Surrendering Life

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 19 April 2019

Preacher: Steve Jeffrey

[0:00] 1974, five people died, 65 were injured in two IRA bombings, two pubs in Guildford in England.

And when that happened, the public was outraged, innocent people died, the British police, they were desperate to arrest someone for it. And it wasn't long before they, in fact, quite quickly, they arrested quite a small time Belfast criminal by the name of Jerry Conlon.
And he was one of four people arrested for those crimes. They became known as the Guildford Four. The police also arrested amongst the four was not just Jerry, but Jerry's dad, Giuseppe, for conspiring in the bombing. And with all their investigations that took place, it turns out the police actually had no evidence at all to suggest that Giuseppe, or in fact, the Guildford Four were guilty for the bombings. In fact, they received evidence to show exact opposite, and especially for Giuseppe, that he was clearly innocent. He was nowhere near it at the time and had nothing to do with it. In spite of that, Giuseppe Conlon was sentenced to 12 years in prison. Even though the authorities knew he was innocent, his son, Jerry, was sentenced to life imprisonment. There's a movie called In the Name of the Father that you can get about this.
Jerry Conlon was released after 15 years and went on to write a book about his innocence and his eventual vindication. Giuseppe Conlon, however, his dad died in prison, an innocent man.
It's another one of those stories that you hear in history. Innocent people being condemned for crimes that they didn't commit. It's a miscarriage of justice. And as we come to Good Friday, and as we hear the story read to us, we go, here's just another one of those stories, the innocence of Jesus. He's just another innocent guy, the wrong time, the wrong place, said some things that got him into a lot of trouble, and he just died. Jesus was utterly innocent in his suffering. He's not just innocent, as Pilate himself revealed, not just innocent for the charge of blasphemy, but he's in fact innocent of all sin. One of his closest disciples said this about Jesus, he committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. Now what's remarkable about that statement? On one hand, you might be saying he's a mate, he's trying to, you know, he's saying good things about him. But you and I both know that the closer you get to an individual relationally, the more you see their flaws, the more you see their failings, the more you live with someone and spend time with someone, their faults come to the surface. The people that we elevate as heroes in our lives, you get close to them and you realize they're like everyone else. They put their trousers on one leg at a time. They're no different. But not with Jesus. The closer you get to him, the more you see his innocence. He was sinless. Those closest to him could find no fault with him.
[3:39] Pilate couldn't find fault with him. In fact, Jesus is one of two people in history who in their own time people wondered not just who they were, but what they were because of their quality of life.

Buddha was the other one. And so the most important question of the past 2000 years, which is just as important now in the 21st century, is why did Jesus die? Why did he come and why did he die? There still is controversy around which humans are responsible for the death of Jesus. That goes on. But the reality is that's a marginal issue.
The central issue around Jesus' death is not the cause of it, but the meaning of it. Importantly, the Bible tells us, in fact, that Jesus chose to die. His heavenly father ordained it and he embraced it. We see that in the text before us today. Jesus was in total control. He says to Pilate, you have no power over me unless it was given to you. And you see on the cross, Jesus was in total control.
[5:07] He breathed his last and he surrendered his life to death. He literally gave it up. One of the most stunning statements Jesus ever made about his own death and resurrection is just a few chapters earlier in John's gospel.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host - 2026-09-11 00:53:31

John chapter 10, verse 17 and 18. He says, I lay down my life that I might take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord.
I have authority to lay it down and I have authority to take it up. He's in total control. Human beings might have had multitude of reasons for wanting Jesus out of the way.
But only a good God can design it for the good of the entire human race, including, as we've just sung, those who put him on the cross. God's full purpose for the entire world in the death of Jesus are really incomprehensible, but they are good.
His death has been powerful in its ongoing impact. You see, Jesus was really a peasant nobody convicted, condemned as a pretender for the throne to Rome, throne of Rome.
[6:33] And yet, in the following three centuries from his execution, his death unleashed a power to suffer and to love, which in fact transformed the Roman Empire.

And to this day is influencing and reshaping people and communities and nations and cultures right across the globe. East, West, rich, poor, intellectual young children have embraced and been transformed by this Jesus.
And continue to be transformed by this Jesus. But Jesus' death was also unique because he was more than just a mere human.
Not less, but more than. And this is the testimony of those who knew him and were inspired by him to explain who he was.
For instance, at the very beginning of this biography on Jesus' life in John's gospel that we're looking at this morning, John calls Jesus the word, which has massive implications in the Greek culture.
[7:49] Divine being. And it says, And it says, At the very beginning of John's gospel, In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God, and the word, this God, became flesh and dwelt amongst us.

So the crucial question, all these years later, is why did Jesus, God himself, not just come, but in coming, chose to die?
Why did the eternal choose to die? What is the purpose of it? What's the meaning of it? What did Jesus achieve by his death? What is it that Jesus is offering to each one of us on this Easter in 2019, some 2000 years later?
And so there's two things that I want to kind of focus on for the rest of our time together this morning. Firstly, the nature of Jesus' offer to us. That's the first thing, the nature of his offer to us.
And secondly, how do we take up that offer? So firstly, the nature. Verse 28, John 19, if you've got your Bibles in front of you, verse 28, it says, Later, knowing that everything had now been finished, and so that scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said, I am thirsty.
[9:25] I am thirsty. Now our first reaction to that, you just read straight through that, and you don't kind of focus on it a whole lot, our first reaction to that is, well, of course he's thirsty. He's been crucified under the Middle Eastern sun.

So of course he's thirsty. He's been losing lots of fluid. So of course he's thirsty. One of the things that people died from when being crucified was in fact dehydration.
All the loss of fluids. And from what I understand, dehydration is a horrible death. I've heard that to die of dehydration is like the pain involved of getting your hand and putting it on a hot stove.
You know the pain you feel with a burn, but on the inside. That's what dehydration is like, to die from dehydration. It's burning up inside.
It's like you've swallowed a fire. And so you go, cool, of course he's thirsty. But if you linger over these words a bit, you start to realize it's a little bit weird that it gets mentioned here.
[10:41] And so it's possible that Jesus is making a significant point. You see, let me just clarify something here. Jesus has suffered an awful lot up to this point.

A lot. He's had soldiers smash him in the face and say, prophesy. He's been lashed to a post and whipped 39 times.
His back would have looked like a piece of raw steak. He's had tent pegs driven through his hands and his feet.
He's had this crown of thorns squeezed onto his head. And he accepted it. He endured all of that, all of that pain, all of that suffering.
He submitted to it. And we don't even up to this point, even get up. Oh, that hurt. Oh man, that, that really hurt.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host - 2026-09-11 00:53:31

[11:51] Not even a whimper. And now, all of a sudden, having endured all of that, he goes, I'm thirsty.

Why complain about thirst? That's because something more than physical thirst is going on here. Certainly he was thirsty. But something much deeper is going on here that Jesus is attempting to highlight for us. Earlier in John's gospel, which was just read out to us as well, John chapter four, we read that Jesus encounters a woman at a well.
She's a Samaritan woman, mortal enemy of Jewish people in the first century. She's a woman, as the text tells us, been looking for love and security in all the wrong places.
And she's surprised that Jesus comes to her and says, give me a drink. In other words, Jesus says, I'm thirsty. Give me a drink. And then Jesus says to her, everyone who drinks this water, the water that you're about to draw out of the well with your bucket, will be thirsty again.
[13:03] But whoever drinks the water that I give them, will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water, welling up to eternal life.

You see, in the Bible, thirst is a metaphor for the spiritual emptiness that comes when God's not the center of your life.
It's one thing to believe that God exists, but it's quite another thing for him to be the central reality of your life.
Even this woman at the well believes in God. For instance, in Psalm 42, we read this, as the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, my God.
My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. Where can I go and meet with God? So it's not belief, mere intellectual assent in God that our soul needs, as much as it is in meeting God, knowing God, experiencing God.
[14:19] Without meeting, knowing, experiencing God, without him being the central reality of our lives, the Bible says we die of thirst. We die, spiritually.

We can believe in God, but have something else as the central reality of our lives. These other things, they might be success, approval, comfort, friendship, family, sex, romance, influence, or money, or a multitude of other things, are actually, are the actual drink, if you like, that we are pouring into our souls to quench the thirst that we constantly feel on the inside.
Give me satisfaction, give me approval, more of it, more of it, more of it in the hope that we will never thirst again. And what Jesus is saying is that if you attempt to quench the thirst of your soul with anything else, other than the love and the beauty and the comfort of God in Jesus Christ, then you will thirst again, and again, and again, and again, and again, and again, fuera.
And when Jesus is talking to the woman, as she's drawing the water at the well in John 4, he says, the water that I give them, the water that I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life.
You will never thirst again. And the Samaritan woman says, yes, give me some of that water.
[15:56] This stuff's better than Powerade. You know, like, give it to me. I don't want to get thirsty ever again. I don't want to keep coming to draw from this water consistently.

Give it to me. And then Jesus says, immediately in response to her wanting to take up this offer, says, go and get your husband. Well, actually, Jesus, I, I don't have a husband.
He says, you're right. When you say that you have no husband, the fact is you have had five husbands, and the man you're currently with is not your husband. And when you first read that, she goes from being really keen to get this living water of Jesus, and all of a sudden, Jesus, go and get your husband.
It's like, what are you doing here, Jesus? I mean, this is an opportunity. Get her to bow and pray the prayer and ask you into her heart. What are you doing here? This woman is talking about really important spiritual stuff.
She wants to take up the offer of eternal life. He changes the subjects and brings up her brokenness, her mess. Why change the subject, Jesus?
[17:12] Why be so harsh here? But in actual fact, he isn't changing the subject. And he's in fact being incredibly tender to her. He's pointing out to her that all her messed up love life is simply a result of looking for men to give her what only God can give her.

The reason her life is going so poorly is because when you look to someone, to something other than God for your life, for your love, for your significance, for your meaning, for your hope, you will simply thirst again.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host - 2026-09-11 00:53:31

You will simply thirst again because it will never satisfy. And anyone who continues to do it continues to look to everywhere else except God will thirst eternally.
What she needed was God to be the living reality of her life. The center of her life.
She needed to have the love of God at the center of her life so that she didn't need, in fact, to look to the love of men to give her what only God can give her.
[18:29] So Jesus was not so much confronting her as he was lovingly convicting her. She hasn't been living with God as a central reality of her life, even though she claims to be a believer.

She has a belief in God. And Jesus is saying here, it's not enough. God was at the center of her life and Jesus helped her to see it.
Helped her to see that other things, in fact, were more important to her. Earlier in John's gospel, when people got close to Jesus, what we see is they immediately fell to the ground in his presence. They discovered that they could not stand in the presence of perfection and greatness and holiness. When we think that we can do that on our own terms, it's simply because we have no idea of his splendor and we have no idea of our actual brokenness and sin.
So how is it possible that you and I can meet and stand before God, who is holy and perfect and glorious?
[19:54] Well, this is the reason why Jesus was thirsty. His thirst is a picture of what's actually happening on the cross.

On the cross, Jesus Christ is experiencing the ultimate thirst. He is experiencing, if you like, the everlasting burnings.
The prophet Nahum in the Old Testament puts it like this. Who can withstand his indignation? Talking about God. Who can endure his fierce anger?
His wrath is poured out like fire. And on the cross, Jesus was getting what the whole human race deserved for its evil in putting everything else but God at the center of their lives.
He was getting what we deserve for our sins. He was experiencing the divine justice. It was like a million suns burning down on him. He is thirsting so that we can have the living water.
[21:06] He is dying of spiritual thirst. He is experiencing the agony of eternity without God, being separated from God, the fountain of living water, so that we can have the fountain of eternal life giving water.

Jesus experienced the agony of separation from the love of his father, the experience of the fire of his judgment and anger, so that we can experience his presence, his love, and the never-ending refreshment of water, of eternal life.
He got what we deserve so that we can get what he deserves. He suffered so that we can have a river of life welling up in us, which is his favor, his love, his approval, his acceptance.
And every single one of us needs that. Every single one of us has approval and acceptance issues. Dropped on our head as a baby, not raised by the parents in the right kind of way.
Every single one of us has got issues with that. And Jesus offers it unconditionally. That is the nature of his offer to us. So secondly, how do we take it up?
[22:21] Last thing that Jesus says here, so he says, I'm thirsty. Next thing he says is, it is finished. As he breathes his last in verse 30. Jesus is using a word there, that in the original language means totally paid.

Totally paid. It's a word that you would write across an account in the first century. Like a stamp, paid in full. Tetelestite, paid in full.
One of the wonderful and great paradoxes of history, is that here, is the helpless, powerless, dependent Jesus on the cross.
And his last word on the cross. I did it. I did it. I triumphed. I've accomplished it.
And what he has accomplished, is described for us a little bit later in the New Testament. Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God.
[23:35] See, there is this infinite chasm between us and God. Infinite chasm, because we have not put him at the center of our lives. And Jesus has done everything required.

Paid every debt that we owe to God. Dealt with every sin of shame and guilt and sin. And he's accomplished it all. And he says on the cross, I've done it. It's finished.
Nothing more needs to be done to bridge the gap between us and God. I mentioned Buddha early in this message.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host - 2026-09-11 00:53:31

So contrast Jesus' last words with the last words of Buddha. Jesus, it is finished. The last words of Buddha, strive without ceasing.
There is a lot of admirable things about Buddhism, like the self-denial and the recognition that selfishness is in fact a big problem of human humanity.
[24:47] But if you know anything about the eightfold path of Buddhism, then you would know that it is incredibly hard, incredibly demanding, and you never know if you've ever arrived.

And that's why his last words was, strive without ceasing. Never give up. Keep striving. Keep striving. If you want to achieve enlightenment, you've got to keep striving.
Keep striving. Keep striving. And Jesus' last words is, I've done it all for you. I've done all the striving. I've done everything you need to bring you to salvation.
Religion is where we give God a performance and in the hope that God blesses us. And the core message of Christianity, the core message of Easter, the core great news, if you like, which is why it's called Good Friday, by the way.
The great news, the gospel news of Easter is that in Jesus Christ, he's done everything.
[25:48] And we live to love and to serve him, the one who has already given us the love and the acceptance and the approval and the blessing. Jesus says it's done.

Any effort on our behalf to attempt to make his finished work better actually makes his finished work worse.
takes away from it. Any effort at all, any striving at all, takes away from it.
So when Jesus says here, it is finished, what he actually means is, it is finished. We cannot receive his salvation and act as if we can add to it in some kind of way.
And there are two kinds of people who attempt to add to his finished work. One kind of person is the beat myself up person. The other is the prove myself person.
[26:54] There are the self-beaters and the self-provers. The self-beater is the one where every time someone criticizes them, they are devastated and they beat themselves up.

Every time you do something wrong, you make a mistake, you beat yourself up. In fact, you did something 15 years ago and you still can't get over it. You always feel bad about everything.
You need to know on this Good Friday that Jesus was beaten up for you. Was it not good enough for you? Do you think you can add to it in some way?
He paid for your sins. Why are you still trying to pay for them? He atoned for your sins. Why are you still trying to atone for them? It is finished. Attempting to add anything to what Jesus has done simply subtracts from it.
And so can I say with sensitivity, blunt sensitivity, how dare you hate and loathe yourself if you are a Christian?
[28:05] Don't you understand what Jesus has done for you? Don't you understand the approval he has on your life? The other person is the self-prover.

You are the other end of the spectrum. You feel so much better about yourself. You're often proud. You're often a self-made person. You've had a bit of success in life and you think it means something. You've got money, you've got success, you've got possessions, you've got a great middle-class lifestyle, you obey the laws of the land, you've got family, you've got career.
in order to feel secure and significant, you feel like that and you're just trying to add to Jesus' work to make yourself feel a little bit more secure and accessible.
You think that what you've done in life contributes something. And the message of Christianity is that we're all sinners saved by grace if you trust in the finished work of Jesus.
We, every single one of us, are more evil than we ever dare to believe and we are more loved than we ever dared to hope or imagine.
[29:15] The person who tries to prove themselves doesn't understand that they can never, never can prove themselves because they are more evil than they ever imagined.

And conversely, the person constantly trying to atone for their flaws by beating themselves up never will because they're already loved and affirmed more than their wildest dreams.
God humbles one person and God affirms the other. It is finished on the cross. Jesus' death on the cross doesn't make a contribution to your salvation.
It is your salvation. All of our overwork, all of our anxiety, our constant striving, our lack of gratitude and rejoicing is because we don't know that it is finished.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host - 2026-09-11 00:53:31

The amazing truth of Easter is summarised succinctly by another New Testament ad. Let me just paraphrase that. Full acceptance, grab it, push it right down in the depths of your heart. [30:24] Jesus' wonderful news for people like us who know that we cannot measure up to the demands of our own consciences, let alone the demands of our own holiness.

We don't even live by our own standards, let alone by anyone else's standards. So I call on you on this Good Friday to see the good news.
It is finished in Jesus. See your need being met in him and believe and strive no more.
For God so loved the world that he gave his only son that whoever believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. We don'tind sacred love certifications get through that power of ben Zeck will not perish but Corinthians will not Beweg for all of the everyday He will not be here Jesus for the whole spoiledrem He will not be here the agora when he comes from to the Didn't

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host - 2026-09-11 00:53:31