

Mark 10:45 “The King Gives His Life to Give Us Life”

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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.
- We join me in prayer praising this King who has come. King Jesus, the wonders of your love amaze us tonight.
- We praise you for being a King who did not cling to the glory and the comfort and the privilege that he had, but loved us so much that he came to be born, loved us enough to give us hope, to give us life.
- Oh, Jesus, we praise you for all the many gifts that you give us out of the abundance of your glory and grace. We pray tonight as we especially celebrate your birth, as even brothers and sisters of ours around the world are waking up already on Christmas morning, celebrating, praising your name.
- As churches gather around this city, would in each of those places the name of Jesus be praised? Would light break into darkness? Would hope come to those who are hurting and grieving and mourning?
- [1 : 20] Jesus, in each of our hearts, would we prepare room for you? Not a corner, but a place where the King would come and reign and rule and shed his love abroad in our hearts that we would worship you and love you and trust you, especially tonight.
- Jesus, do that work in us. Come to our hearts. We ask it in your name. Amen. Before we look at God's word together for a few minutes, we're going to sing one more song tonight.
- It is a bit less familiar to most of us than some of the ones that we have sung tonight, but our kids taught it to us a couple of weeks ago. Kids, many of you sang at Hark the Herald with Miss Kristen and Miss Veronica, sang It's About the Cross.
- You can clap for them. They were fantastic when they sang. If some of you are here tonight, would y'all come up and stand on the stairs and help us learn it? Because your parents don't know it as well as you do.
- Will you come up here with me and help us sing? Mr. DJ and Miss Lindsay are going to sing too, but y'all come up here and stand on the stairs with me, okay? Can you line up here? Right here, Alex.
- [2 : 41] Right up here. There you go. Oh, you going with your dad? All right, here you go. Spread out. You can stand up. Can y'all stand up? Perfect. Okay.
- And a few of you over here too, okay? There you go. They're ready, DJ. Let's stand and sing with them. Thank you.
- Step out, that ranger, where the baby lay. It's not all about the angels who sang for him that day.
- It's not just about the shepherds or the bright and shining star. It's not all about the wise men who traveled from afar.

It's about the cross. It's about my sin. About how Jesus came to be born once, that we could be born again.

[3 : 56] It's about the stone that was rolled away. That you and I could have real life someday.

It's about the cross. It's about the cross. It's about the cross. It's about the cross. It's about the cross.

It's not just about the presence underneath the tree. It's not all about the feeling that the season brings to me.

It's not just about coming home to be with those you love. It's not all about the beauty in the snow I'm dreaming of.

It's about the cross. It's about the cross. It's about my sin. It's about how Jesus came to be born once, we could be born again.

[5 : 03] It's about the stone that was rolled away. It's about the cross. It's about the cross.

It's about the cross. It's about the cross. Beginning of the story is wonderful and great.

It's the ending that can save you. That's why we celebrate. It's about the cross.

It's about my sin. It's about how Jesus came to be born once, we could be born again. It's about God's love nailed to a tree.

It's about every drop of blood that flowed from Him when it should have been me. It's about the stone that was rolled away.

[6 : 08] You and I have real life someday. But you and I could have real life someday.

Someday, it's about the cross. It's about the cross.

Thank you. Thank you, kids, so much.

Thank you for helping us sing. You may be seated. It's easier for them to find you on their way back.

I love reading the story of that first Christmas. The angel, the angels, the shepherds, the baby who's born.

[7 : 19] And I love to remember, kids, thank you. Thank you not just for helping us sing, but for helping us to remember what that first Christmas was about. It's about the cross, isn't it?

It's about the cross, isn't it? It's about the cross. It's about the cross, isn't it? It's about the cross. It's about the cross. But not to die meaninglessly, not hopelessly.

No, to give his life, to give us life. That's why Jesus came, right? That's why Christmas.

Welcome tonight, especially to those of you who haven't been with us through this month of December. That's what we've been talking about here on Sundays. What Jesus tells us about the reasons why he came to be born.

When we say that Christmas is about the cross, we don't mean that it is the only thing that Jesus came to do. But we do mean that it is the absolutely essential culmination of everything that Jesus came to do.

[8 : 36] We've heard Jesus through this Advent season answer the reason for Christmas by saying he came to fulfill all the Old Testament promises and demands.

To live an obedient life and then to fulfill one specific demand for others that death was required for disobedience.

He said he came to seek and to save the lost and that required him going all the way to the cross to rescue us and bring us home. He came to do his father's will.

The king who rightfully could have done anything he wanted said what? Not my will, but yours be done time and time again at every turn, including to his death.

He came, we heard this morning, to announce the true kingdom. Where the true king doesn't demand that you give your life for him, but gives his life first for you.

[9 : 44] See, none of these reasons for Christmas, reasons Jesus came, can be accomplished fully without this one. One verse tonight, Mark 10, verse 45, Jesus speaking to his disciples.

The Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.

Tonight we'll see ultimately that Jesus came to give his life, to give us life. In other words, it's about the cross. In fact, any statement of Jesus' purpose in coming that misses the cross misses Jesus' heart.

And you'd be surprised at how common that is today, even in the church. If you asked a bunch of pastors around Huntsville to tell you why Jesus came, some will tell you that it was to show us how to live.

Oh, and he did a great job of that. Others will tell you that he came to help us know what God's love is like. And that is so important, isn't it? For us to know what God's love is like.

[11 : 05] Still others would tell you that he came to upend social norms. And he certainly did that. It wasn't less than that. But if any of our answers stop there, we stop short of what Jesus says is essential, at the heart of why he came.

In fact, the very most exemplary, loving, revolutionary thing that Jesus ever did was to go to the cross, which accomplished way more than any one of those reasons indicates.

He was born to die. It's why he entered the world. To ransom captive Israel, right? The idea behind that word ransom is the payment of a price.

To pay a price to set free someone who is captive. That's what Jesus came to do. Jesus says he came to give his life as a ransom for many.

To set us free. To give us life. Now, some of you are thinking, ransom, that's cool.

[12 : 19] We're at least going to get a good kidnapping story with ransom demands. And that's going to keep me awake for a few minutes at least. This will be cool. Sorry. Others of you have been in church enough times to start thinking, Oh, I know where this is going.

C.S. Lewis. The traitor Edmund. Aslan, king of Narnia, who will give his life in the place of the traitor to set the traitor free.

Great story, but no. Still, others of you have been at Southwood enough times to think, Oh, he's going to tell the story about the two brothers in the quicksand.

Where the older brother gives his life to put his younger brother on his shoulders so his head can reach above the quicksand. To give life the only way that his younger brother can live.

Tempting, but wrong again. I'm not going to talk about any of those great images tonight. Ha! Tonight, I want to tell you about Ladder 3 Fire Company in New York City.

[13 : 34] After planes crashed into the Twin Towers on 9-11 22 years ago now, can you believe that? The Ladder 3 Fire Company radioed in to ask to be sent to the towers.

Some of them had just finished an overnight shift and gotten off and were headed home to safety, but instead jumped back in to head directly toward danger.

Nearly certain death. Why? Well, they knew that thousands were stuck, trapped, hopeless, and facing death in those towers.

And the purpose of their existence as a fire company was to serve. In this case, even to give their lives, to give others life.

Time and time again, they entered the North Tower, directing, dragging, carrying people out to safety, to life.

[14 : 39] And then back in again. Knowing that eventually, at some point, that tower would collapse. And 11 of them would give their lives to give life to many others.

A high price, for sure, to get others to freedom. But one they willingly paid. The Son of Man, that's the Bible's name for the divine, eternal King and Judge of all.

The Son of Man, that's the Bible's name for the divine, separated from God all the way back to the Garden of Eden when our rebellion first separated us from this true King.

We call that sin. And we have been longing for real, fulfilling life that He provides, but we've been unable to find our way back.

God's people were longing for ransom, right? Ransom, captive Israel, mourning in lonely exile.

[16 : 15] Lonely? But there were thousands of them in exile together. Lonely? They were separated from God. That's true loneliness.

All of life for generations. They've been living, missing what they were most created for. The heart of true life. To know God.

To talk with Him. To taste His grace. To share His love. They've been missing Him. Paul tells us in the New Testament that our condition because of our persistent nature, because of our stubborn commitment to sin, to wanting things our way, to want to rule ourselves rather than bow to the true King, our condition is that we live without hope because we're without God in the world.

That is the definition of without hope. We exhaust ourselves, don't we? Running all over this world seeking life, hoping there's true life somewhere to be found, but we are stuck, trapped in a building that is going down with no way to free ourselves.

Hopeless. To give us hope, God had to come. He had to break in to rescue us, and that's exactly what we celebrate at Christmas.

[17 : 47] Rejoice! Emmanuel, God with us has come to thee, O Israel. He came and on the cross once and for all dealt with the sin that was separating us from God, keeping us away from that true life.

He was pierced for our transgressions. He was crushed for our iniquities. God laid upon him the iniquity, the sin of us all.

The King gave his life to give us life. That's why we sing at Christmas, let earth receive her King. He comes to make his blessings flow far as the curse is found.

Drive the curse back. We sing glory to the newborn King. God and sinners reconciled. The ones who were separate and couldn't get back, brought back together again through the blood of Jesus.

Who is this? The God who lives forever, now hangs there, dying, and yet reigns everlastingly. Everlastingly.

[19 : 02] The one who could have continued living in complete safety, willingly entered danger and certain death to give his life, to give us life.

That's what he tells us in John 10. He came that we might have life and have it abundantly. As he, the good shepherd, lays down his life for us.

He leads us out of the rubble of our sin into life with God. Remember, that is where abundant life is. That's where it's found. It's in relationship with God himself.

Because, see, what happens in a story someone once wrote that I won't talk about tonight. When a willing victim is killed in a traitor's stead, the table would crack and death itself would start working backward.

Our King does not stay dead, does he? He rises from the grave. It's about the stone that was rolled away so that you and I could have real life someday.

[20 : 08] Jesus conquers death so that he lives and we live. And now we know that abundant life, right? Life with God today and forever.

No longer stuck. We're set free. No longer hopeless. Now full of hope. No longer dead.

Alive. Truly. Abundantly. Forever. Alive with God. Why Christmas?

The Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.

The King came to give his life, to give us life. It's about the cross. So really nothing could be more Christmassy than the Lord's Supper, could it?

[21 : 14] That's why he was born. He knew where he was headed. As Jesus approached the very culmination of why he came into the world, on the night that he was betrayed to his death, he took bread.

And he broke it. And he gave it to his disciples. As I, ministering in his name, give this bread to you, he said, take and eat.

This is my body, given for you. Do this in remembrance of me. In the same way, after supper, he took the cup. He said, this cup is the new covenant in my blood, shed for many for the forgiveness of sins.

Drink from it, all of you. For as often as you eat this bread and you drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

When we eat this bread and drink this cup, we proclaim the Lord's death. The bad news, that if your sin was the only sin ever committed, it would require the death of the Son of God in your place for that sin to be forgiven and for you to know life again.

[22 : 39] And we proclaim the good news, that if you were the only sinner in the entire world, the King, the Son of God, would willingly come and give his life for you because of his great love.

That's how much he loves you. This table proclaims his life and death and resurrection for you. If that is your hope, if that's why you are here, what you see before you at this table, a Savior who has given his life for you, then know that this is a table set by the Lord himself who came to give his life as a ransom for many.

It's not Southwood's table. It's not a Presbyterian table. It's Jesus' table. And if he is yours and you celebrate him and you're united to his body, come and eat with us and celebrate how much he loves us.

I know that always there are many with us for whom that's not their story. I bet that's especially true on Christmas Eve. If that's not what you see here, if that's not your understanding of who Jesus is, if you're really not sure what you think about Jesus yet, perhaps, or maybe your version of Jesus is more the good teacher Jesus who said and did lots of good things, but not so much the Jesus who gave his life and rose from the dead to be your only hope of life.

If that's not the Jesus in whom you place your hope, then we'd invite you not to partake of the elements of this sacrament tonight. We'd invite you still to come up to these tables with us.

[24 : 31] As we gather in groups around the table, we're going to be praying together with every group. We'd love to be able to pray with you. Or if you're more comfortable, you can remain in your seats.

That is certainly fine. But know that what we would like most to invite you to is not to a table, but to a Savior. To a substitute who will stand in your place, who will die for you, who will live for you, who will never stop loving you.

We delight to share more of him with you this Christmas. Let me pray and then we'll come celebrate together. Jesus, at this table that reminds us of your purpose, that you came to give your life to give us life, would you fill us with joy?

Would very common elements like bread and wine do in our hearts by your Spirit a very special thing? Would they remind us of your love?

Would they strengthen our faith? Would they grow our zeal for you and your kingdom and for the good news of Christmas to be known and embraced by everyone we know and embrace?

[25 : 43] Bless us as we gather around this table together and eat with you, our Father, our Son, our Spirit. We ask in your name, Jesus. Amen.

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