

John 19:31-42 "Crucified, Dead, and Buried"

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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.

! House and the empty tomb. What happens in between there?

It's going to give us several final views of our crucified King. Before we read it, I want to remember just, maybe you've been here every week, maybe you haven't, but just a few of the things we've been seeing about Jesus in this story.

How we've seen Him specifically as King, not just on Palm Sunday, although He was hailed as King on Palm Sunday, but just in the last 24 hours of Thursday and Friday, Jesus is in control of every painful moment, isn't He?

He spoke to His betrayer ahead of time, and then He had to awaken the awestruck soldiers who'd fallen to the ground at His I Am.

[1 : 24] When Pilate tried to question Him, He ended up questioning Pilate and having to explain to Him the nature of His unique kingdom. When being mocked with a crown of thorns, His silence reminded us that no one takes His life from Him, but He lays it down of His own accord.

There's a sign on the cross that reads, King of the Jews, and He gives His life, lifted up to draw all kinds of people to Himself. He endures the fires of hell for His subjects to protect them, to fulfill the Scripture.

In fact, He is the King of glory, paying all of our debts so that we have nothing left to pay or earn to be in His kingdom. It is finished!

And then He remains in control to the very end and hands His Spirit to His Father. Man, what a king!

But now it seems to be over. What will become of a crucified king? We continue reading at verse 31 of John 19.

[2 : 46] God's Word given for our blessing. Since it was the day of preparation, and so that the bodies would not remain on the cross on the Sabbath, for that Sabbath was a high day, the Jews asked Pilate that their legs might be broken and that they might be taken away.

So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first and of the other who had been crucified with Him. But when they came to Jesus and saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs. But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water. He who saw it has borne witness. His testimony is true, and He knows that He is telling the truth, that you also may believe.

For these things took place that the Scripture might be fulfilled. Not one of His bones will be broken. And again, another Scripture says, They will look on Him whom they have pierced. After these things, Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus, and Pilate gave Him permission.

So he came and took away His body. Nicodemus also, who earlier had come to Jesus by night, came bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about 75 pounds in weight.

[4 : 11] So they took the body of Jesus and bound it in linen cloths with the spices, as is the burial custom of the Jews. Now in the place where He was crucified, there was a garden.

And in the garden, a new tomb in which no one had yet been laid. So because of the Jewish day of preparation, since the tomb was close at hand, they laid Jesus there.

This is God's Word. Let's ask for His help. Father, we're confident of Your help, because You sent Your Son to us, for us.

You've given us Your written Word, that we might know You through knowing Him. By Your Spirit sent to us now, would You give us eyes to see Him, ears to hear Your Word as You would have us

to?

Oh, we need Your help for that. Help the one who speaks and the ones who listen. We need it. And ask for it in Jesus' name. Amen.

[5 : 20] Death just seems to keep coming. I feel like it's in charge sometimes. That's what a 90-year-old woman at a nearby retirement community told me this week.

She wanted to talk about her grief that just seems to be compounding. She's had a lot of loss in her life, so much so that sometimes in her grief, she laughs and chuckles as she talks to keep from crying too much.

She's lost a husband, multiple children, many, many friends. Just last week, a friend she's had for 75 years.

Some of you aren't old enough to have had a friend 75 years. Death just seems to keep coming. Too soon, we sometimes say.

Isn't it almost always too soon when it's someone you love? Maybe it is in charge. Maybe you felt like that.

[6 : 33] Maybe you get that uncomfortable feeling in a graveyard or cemetery. Like there's an enemy that you can't quite see and you don't know how to defeat.

It's surrounding you somehow. Maybe you feel that way in hospitals or doctor's offices or some other place where death has tragically struck your life or your family.

Sometimes maybe feel alone there or overwhelmed or afraid. Perhaps of all of the wonderful angles that we've gotten to see Jesus' cross from, the most obvious one, what's happening, is that Jesus dies on the cross.

The Lord of life encounters death. And we need to see this. We need to see how this battle goes when that happens because death is a formidable foe for us.

Yes? It feels like it keeps coming. It feels like there's no way to avoid it. And so John gives us here as Jesus dies several final perspectives on this crucified king and all of them show us another wonderful facet of our king.

[8 : 02] Want us to consider his death again this morning? We'll do it again Thursday and again Friday, by the way. It's that important. And you know what it'll do in your heart if you keep doing that this week?

It'll make you long for Easter. Anybody excited for Easter? It's because I got you real sad there for a few minutes. You wanted to breathe. But you'll start longing.

You'll long for life. Let's get some glimpses of the crucified king. First, eyewitness testimony. Likely from John himself who's writing, oh, it's fine if it's someone else who was there.

Jesus dies on Friday, remember, the day before the Sabbath. And this is a special Sabbath because it's during the Passover feast. So it's a big deal. The Jews don't want bodies on the cross on such a special day because bodies on the cross are cursed, right?

In fact, it brings a curse on the whole land. And so they went, get those bodies off of there. They want to hasten their deaths and get them out of the way. So the Roman soldiers break the legs of the two thieves that are crucified on either side of Jesus, breaking the shin bone so that you can no longer push up to get air and thus you die quickly.

[9 : 25] Archaeologists have unearthed bodies of crucifixion victims from the first century and seen those crushed shin bones. But then as the witness looks on, the soldiers come to Jesus and they realize something different.

What's different about Jesus? He's already dead. Perhaps faster than the others because of the beating that he's taken, the torments of hell that he's endured, that would do it.

Perhaps also because he's handed his spirit over to his father. Whatever the reason, they don't break his legs. But don't be confused.

These executioners, this special group of Roman soldiers doing the crucifixion, these are death experts. Okay? That's their line of work. Leaving no doubt, one thrusts his spear into Jesus' side and John looks on as blood and water flow out separately from his side.

There are multiple medical explanations for this, but all of them agree that what's being witnessed is a confirmation of his death. Jesus is really dead.

[10 : 44] This is what the witness primarily is telling us. Why it's so important that he's telling the truth, right? That Jesus has really encountered and endured death.

That common human enemy, that common human experience, he experienced for us in our place, paying the wages of sin, right?

Death. He died. The word became real flesh, real human flesh, really lived on this earth and really died.

He didn't dodge any battle. He didn't avoid any enemy. He didn't shortcut any suffering. He didn't swoon, as some have said, and resuscitate in the cool tomb.

That's a theory that develops quickly after Jesus' death. You know why? Because he's alive. And there's so many people who see him alive, so many appearances that they say, well, he's obviously alive.

[11 : 58] I don't know. Maybe he never died. That must have been what happened, some say. No way, the witness says.

Many saw the blood and water, the pierced side. There's so many other issues with a swoon theory, but it is vital for us to know that Jesus died and was buried.

Paul tells us that's at the heart of the gospel, right? Right there in the early creed that we professed earlier this morning, he was crucified, dead, and buried.

Now, many have seen in the blood and water flowing from Jesus' side those clear signs of life and cleansing and purification. Michael and Lindsay just sang about that so beautifully.

Let the water and the blood from thy riven side which flowed be of sin the double cure. Cleanse me from its guilt and power.

[13 : 03] That's the picture as God meets his people's needs from the rock that is struck, the rock of Christ. John doesn't elaborate on that.

The witness is focused on testifying that Jesus is really, truly, certainly dead.

But the Old Testament background will lend credence to seeing the spiritual picture as well. See, these very unusual circumstances at the cross directly fulfill Scripture written hundreds of years before these events.

We keep encountering every week it has been another Old Testament Scripture, many weeks multiple ones being fulfilled. This is not a defeated out of control imposter Messiah, right?

But a God showing us this plan to rescue us at the cost of his own son has been their joint commitment since before they created the world together.

[14 : 11] And this Jesus is the long-awaited Christ, the promised Messiah King, the anointed one. It's Jesus.

The first Scripture cited is not one of his bones will be broken. That may refer to Psalm 34 where the righteous one has no bones broken.

That fits certainly here, but perhaps even better is the reference to Passover. John has made this repeatedly, right, with the Lamb of God.

All the way back to the Exodus, God institutes the Passover and talks about the Lamb saying, you shall not break any of its bones.

Here then, I think, is biblical reason for us to see the blood flowing from Jesus as bringing life to others. You may know the story.

[15 : 11] Derek mentioned part of it earlier in the service. God has promised to send the angel of death to kill the firstborn son of every home in Egypt.

That's a pretty scary promise, right? Especially if you're an Israelite living in Egypt as they did then. Especially if you are a firstborn son.

That's scary. scary. But what does God tell his people? He says, kill a lamb and use a hyssop branch to put its blood up on the door frame of the house.

And the angel of death will pass over that house with the blood on the door frame and let the child live because the lamb has died. Right? Jesus has already sat with his disciples just last night and he's told them that his blood would be shed to give life in the new covenant.

That's the blood of the new covenant. And now we see here the picture of his sacrifice. What a beautiful picture when we think about the blood that has been shed for us. I love the reminder that this is of the finished work of Christ that he really fully finally saves us.

[16 : 29] The power of his blood that we were singing about. There's nothing stronger than the wonder working power of the blood that it would make us sons and daughters of God who we otherwise couldn't even come into his presence.

Can his blood really do that? I'd ask you to imagine back to the Passover. What if I'm not sure? Pastor, what if I don't know all the answers to all of my questions?

Well, imagine that that's the way you were as an Israelite family and you hear what Moses tells you to do. This is Yahweh's command and you think, I don't know, I've got some questions for Yahweh before tonight.

I'm not really sure how all this is going to work out. And you're wrestling with it, but before you go to bed, you do kill the lamb and put the blood on the door frame. Or imagine, you're just really scared. I mean, you're not sure how this night's going to go. You can't even sleep. You're anxious all night. But before you go to sleep, you kill the lamb and put the blood on the door frame of your house.

[17 : 31] I want to ask you, were the firstborn sons in those houses full of fears and questions and anxieties, were they alive in the morning?

Yes, they were. And it was not because of their clarity. It was not because of their confidence. It was because of the blood of the lamb.

The power in that blood of that lamb. That is actually the good news of Jesus, isn't it? That while Passover lambs are being slaughtered inside the city of Jerusalem, he is the perfect Passover lamb with no blemish or defect, with no bones broken, being slaughtered outside the city, and he cries out what?

It is finished. As he sacrifices his life. No more sacrifice needed. He gives his life to protect all who will place their trust in him from eternal death.

You can count on it. The second scripture here quotes the prophet Zechariah. Zechariah, likewise, tells of salvation for God's people.

[18 : 50] I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy, so that when they look on me, God says, on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him.

As one mourns for an only child and weep bitterly over him as one weeps over a firstborn. Some common themes here, aren't there? On that day, the mourning in Jerusalem will be as great as the mourning for Hadad-Rim, and on that day, there shall be a fountain opened for the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to cleanse them from sin and uncleanness.

This is a dark day, right? Just like the one we're reading about on Good Friday, because they've pierced God himself. The word made flesh.

You know, remarkable prophecies, right? Because rarely is anyone ever crucified and pierced. But when Jesus is pierced on that day, a fountain is opened to cleanse from sin and uncleanness, and oh, how we need that fountain, don't we?

For us, the fountain from Emmanuel's veins that we sang about to wash away with clean water. All our guilty stains to cleanse us from the guilt and power of sin.

[20 : 20] John says, look no further for that fountain. Come and mourn. It's right. Jesus is crucified.

But as he dies, don't miss the life that flows from him. The cleansing and the forgiveness that results from his sacrifice for sins once for all.

The witnesses here at the cross watching what the law and the prophets have foretold for centuries, right? Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.

He sees it. Next we notice two men who get involved in Jesus' burial. Normally what would happen is that crucifixion victims would be left up on the cross for the vultures to pick at.

And then eventually thrown in a common criminal grave called Gehenna. But Joseph, he's a connected man.

[21 : 28] He gets all the way to Pilate, doesn't he? Somehow on this day, all the way to Pilate and receives permission to take the body of Jesus. Maybe even more remarkable than that is that until this day, virtually no one knew that Joseph even followed Jesus, even cared about this guy.

He was a secret disciple. Does that sound pretty cool? Secret disciple. Except the reason he was a secret disciple is that he was afraid that it would cost him personally, perhaps professionally, to follow Jesus.

Joseph was a member of this Jewish ruling council that had just condemned Jesus. And now, all of a sudden, this fearful, secretive, self-serving, self-protective Joseph steps forward to spare the precious body of Jesus from the vultures and Gehenna.

We don't know what all went on in Joseph's heart. What we do know is that the cross inspires bold discipleship where there has been fearful following of Jesus.

We see the power of the cross to do in his life what nothing else had done to motivate Joseph out of hiding and into the service of King Jesus. And I love this part.

[23 : 00] I mean, think about this. Just imagine what this could mean for you. That God uses here resources and connections that Joseph has in part due to his weaknesses and sins and his fear of man.

He's still influential and has access to power. He's still wealthy and has access to a new tomb nearby and in his abundant grace toward Joseph God says I've placed you here and I've given you access to these things to use for the king.

Where has God placed you? And what has he given you? Would some of you sometimes describe yourself as a secret disciple? Sometimes because of fear?

What relationship might God use for his kingdom? What resource might God ask you to consider using for King Jesus? Even now are you perhaps in a new season of life where there's opportunity where you've felt an outsider in rooms like this one for a while maybe?

And you think I never really could be central in God's work and God says yes you can. That's the way I work with people like you. Where might God call you to go boldly because you begin to grasp the value of King Jesus.

[24 : 36] You say oh he's worth the cost whatever it is I don't know what it'll be but I'm going Jesus I'll be there for the king. Joseph teams up with Nicodemus God rarely sends his followers out alone does he?

Remember Nicodemus? The teacher of Israel who had lots of questions for Jesus under the cover of darkness back in John chapter 3?

Nicodemus was really thrown off by the idea of being born again he had a lot of questions about that right? You could certainly call Nicodemus a skeptic about Jesus.

He speaks up for him at the Sanhedrin once later in John but really we have no evidence that he believed in Jesus until now. I want you to try to put yourself in his mind for a minute just from what we know of him back in chapter 3 Jesus had told Nicodemus that he Jesus would have to be lifted up on a cross like the snake in the wilderness in order for men to be born again to have new life in fact without that kind of new birth from above Nicodemus the one who knew so much would never even see the kingdom of God it seems that skeptical Nicodemus thought I believe that kind of crazy sacrificial leadership when I see it that's not the way kings and kingdoms work around here and now at the cross what happens all of a sudden the guy who's waiting he's in wait and see mode with this Jesus that he's talked to he sees the cross and it all starts falling into place Nicodemus is all in born again you might say 75 pounds of spices so expensive trust me the honor of a rich man's tomb in fulfillment of Isaiah 53 and these are spices fit for a king no one else in these days would have received that amount of spices for a burial except a king do you hear what Nicodemus is saying now there's the king this is a royal burial the king of the Jews the Messiah even in a graveyard the king even as he's wrapped head to toe and placed in a tomb the king Nicodemus doesn't know what's coming next does he there's lots of spices there that wouldn't be practically necessary but like

[27 : 29] Lazarus' sister Mary just a few months ago he sees the value of Jesus and he honors him the best way he knows how listen bring your questions bring your confusion bring your skepticism to Jesus he welcomes those he welcomes you he wants to walk with you to the cross and say look what I'm going to do for you bring your questions there to him he dies on the cross to give you new life what a gift from a self sacrificing king quite a king see there's one more perspective on this crucified king that is clearly very important to John it's ours it's yours look back at the witness why does John go to such great lengths to shine the spotlight on the death of Jesus why does he need us to know it's an eyewitness who sees exactly what happens and can confirm this for us that you also may believe

John is urging you as he does in this whole book to see that the true king the promised Christ Christ is Jesus he invites you to see that he really suffered and truly died that he fulfilled the scriptures that he obeyed to the end but it's more than that John's inviting you into more than that he's offering that as you believe you will have life through Jesus see dependent faith what he's inviting you into it's not mere intellectual ascent to some historical realities and teachings about Jesus John often uses the phrase believing into Jesus because it's about a relationship entering into this relationship with Jesus that's what John's describing for you it is a relationship of grace where you believe in him not merely that he died not merely that he died as a sacrifice for sins but that he died to pay the penalty

of your sins that the penalty you could never pay and so bring you into the presence of God he pays the price you get the credits it's a relationship of grace where you believe into Jesus not merely that he was pierced in blood and water flowed out of his body but that his blood washes you clean and that rivers of living water will flow from you as you are the one who receives his spirit because you know the unique king the king who gives his life for his people rather than demanding they give theirs for him it's a relationship of grace where you believe

Jesus not merely that he was a king and did lots of wonderful things that should be emulated in your life get to work do enough try harder but you believe that he finished all righteousness for you all that God required of you so the burden is off of you and yet he gives you his spirit so that you can do the good works that he has prepared personally for you while he walks with you in his name for his glory he set you up for that I heard someone describe this believing into Jesus as boarding an airplane some passengers on an airplane understand more than others about how the plane flies how it stays up in the air right perhaps as a result some are more fearful than others maybe you felt that some sleep while others busy themselves with work but everyone who by faith steps into that plane arrives at the same destination together come aboard!

Believe into Jesus! He will bring you home! You can sit back and relax and depend on him and he'll get you there!

[32 : 22] It's why he died for you! I just want to say to three different groups of you this morning maybe friend who has never seriously considered the good news of Jesus would you see Jesus today and believe in him and find life forever he's the king who dies to give you life would you receive that today?

maybe I think there's quite a few friends who have for many many years of your life you've liked the idea of the good news of Jesus and so you hang around places like this occasionally won't you see Jesus and believe in him for you personally you've been hanging around but you've thought I'm not really sure why I need him embrace how dependent you personally are on him to have any hope in the face of death what else would you hope in than the one who has faced it and conquered it and then there's friends here who've already embraced the good news of Jesus won't you see Jesus today believe into him and live with a fresh boldness as his disciple wherever he calls you to follow him to go with him because he's worth it would you see him and see him as worthy today listen he's the king the real king even in the face of death the powers of darkness don't stand against king Jesus you are safe only in him I've been in a lot of graveyards as a tourist kind of like history graveyards are good places to go as a pastor you end up there quite often and sometimes I do feel like death just keeps coming like it's in charge so I've made a habit when I'm there in a graveyard to look for crosses you can almost always find some kids if you want to play this game while you're being a secret disciple some of them are on tombstones Some of them are in the ground themselves!

They're reminders to me that there's a king who's in the graveyard who has really encountered death so I'm not alone when I feel overwhelmed and alone because no one else can enter death with you but Jesus does you'll still be united to him on his plane when you die those crosses are reminders to me that death is not in fact in charge is not the king because this king is always in control and actually conquers death spoiler alert for next week I am so sorry if you were waiting till we got to chapter 20 and what happens next week I know that is most of you but this king will rise victorious saying and enabling us to say where oh death is your victory where oh death is your sting because our sin is forgiven and our

God is restored and we no longer have an enemy to fear because even death is a defeated foe even when it feels like he has the upper hand I've told you before of the painting entitled Checkmate this painting once hung in the Louvre in Paris you'll see this young man playing chess against the devil he's looking pretty hopeless the devil grim grins smugly he's got him where he wants him he's got him stuck in Checkmate years after Frederick Moritz Auguste Wretch painted Checkmate an international chess master stopped and stared at the painting particularly the chess board and he said it's not true it's not true the king still has another move maybe death feels overpowering foreboding it's coming it's going to have the last laugh in your life if you feel that way this morning

[37 : 21] I want you to know it's not true it's not it has met its match in king Jesus king Jesus encounters death head on and while on Friday night it looks for all the world like he's defeated rest assured!

he is the king and come back sunday because the king has another move let's pray jesus we worship you for that we're so grateful that you truly died and that you truly live it changes death and changes life for us give us grace to trust you more where it's hardest for us to do that help us run for refuge to you even today we ask in your name amen for more information visit us online at southwood.org