up his spirit. And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom, and the earth shook, and the rocks were split.

The tombs also were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised.

And coming out of the tombs after his resurrection, they went into the holy city and appeared to many.

[2 : 15] When the centurion and those who were with him, keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were filled with awe and said, Truly, this was the Son of God.

darkness, cries, mocking, waiting, doubt, innocence, betrayal, pain, unimaginable pain, fear, hope, death, earthquakes, open tombs, peace, this was a day like no other.

What would it have been like to be there? To see the darkness in the middle of the day? To hear the cries of Jesus on the cross?

To hear those mocking one you loved, or perhaps to be the one mocking that you doubted? To see the innocence, to know he was innocent and he was betrayed, and to see his pain and his screams. He's looking up and screaming. And to see fear and hope and then death. The words of the centurion, they, in verse 54, they, and the people that were with him, they sum it up, what it would have been like.

[3 : 46] Truly, this was the Son of God, he said. Now, this was a man who had the respect and commanded so many. We don't know if he really believed. Some translations say, a son of God, but he was in shock.

Utter shock. Imagine, if you're there, you see this, you turn and you see the temple curtain torn, this massive thick curtain that no man could rip, but it's torn straight down the middle.

And what used to separate you from going into God, where you had one go on your behalf, you could now see straight through. It would definitely mess with your mind.

Here's the truth. We remember that Jesus said, these things had to happen. Right? There's no life if there's no payment for sin.

There's no payment for sin if there's no bloodshed and there's no forgiveness of sins, past, present, and future, unless the bloodshed is of one greater than time itself. And there is no one greater than time itself except for the author of time.

[4 : 52] Truly this was the Son of God? Is Jesus just a was to you today? Or as Revelation says, is he a was and is and is to come?

He was there. He was here. He did die. And it was so that we will be with him forever. But for now, if we were there, silence.

The disciples, we would see them scatter. We would see the fear in their eyes. We would see them weeping. We would see them hiding. We would see them trying to comfort. We would see some hope.

And today, in our silence, in our hearts, don't we scatter? Don't we fear? Don't we weep if we admit it?

Don't we hide and we comfort and we're just clinging on to find some hope? Do we really understand the meaning of this cross? We have an opportunity to focus on that.

[6 : 00] One of my friends texted me a few weeks ago that they saw that Hershey's was selling a chocolate cross. He said, is this sacrilegious? You know, we can't sugarcoat this.

I'm not trying to knock Hershey's, but do we really get what's going on here? Dan Doriani writes that the cross was originally an emblem of pain, shame, criminality, and death.

R.C. Sproul says that the cross is tragedy and victory in the same moment. It's scandal and honor, defeat and triumph, shame and esteem. The cross represents the great suffering of Christ and the suffering far transcends physical pain.

It's more than a human death. It's an atonement. Atonement. What does that mean? It's, in Christian thought, an atonement is that act by which God and man are brought together in a personal relationship.

The term was originally from an Anglo-Saxon word, meaning making at one. So, hence, at one-ment. So, it presupposes that there's a separation that has occurred between God and man and that human beings, if we're to know God, to have fellowship with God, there has to be an atonement to make us one, an at-one-ment.

[7 : 24] This was the most torturous instrument of death and punishment that existed. Think electric chair. Okay? This was, though, the only way for the way.

And it was our sin that nailed him there. My sin, your sin, made God the Son bleed and die. Our sin caused the death.

Our disobedience split his side. Our brokenness crowned him with thorns. Our darkness crucified the light, the one who is life. In him was the life.

And the life was the light of men, but the light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it. Verse 45 says that, tells us about this darkness.

From the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour. This was not a normal darkness. It wasn't like a storm. This would have been understood as dark in daylight.

[8 : 28] Imagine the sun went out. And this would have meant that it was dark from noon until three o'clock. The Jews and the Greeks would have understood this darkness as an omen. It was an omen of judgment.

Jesus here was enduring God the Father's judgment on sin. His cries of anguish, they were true because he was separated from God the Father in this moment in outer darkness so that we may be welcomed into the Father's arms in eternal light.

Verse 46 says that, Jesus cried out with a loud voice saying, Eli, Eli, lama sagwaktani. That is my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

Why have you forsaken me? Forsaken. What does that mean? It means to abandon. It means to leave. It means to reject.

The innocent one who has known nothing but intimacy with his Father is for a moment completely rejected. And it's because of us. God can't look upon sin and smile.

[9 : 38] A righteous judge cannot not punish or he is no longer righteous. Yet Jesus chose to do this to do this for us. Dr. Doriani writes that at the moment when Jesus bore our sin, the Father was distant because he was too pure to look upon sin.

So for those moments, Jesus was forsaken, abandoned, rejected. Yet the Father did not forsake him absolutely or forever. We know this. He still loved his son.

He never forgot his plan to reconcile our lost race to himself. As soon as Jesus finished bearing our sin, fellowship would be restored perfectly and forever.

After that cry, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why me? He had pain. But after that moment came the death, that eerie silence of death.

If you've ever been around it, you know it and you never forget it. Christ's body was lifeless and still. And in these moments, when it seems that God is gone, he's very present.

[10 : 53] He's overcoming death and killing it and allowing a relationship to take place between us and him. He's killing and conquering death.

And in three days, everybody will see. But for now, silence, darkness, grief. But in the silence, God is working.

In the darkness, God is working. In Jesus' cries, God is working. In Jesus' unimaginable pain, God is working.

And in Jesus' death, God is alive. But why? Why that death? Again, atonement. Somebody had to take the wrath of God.

Blood must be shed to forgive the offense. Light cannot exist in darkness. So he died. So that your sins can be forgiven.

[11 : 56] So that you may know the love of Christ. That you may know the love of God through faith in Jesus Christ. So that you can be certain that in your darkness, God is working. And in your cries, God is working.

And in your pain, right now, God is working. And in your death, if you have faith in Christ, you may be alive forever with him.

But don't miss the good in this Good Friday because sometimes in the darkness, it's hard to see the beauty, isn't it? One time I was driving down 431 over the mountain and on one side of the mountain, there was light and sunlight coming down.

It was beautiful. I could see every detail of the trees. But on this side, it was dark and everything was blurry. The same beauty existed, but the darkness clouded it.

Well, in this darkness is light. In this darkness is beauty. Because the light was conquering the darkness and in the darkness, God is shining. And here's the beauty.

[13 : 04] That you, sinner, me, sinner, are guilty of killing the Son of God with our sins. Yet, you are offered freedom from the punishment that you deserve.

Why? Because it is finished. To tell us die. It is finished. Every drop of blood has paid for every sin that you can possibly commit or conceive or think about.

But, only if you receive that payment. You do have to take it. And that's called faith. Verse 50, you see that Jesus cried out again with a loud voice that says he yielded up his spirit.

That means that he died. He was still in control. He had authority to give up his spirit. But you were worth it. But what did that accomplish?

Two things. Two big words. Propitiation and expiation. That's what the atonement accomplished.

The death of Christ, as R.C. Sproul writes, was both a propitiation and an expiation.

[14 : 09] Propitiation refers to the turning away of wrath by an offering. God's wrath is now satisfied. His justice is met by the sacrifice and the blood of Jesus Christ.

Expiation refers to the covering of sins. By the atonement, the at-one-ment, our sins are now removed from us. The atonement satisfies both the demands of God the Father and the needs of Christ's people.

That such a double transaction can be achieved by one person and one event, R.C. Sproul says, is a matter of eternal glory. This was no ordinary death. This was a payment.

This was a mission. And the mission was accomplished. Paid in full. Completely successful. It is finished, as Dan Doriani writes, means that God's displeasure with us is finished.

If you have faith, acknowledging your need for forgiveness and your inability to achieve it on your own, if you believe that He died for you, and you have certainty in the things not seen, the eternal things, then He promises to adopt you into His family as brothers, as sisters, as daughters, as sons of the Most High God, Yahweh, heirs of His kingdom.

[15 : 27] Do you believe this? Do you believe in Jesus Christ? Maybe you're here and you have and you've forgotten your way. Maybe you're here and you never have.

It's never too late to turn to Christ until we don't have the opportunity anymore. You know, knowing someone who knows about Jesus is not the same thing as knowing Jesus.

Reading a book is not the same thing as knowing the author. I was with a man this week, a dear man, and I asked him when he came to know Jesus and he said, well, later in life, but he realized

that he was religious for so long that he had no relationship.

Are you religious? America is very religious. There's a difference between religion and a relationship with the creator of the universe. For me, I sat at 16 years old not knowing anything about Jesus in a room of people who prayed to him for an hour and I realized, I have no idea who you're talking to.

I started asking questions and I've been different ever since. Do you believe that if you just read the medicine bottle that tells how it's going to cure you, that it's the same as taking the pill?

[16:47] Well, Christianity is the difference, the difference between Christianity and every other religion. I've heard it said it's the difference between two words, doing and done.

What are you doing to try to make that relationship right with God because Jesus has already done it. This is the only religion that offers true relationship with God on your behalf, asking nothing of you but to believe it.

that we may be children of light shining as stars in this dark world. Do you believe that? Do you believe that you can shine the love and the redemption and forgiveness of Jesus everywhere you go?

That's why he died. That you have a purpose right now. Whatever you do, wherever you work, he will use you to change this world. It can be a smile, it can be a hug, it can be a listening ear, it can be a shoulder to cry on but he's using you.

I'll tell you what, it's not a paycheck. You don't have to work for God's love. This father loves you perfectly and the only time that he had that wrath against you, his son took it for you.

[17:57] If you've ever held a baby in your hands and think how beautiful it is, that's what God thinks of you if you have faith in Jesus Christ and it's all because of what happened on that cross.

You're free to love and to be loved. And to hurt and to be healed and to hope. After Jesus died, three significant things happened.

The curtain temple was torn from top to bottom. This meant that now we can approach the throne of grace with confidence because there is one who is both man and God, whose sacrifice paid for the sins of the people temporarily and eternally forever.

And he reigns in heaven guaranteeing that that is true. And the temple being torn shows that you can walk straight to God. Now, you don't need anybody but the great high priest Jesus Christ.

Then there was an earthquake because the foundation of the entire cosmos was shaken. Sin has been forgiven and now Jesus is going to make all things new.

[19:07] All of them. You ever thought about that? I want to visit another planet with Jesus one day. I can. You can. He controls everything.

And then the tombs were opened. People really walked out of the grave. Christians who had fallen asleep as they call it. This was a cataclysmic event. God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and Jesus is God and his death offers us cleansing forever.

Relationship with God. He really is who he said he was. And he's not just a was. He's the son of God. Not a son or a God. He offers you eternal life and he paid the death penalty for your sins.

And he offers you his perfect righteousness. I don't want to sugar coat this cross. I don't want to put chocolate on it. On this cross, this instrument of death and destruction, Jesus absorbed the wrath of God that you deserve, that I deserve, and he offers you eternal life.

This is serious, y'all. It's serious. Do you know Jesus as your Savior? Know him. Does he know you? If you don't, remember the Passover?

[20:29] There was the angel of destruction and it passed over all of those who had the blood of the lamb on their doorposts. If you don't know Jesus, you're saying, I don't want you to pass over my sins.

I think I can do it better. I think that wasn't enough. I'll take it from here. And the wrath that you will absorb is in a place called hell that is a very real place.

I don't want anybody to go there. Jesus spent more time talking about that than any other place.

And I don't say that to scare you. I say that to let you know that Jesus is the only way.

And I don't want you to choose to pass over that. The free gift offered to you because it would be payable at your death. Hell is also what he took on the cross so that you don't have to.

Did you know that John Calvin, the great theologian, he struggled with the Apostles' Creed phrase, he descended into hell. Not the accuracy of it, but where it was placed in the actual creed.

[21 : 36] Rather than the traditional order which says, who suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried, he descended into hell. Calvin wanted it to be reordered to say, who suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, descended into hell, dead, and buried.

Why? Because Jesus received the punishment of hell while he was on the cross. The punishment that he saves us from. But he saves us for something great, to renew the world until he renews the entire cosmos.

On the cross in the silence, God was reconciling sinners to himself as he absorbed the wrath of God, suffered the hell that we deserve, and now offers us the eternal life that only he could hurt. But now death is dead. Love has won. Christ has conquered. Is Jesus just a was, as the centurion and those looking on said, or is he your Savior who was, and is, and is to come.

There's no more payment necessary because it is finished. And if you let Jesus pay the debt, you are free. Free to have a relationship with God. Free to have purpose and meaning in life like no other.

[22 : 56] And free to live forever. How do you accept that gift? You simply ask, help me, Lord. ask him to give you that gift.

I love you. You're not alone. You have a purpose. You have a place to belong in God's people. Don't wait to ask. It's never too late. Let me pray for us. Father, you're real. And people in here need you in so many different ways.

I don't know where they are, but I know they hurt because they're human. And Lord Jesus, I pray that if anyone in here does not know you, that they would simply right now ask, come into my life. thank you for dying for me. Give me the purpose and meaning I'm looking for in everything besides you. And if they're here and they've known you for a lifetime, give them the fervor that only you can give of the Holy Spirit.

[24 : 06] Remind them of who you've called them to be and fill them, Lord Jesus, with the power that we will hear about on Sunday. We love you and we lift these things to you only in the name of the atoning one himself, Jesus Christ, who we believe.

Thank you for paying our debt. It is in his name that I walk straight into the Holy of Holies and say, I love you, Dad. Amen.

For more information, visit us online at southwood.org. Thank you. Amen. Amen. Amen.