

Communion Sermon - Who, Where, Why Of Jesus' Death

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[0 : 00] Let's turn for a little back to John chapter 19 and reading at verse 18. Just the first four words of that verse, there they crucified him.

We find in verse 17 that he went out bearing his own cross to the place called the place of Asgal, which in Aramaic is called Golgotha. Then it says, there they crucified him.

As we know, this world is a very, very unjust place. And injustice, sadly, is part and partial of life. Injustice comes at various levels and various degrees, sometimes quite horrific. And I'm sure we've all at one time or another felt ourselves victims of injustice.

I remember in school, back in these days, the belt was a normal part of everyday life in school. And I was belted regularly.

[1 : 02] And I can hardly remember any of the beltings I got, except the ones that I didn't deserve. Sometimes you got belted because the wrong person got belted.

I had a knack of looking guilty even when I hadn't done anything. And I can still remember, as a young boy, the sense of injustice when you got belted for something that you just didn't do or hadn't even been there.

Now, in the great scheme of things, that's nothing. But throughout this world, there are so, so many injustices. And so many people must have so much hurt within their heart at what is happening to them.

But without a doubt, the greatest injustice ever that took place in this world was what we have here. Where we find that the King of Kings, the Lord of Lords, the second person of the Godhead, who has come in our nature into this world in the most unjust way possible, has been put to death. And the arrest, the trial, the sentencing and the execution of Jesus surpasses anything in the injustices that this world has ever known.

[2 : 18] So today I just want to look very, very simply at what we have here and just to ask. And everything is going to be just so straightforward and simple.

Asking the questions there is, there they crucified him. And who is the him? And who are the they? And what did they do?

And why was he crucified? Very, very simple questions. Of course, the one who is central to everything, the him, is of course Jesus Christ.

And just as the Son is central to the world that we live in, central to everything, without the Son we would not be here, we wouldn't exist, so the Son of God is central to everything in this world.

It was by him and through him that everything was made in the first place. And it is by him and through him that everything is upheld. And it is by him and through him that we live and move and have our being.

[3 : 18] And yet, the amazing thing is that this is the same Jesus that we have here. And no wonder the Bible says, Great is the mystery of godliness, Christ manifest in the flesh, because these things go beyond our understanding.

And as we know that God's love in sending his Son is the greatest display of love this world has ever known. Because when the Father sent the Son into this world, we've got to remember the world that he sent his Son into.

And he didn't send his Son to come into this world as a king, although Jesus was and is and always remains a king. He sent him into this world in a state of nothingness, in a state of poverty.

He became just like us. He didn't come just with the appearance, as there were times in the Old Testament when Jesus made appearances, and he had the appearance of human nature.

This was real human nature, apart from sin. And he came into this world, and a world, although there are so many blessings, and we've got to remember that this world, there's so much that's good.

[4 : 33] But we've always got to remember that all the good in this world comes from God, from his common grace. But it's also a world that is full of anger and hatred and cruelty and bitterness, a world that is so full of revenge, and a world that is just, sometimes you feel it's almost bubbling with anger.

And it's into this world that the Lord Jesus came. And as we say, he didn't come as a king, although he is a king and was a king and always will be. But he came by way of poverty, in order to make us rich.

That's what the word tells us, that for your sakes he became poor, that through his poverty we might become rich. And during his lifetime here, he did nothing but that which was good.

Every day, every hour of every day, Jesus did that which was good. All the time, he obeyed his Father, and he kept the law.

Every moment of every day, he fulfilled the law and honored it. And he was doing that as our representative as well. And there was nobody that could say, Jesus isn't a good person.

[5 : 51] There wasn't one person. If the truth was to be told, nobody could stand up and say, you know, see Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus, although there were many people, and particularly amongst the religious leaders, that pointed the finger at him and made so many accusations against him, they weren't true.

Nobody, if they were speaking from the honesty of their heart, could say, this man is evil. Although they were saying that, they said that it was by the power of the devil, by the power of Satan, that he was casting out devils.

There was an agenda against Jesus sweeping the land. But if the truth be told, he did nothing but good.

He spent his life, as we know, he was going around healing the sick and opening the eyes of the blind and healing the lepers and opening the ears of the deaf and losing the tongue of the mute. And he taught and he saved and he delivered and he was a shining light in a dark world for 33 years. But you know, by the end of 33 years, this world couldn't handle him any longer.

[7 : 04] They had to get rid of him. The perfection of Jesus was such that the world couldn't cope. And it wouldn't matter at what age or what particular century Jesus was to come.

The world would have dealt with him in exactly the same way. Because there is an inbuilt hatred within the human heart against the Lord Jesus Christ. And you know, one of the things is this. People who reject Jesus Christ in this life, it would be impossible for them to go to heaven. It would be impossible for them. They wouldn't want, you know something, they wouldn't want to go to heaven.

People who do reject the Lord Jesus Christ in this world would not want to go to heaven. Why do we say that? For the very simple reason that heaven is being in the immediate presence of Christ forever.

Where you're being shepherded by him, taught by him, fed by him, enjoying him in a fullness, in a richness that even surpasses anything that you've ever known here.

[8 : 12] And if people cannot tolerate Jesus here, if they don't want to hear his word, if they don't want to meet with him, if they don't want to come to his house, if they want to get rid of his word, how would it be, how on earth could they ever tolerate an eternity in his presence?

They couldn't. And so, people will say, it's an awful thing for people who rejected Jesus not to get to heaven. But you know, they wouldn't want to go to heaven.

That's the bottom line. And that's where we often don't understand just how these things are. And that is why God's people, that is why you want to go to glory.

It's because you love Jesus. You can't wait to get to be in his immediate presence, to fellowship with him in a way that you've never been able to do here, where you will see him in a way you've never seen him before.

And so, this is what's ticking away within our heart. And so, as we say, here is Jesus who never did anything but that which was good.

[9 : 26] The most wonderful life. And yet, he is the one who was put to death. And then that brings us very simply to who are the they. Well, that falls into different categories.

At the end of the day, we'd have to say it was Pontius Pilate that put Jesus to death. But of course, Pontius Pilate was very simply the authority of Rome and the Jews couldn't put Jesus to death without the authority of Rome.

And so, Pontius Pilate is the man who is, he is the governor, he is the one, is the only one really who can make that decision. And at the end of the day, he is the one who makes that decision. He didn't want to. And when we read through the different Gospels, we see that Pontius Pilate was being pushed more and more into a corner. He realized that Jesus was an innocent man. He said, I find no guilt in this man. I find no fault in this man. Pilate was looking for ways to release Jesus. Pilate remembered how he took Jesus and had him flogged.

[10:32] He thought, maybe that'll do. He took this man Barabbas who he reckoned was as dangerous a criminal as there was and he thought, right, I have to release somebody at the time of the Passover.

If I take this dangerous man who was kind of like a terrorist in today's society, if I take him and say, right, who do you want me to release?

Barabbas or Jesus? They're bound to say, oh, release Jesus. But as we know, they didn't. They went for Barabbas. And so all the time, Pilate found himself being pushed and pushed and pushed more into a corner and then eventually they've come to the very place where he found himself in a real predicament from verse 12.

From then on, Pilate sought to release him but the Jews cried out, if you release this man, you're not Caesar's friend. Everyone who makes himself a king opposes Caesar.

And it's at that point so when Pilate heard these words, he brought Jesus out and sat down on the judgment seat with him. See, he realized he was maybe putting his own life in jeopardy by siding with Jesus.

[11:46] The Jews knew exactly what they were doing. And so Pilate in the end, he finds himself being trapped and in fact, remember, he even took water and washed his hands publicly in front saying, I'm innocent.

I'm innocent to the blood of this man. So, while Pilate will be, they crucified him, he was the one who gave the authority, it wasn't really Pilate.

And then you could say, well, it was the Roman soldiers, they were the ones who were given the task of executing Jesus. and of course, at a physical level, that's exactly who it was that crucified Jesus.

But they wouldn't have crucified Jesus and Pilate wouldn't have been, Jesus wouldn't have been before Pilate were it not for the religious leaders amongst the Jews, the religious leaders.

Because they were the ones who were agitating and determined to get rid of Jesus. they couldn't cope with him. They couldn't cope with his teaching.

[12:48] They couldn't cope with his presence. They couldn't cope with his purity. They couldn't cope with his righteousness. You know, self-righteousness has a real difficulty with truly righteous, holy, good people.

There's something about a really good, righteous person that the hypocrite and the self-righteous finding kind of hard to cope with.

And here was Jesus who was on another level altogether. They couldn't cope with him. And they were so jealous of him. And we're told, Pilate knew that it tells us that, that they had delivered him up for envy, the murderous curse of envy.

And of course, we see just this incredible display of just irrational hatred that is within the human heart.

You know, by and large, the human heart, we, we, we, we don't know one another. We don't even know ourselves. And you know, every so often when we see these shootings, where we see the acts of terrorism that are, and just, you, you cannot understand, and you see the carnage and the bloodshed and the grief and the chaos that it brings.

[14:13] And you're saying, how, how can people do that? That is a reflection of what is down deep within the human heart. And you look at the Rwandas and the Cambodias and the Holocaust.

You think of the Holocaust there and you find there are soldiers there every day, every week, every month. And their daily duty was slaughtering men, women, and children.

And some of these went back, just back into normal society. Afterwards, couldn't believe what they'd been doing. Some of them who had authorized all these slayings, they went back into society

and years later they're discovered.

And neighbors cannot believe that this nice, quiet man beside them was this murderous monster. Because that's the human heart.

It is so deceitful, it's fearsome. And you and I don't know what's in there. And every so often there's like an explosion of what's really in there.

[15 : 17] And were it not for God's preservation, were it not for God's common grace, this world would be just beyond our understanding.

It would be so evil. but because of God's what we term is common grace, God exercises so that there's restraints placed upon and there's so much goodness.

But here we see this explosion of evil in the human heart and where they're putting the Son of God to death. And crucifying, you know it's quite extraordinary when you think of these Jews, they're crucifying the one who ultimately made them, they're crucifying the one who upholds their life, they're crucifying the one that they are yet to stand before at the seat of judgment.

The Jesus that they're putting to death, they're going to meet again on the judgment seat and he will be on the throne. That meeting is still to take place. It goes against logic, against reason, against thought.

It's too awful a thought. But that's how it's going to be. So the sin of that generation was really quite horrific. Jesus came to his own but his own received him not.

[16 : 41] The generation of the flood provoked God to such an extent that he obliterated them apart from Noah and his family. Well here is another generation that are guilty of the most heinous crime that was ever committed in this world.

And what did they cry out? His blood be upon us and upon our children. That's what the Jews of the day cried out.

They were happy that they said we bear responsibility us and our children and our generations for putting Jesus to death.

death. It was a quite horrific moment really. The great sin of rejecting the Lord Jesus Christ. And then we have to ask the question, we are just running through things very quickly here.

Where did they put him to death? And they crucified there, they crucified there, where? Well we read that Jesus went out bearing his own cross to the place called the place of a skull.

[17 : 52] But notice where he went, he went out of the city. And in Hebrews we're told this, for the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the holy place by the high priest as a sacrifice for sin are burned outside the camp.

Jesus also suffered outside the gate. Now, very often the priests were allowed to eat of the sacrifice that was they didn't have an inheritance.

The priests were different to the other tribes within Israel and they were allowed to, out of many of the sacrifices to eat the fat of the sacrifices.

But for instance, on the day of atonement, they were not allowed to. The high priest remember, he took the blood and he went in to the most holy place.

He was only allowed in once a year. There he sprinkled the blood of the sacrifice. There it was into the presence of God. And that is what Jesus was doing.

[19 : 01] The very same thing, there was this transaction taking place where his blood, there was a private transaction taking place on that cross between father and son, where Jesus was presenting his blood before the father.

But the animal slain, whose blood was presented before the Lord, that animal was taken outside the camp and burned.

And that is where we have this representation of the Lord Jesus. His blood is making atonement for sin, but his body, as it were, is being crucified, it is being burned, it is the place of the curse, it is a complete burnt, a sin offering, and a burnt offering, before the Lord, outside the camp.

And so, we find that all the Old Testament imagery, all the whole sacrificial system is pointing to the Lord Jesus. It's very interesting that in the New Testament, we are termed, at different times, priests and kings.

priests and just as the Old Testament priests were allowed to feed upon the sacrifice, so are we.

[20 : 23] That's what we do, we feed upon the Lord Jesus Christ. That's what we do when we take the sacrament, although we do that spiritually, in many ways we are feeding upon Jesus, but in a very special way, when we come to the table and we take the bread, in a symbolic way, we are

taking off the broken body of the Lord Jesus Christ, as is displayed by the broken bread.

But we go a step further than the Old Testament priests. The Old Testament priests were not allowed to drink of the blood, but we, in taking the wine, it's like we are taking the blood and the body of Jesus, again, in a symbolic way.

Then we ask the question, why was this done? There, they crucified him. They crucified him. Now, as we know, crucifixion was the most terrible punishment that could happen.

As it was said, the person crucified died a thousand deaths. It was the most lingering, torturous method of being put to death possible. And we find, of course, that Jesus did this willingly.

We sang that in Psalm 40, that Jesus came willingly into this world, and Jesus died willingly in this world.

[21 : 43] We know that no power could have captured him. That's very obvious. We've got to remember that this Jesus is the one by three words, or even just two words, was able to calm the raging storm.

He was able to walk in the water. He, by his word, was able to summon the dead out of the grave. He was the one who caused those who came to arrest him by just saying, I am.

That they fell backward to the ground with the force of the authority and power of who he was.

There was just a glimpse for a second of who he is, the majesty and glory of Jesus.

And when they saw this, they fell back to the ground. And yet, then he gave himself willingly. all the time, he did this willingly. And he came and he was giving constant perfect obedience to the Father.

And as we say, he left the realms of glory and he came into this sin-sick world. And he came down for you and he came down for me. And that's why we're here today.

[22 : 58] Because Jesus, what he had to endure, we've got to remember, although we sing, to do thy will I take delight. That's what Jesus was in Jesus' heart.

And yet, there were moments that his whole being recoiled against doing that. Remember in the Garden of Gethsemane, he sweated as it were drops of blood.

The pressure was so great, as people describe it as that Gethsemane was a window that opened up to Calvary, where he was seeing what he had to do, what he had to endure.

And it wasn't just the thought that he was going to be crucified, which was an awful thing, but that he was there as a sacrifice for sin. And that he was going to bear the wrath of God and the curse of God for our sin, for all the perversiveness and twistedness and iniquity, for all the deceit and the guilt and everything that's part and partial of our life, everything that will condemn us from the presence of God forever, Jesus said, I'm going to take that on myself.

Father, I am going to take it. And that's what he did. He went there and he took all God's wrath.

That's why these three hours plunged into darkness where we hear the cry of desolation, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

[24 : 26] Into that fearful abyss and agony. And he did it for us. That's why we're here today. That's what we're remembering. It's so important that we remember lest we forget.

That's what we say at the time of the remembrance Sundays. That's what we have on war memorials. Lest we forget those who gave their life perish the thought that God's people would ever forget what Jesus did.

and that's what we're doing here today. Remembering who, remembering why, remembering where, remembering who did. And if you don't know this Jesus, well today he's present here.

Ask him, ask him even now that he will come into your heart. Let us pray. Lord, we pray to bless us. We pray that you will bless everything that we say and everything that we do.

And forgive us if we say anything that is amiss. Lord, we ask that you will bless the continuation of this service as we prepare now to come to your table to take the bread and the wine.

[25 : 38] Lord, we ask that you will continue to do us good. Bless the young ones who will come in and be with them, we pray. Take away from us our sin, in Jesus' name we ask it.

Amen. We're going to sing now from Sing Psalms, and we're going to sing from Psalm 130. Psalm 130, in Sing Psalms, and that's on page 173.

Lord, from the depths I call to you. Lord, hear me from on high, and give attention to my voice when I for mercy cry. Lord, in your presence who can stand if you our sins record, but yet forgiveness is with you that we may fear you, Lord.

I wait, my soul waits for the Lord, my hope is in his word. More than the watchman waits for dawn, my soul waits for the Lord. O Israel, put your hope in God, for mercy is with him, and full redemption

from their sins, his people he'll redeem.

Psalm 130, the whole song, Lord, from the depths. Lord, from the depths I call to you, Lord, hear me from morning chambers onto world.

[27 : 41] Lord, if your presence took have found if you our sins reborn but yet forgiveness is with you that we may fear you are I with my soul wait for the Lord my hope is in his word more than the watchman wish for

God my soul wait for the Lord oh always well good dear hope in God for mercy is with him and full redemption from their sins this people here believe the Hart and wh no weather