

A Man With Nothing Left

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[0:00] Good Friday morning to you. Wow. We're back in COVID days where everything's on video. Good Friday morning to you. Thank you. Welcome. My name is BK and I have the pleasure of serving as one of the pastors here.

You may not realize this, but nearly a third of the Gospels are devoted to the final week of the life of Jesus Christ. And a significant portion of that week focuses on today. Good Friday.

Here, the Gospel writers slow down and they show us moment by moment what happened. Scene after scene, event after event. Because this is the day that changed everything.

This morning, I want to take you to just one of those scenes. There's probably 20 to 25 scenes within Good Friday, but I want to focus in on one particular scene.

It's not one of the scenes that most people or most pastors would be preaching on a Good Friday. But I believe if there is one person who was at that time who could say today is Good Friday, it would be this man.

[1:36] And this event that's one of those things that we're going to be doing.

That happens when I have nothing left. When I have no more time, no more chances, no way to fix what I've done. It's simply between you and God.

The scene is where we find these three men hung on a cross. All three are declared guilty.

All three are condemned to die. And all three are dying. And the reality is, two of them have absolutely no time to turn things around.

There's no time for good works. There's no time for good chances. And in minutes, that verdict will not change. And yet, we read from this text, one dies in rebellion.

[3:08] And the other can honestly say, this is Good Friday because he is promised paradise. What made the difference?

Well, we know it's not what they had done. It's not who they used to be. But it's how they've responded to the man in the middle. And I believe this is why this, and I believe that's why this moment matters for you.

Because whether you feel like life is falling apart, or whether you think you're still building something, there is a day coming when everything will be stripped away.

And you will stand before God with nothing left to rely on, except what you truly believe about Jesus Christ. So here's the question Good Friday puts in front of every single one of us.

When you are stripped, and everything is taken away, what are you trusting in? So let's please turn in your Bibles to Luke 23, beginning in verse 39.

[4:28] I have four points to this sermon. The first point that I want to bring clarity is I want you to notice that these two men were the exact same men in the exact same condition.

Notice Luke 29, 23, 39 says, One of the criminals who were hanged railed at him. That word railed means hurling abuse.

They hurled insults. They blasphemed him. Luke tells us very simply, These men are criminals. They're not misunderstood.

They're not victims of circumstance. They are criminals. There is nobody there weeping for them. In fact, Matthew's gospel makes it even clear that both of these criminals began by mocking Jesus.

[5:32] And I say that to put it out of your mind that there was one good thief and there was one bad thief. The reality is these men are not decent people who made a mistake.

These are men who've been tried, convicted, and sentenced to death with no external pressure by the full authority of Roman law.

In fact, one will later admit we are receiving the due reward of our deeds.

Now, I don't want you to miss this. Because what is true of them physically is true of every one of us spiritually.

The Bible says, and no in certain terms, that all have sinned. There is none righteous. No, not one.

[6:33] The Bible tells us clearly that the wages of sin is death. The fact is, we may not be hanging on a cross this morning, but before a holy God, we stand in the exact same condition as these criminals.

And that is guilty. Not mostly good. Not trying my best. But guilty. Now, I know some of you want to push back.

And the reason we push back is because we like to compare ourselves to others, right? Well, I'm not that bad. I'm not like him. I'm not like her.

We like to compare ourselves. And we do this because we want to feel good about ourselves. But here's the thing. Others aren't the standard.

God is the standard. And what's interesting is that God does not judge on a curve. He doesn't judge us in comparison to one another.

[7:41] The Bible does tell us that God will judge us for every thought, every word, every motive, every action with perfect holiness. And what that means is if you were put on trial before God this morning, there would not be a debate.

There would simply be a verdict. And just like these men, you would have no defense left. These men are not just guilty.

They're helpless. Because they cannot climb down. They cannot fix their past. They cannot make things right.

They are simply nailed in place. And that is exactly how the Bible describes our sin. We are dead in sin, unable to save ourselves, and unable to change our standing before God.

This is the condition of every human being, whether they like to admit it or not. And here's why this matters. If you do not see yourself in that condition, this cross upon which Jesus died will never make sense to you.

[9:07] Because Jesus did not die for good people who needed a boost in life. Jesus died for guilty people who have no hope.

Jesus died for guilty people who have no hope. Jesus died for guilty people who have no hope. So before we go any further, we need to answer this question honestly. Do you see yourself in these men?

Not better than them. Not different from them. But that you too stand before God just as guilty.

And just as unable to save yourself. Because until you get that right, nothing else in this story will mean anything to you.

So my second point that I want to draw your attention to is that we have these two men and we see two responses. Let's just look at verse 39 again.

[10:13] Think about this for a moment. Think about this for a moment.

Here is a man in the final moments of his life standing face to face with Jesus Christ. And what does he do? He mocks him. Think about that.

He's dying. He's guilty. He's got nothing left. And still he rejects the only one who can save him. And notice what his demand is.

Save yourself and us. Some people might misunderstand that for faith. But it's not.

This man doesn't want forgiveness. This man wants relief from the consequences of his life. And sadly for many people, this is the first response to Jesus.

[11:15] Jesus, fix my problems. Jesus, make my life better. Jesus, get me out of trouble. And I will serve you forever. See, those responses are actually rejections of Jesus.

They're not loud rejections of Jesus. But functionally they are. Do these things for me, Jesus, but please don't tell me I'm guilty.

Please don't tell me I need forgiveness. Please don't tell me I need to submit. You see, this man on the cross who mocks Jesus is not turning to Jesus as Lord.

He's turning to Jesus as what is known as the last resort. And here's the truth of the matter. You can be inches away from Jesus and still be completely lost.

This man is closer to Jesus than anyone in this room will ever physically be. And he dies in his sin. And here's the truth.

[12:29] Proximity to Jesus is not salvation. Hearing about Jesus is not believing. Being around Jesus in church with other people is not the same as trusting Jesus.

Now let's look at the other man. Verse 40. But the other rebuked him, saying, Do you not fear God? Since you are under the same sentence of condemnation?

And we indeed justly. I doubt he said it as strongly as he hung on the cross. But he got the words out, right? We indeed justly. For we are receiving the due reward of our deeds.

But this man has done nothing wrong. Same condition. But a completely different response. Now let's break his response down.

One, he fears God. Do you not fear God? He recognizes that what the judgment that is upon him is not simply Rome's.

[13:37] It's God's. Number two, he admits his guilt. We are receiving the due reward. He's not making excuses. He's not minimizing.

He's not saying, I had a hard life. It's really not my fault. He simply says, I deserve this.

And that is something people will rarely say. Number three, he recognizes Jesus' innocence. This man has done nothing wrong, he says.

In the middle of his own suffering, he sees something clearly. Jesus does not belong on that cross with him. Which leads to the second response.

Repent and believe. Notice, it's not perfect. It's not with full theology worked out. But clearly, he fears God. He owns his sin.

[14:39] And he sees Jesus for who he is. And here is why this is so powerful. This man can't get baptized.

This man can't go to catechism class and learn all the truths of theology. He can't join a church. He cannot fix his life. He has no time left.

But he does the one thing that matters. He turns to Jesus. Because these two responses are not just in this story.

But this story represents all of us. The truth of the matter is, some of you may be here rejecting Jesus as well. Not loudly. But perhaps it's politely, quietly, intellectually.

But at the end of the day, you do not bow. Other of you come to the place where you say, I am guilty.

[15:50] I deserve judgment. And Jesus is my only hope. And here's the reality between these two men.

There is no third option. There is no I'm still deciding. There is no I'm somewhere in the middle. The fact of the matter is, the Bible is clear.

You are either rejecting Jesus or turning to Jesus. And this morning on Good Friday, this day forces the question, which is your response?

Now let's just look at the third point. We have one request. And it is a request with no merit.

Verse 42. Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom. No speech. No flattery. No explanation.

[16:53] No promise to do better. Just one simple request. Remember me. What's incredible about this is that this man isn't looking at Jesus who's been raised and is ruling from his throne at God's right hand.

He's looking at a man who's beaten beyond recognition, has blood flowing over his face from a thorn of crowns, being forced into his head.

He is nailed to a cross, and he's about to die. And yet this man says, when you come into your kingdom.

What an incredible amount of faith this man shows. Everyone else sees a dying man, a defeated man, and a man at the end, yet he sees a king.

A kingdom. And what comes after. This man believes something that no one else around him seems to understand.

[18:10] This is not the end of Jesus. But it's not just what he believes. It's what this criminal doesn't bring. Because this is where the passage becomes incredibly clear.

This man brings no good works, no religious effort, no promise of moral reform. He cannot say, give me time and I will fix my life. I'll make this right. I will prove myself.

He's got nothing left. No righteousness. And he says this, Jesus, remember me. And this is the moment everything becomes clear. Salvation is never earned.

Salvation is never earned. This man is not saved because he is good. This man is not saved because he improves. He is not saved because he deserves it.

This man is saved because he casts himself completely on Jesus. And this is where people struggle.

[19:14] Because instinctively, at the core of our being, we want to contribute something. How many people here, when you get invited over for dinner, you feel guilty because you didn't bring a salad or a fruit or something to drink.

And it just feels wrong to go over and just eat someone's food. And they want you to. Right? We just want to pay back. If your Christmas list looks like the names of the people who gave you gifts the year before, you're one of those people.

Right? I need to pay back. We think we need to clean ourselves up. We think, I need to get serious about God.

I need to become a better person. But this man clearly shows us, you don't come to Jesus after you fix yourself. You come to Jesus because you can't fix yourself.

Let me say this clearly as possible. The only thing this man brings to Jesus is his need. I need you, Jesus.

[20:32] And Jesus says, that is enough. And now don't misunderstand me. This is not shallow belief. This is a man who fears God, owns his sin, recognizes Jesus as king, and then entrusts himself completely to Jesus.

We have a phrase for this. It's called biblical faith. It's not just knowing about Jesus. It's not just agreeing with Jesus. It's simply saying, I have no hope except you.

Because this is where everything gets personal. See, some of you are still holding on to something. Your goodness, your efforts, your morality, your religious background.

You're still thinking, surely I bring something to the table. But the cross says, you bring nothing in Christ provides everything.

And until you come empty, you can never receive what Jesus Christ offers. So here is the question. If you have not received Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, the question is, what are you still holding on to?

[22:06] What are you still holding on to? Because the moment of salvation is not when you improve your life. The moment of salvation is when you say, Jesus, I've got nothing.

If you don't save me, I am lost. Let's look at the fourth point. We're going to see one promise, yet full salvation.

This is Jesus' response. Verse 43. And he said to him, truly I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise.

And I want to break this down a little bit because every phrase matters. Notice it says, truly I say to you. Jesus isn't offering a suggestion. This isn't a possibility.

This is what is known as a divine declaration. Jesus is not saying, I hope so. We'll see. No, when Jesus speaks, he speaks with absolute authority.

[23:16] Because the man who is dying on that cross is not just a man, he's the judge. Amen? Notice today. The word today. Not someday.

Not after a promise. Not after purification. Today. Jesus Christ offers him immediate salvation. This man doesn't go to the waiting room. Doesn't go to purgatory.

He does not get, go to a, go get a second chance. He goes straight to the presence of God. Why? Because the work of salvation is not based on what we do, but what on, that, the work Jesus is doing.

Notice he says, you will be. Not you might be. Not you could be. You will be. This man asked to be remembered and Jesus gives him assurance.

What this tells us, this is salvation is not uncertain. Salvation is not fragile. When Christ saves, he saves immediately and he saves completely.

[24:27] Amen? And now he gets to the heart of it. You will be with me. Not just you'll be in a better place.

Not you'll have peace. But you will be with me. You see, salvation is not simply escape from judgment.

It's a relationship with Jesus Christ. The man who is rejected by society is welcome into the presence of the king.

this word paradise. it's not just survival, not just relief. It's to be restored, to be in a place of perfection, to be made whole.

It's to be in a place where everything sin has broken is now made right. Now step back with me a bit and see the whole picture.

[25:33] This man brought nothing and receives everything. He goes from guilty to forgiven, from condemned to justified, from dying to alive, from rejection to, from rejected to welcome in a single moment.

moment. Why? Because of the man in the middle. You see, there are two crosses, there are two men on crosses that day with Jesus.

One chose to die in his sin, still mocking, still resisting, still holding on to himself.

We read here that the other died in faith. Empty handed, but fully trusting in Jesus. And the difference between them was not how they had lived or how much time they had left.

The difference simply was what they did with Jesus. And this is the same question in front of you this morning. The question is, are you a good person?

[26:47] Are you trying your best? trust? No, the question is, what are you doing with Jesus? Because the man who could do nothing received everything because he trusted the only one who could save him.

and this is the story of the one man who can truly say that this was Good Friday on that Good Friday.

Let me pray. Dear Holy Heavenly Father, we, this simple thing of salvation sometimes remains so complex to us.

We often want to do something good. We want to be measured. There's often too many people who think I'm I'm too good.

I'm really not a sinner. Then there's others. I am so full of sin that there's no way that Jesus would accept me. But Jesus says quite simply that we are all lost.

[28:12] That he is the only way to paradise. As we know from the other stories of Jesus, he simply says, I did not come to heal the healthy.

I came to heal the sick. The only question here today is are we going to admit that we're sick? Now a lot of people talk about I look good, I feel good, but when you look at the results of their life and their choices that make them feel good, be good, called good, are filled with misery and destruction.

Father, I pray on this day that you would reveal yourself as you did to that thief on the cross. That they can truly cast their life on you and know that they will be saved eternally and immediately.

We ask these things in your good and righteous name. Amen.