

The Crucifixion

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Preacher: Rev Kenneth I Macleod

[0 : 00] Let's turn to John's Gospel, John chapter 19. Just to look at this section that we read, only from verse 16, or middle of verse 16.

So they took Jesus, and he went out, bearing his own cross to the place called the place of a skull, which in Aramaic is called Golgotha. There they crucified him, and so on.

Sometimes the most incredible events and circumstances are described in just a few words. And if ever there was an underplaying of what happened, it is here with just these few words, and there they crucified him.

Because what took place there is, yes, in many ways the most awful thing that really ever happened in this world, and yet it is the most wonderful thing. It is the most glorious thing.

It's hard for us to understand any glory attached to the cross, and yet that's what we're told, that there is glory attached to the cross. And so this is what we're finding here at this very moment.

[1 : 14] And what we've got to remember is that what took place there all these over 2,000 years ago has a bearing upon ourselves.

So many people today think of the cross of Jesus Christ as irrelevant. The cross of Jesus Christ. And when we talk about the cross of Jesus Christ, we talk about Jesus himself and what took place on the cross, where he was made sacrifice for sin.

That is something that we all have to face up to, because one day it's going to be the challenge when we meet with Jesus. Because every single person is one day going to meet with Jesus.

It's going to have to stand before Jesus and to give an account of what they've done in this life. But the first and the primary thing, and it's a bearing upon everything else, it's whether a person stands or falls, is what have they done with Jesus?

What have they done with what Jesus did on the cross? So that although this event, a historical event, it is of huge significance.

[2 : 26] And it is something that we all have to face up to and something we all have to give an account for. So we find that Jesus goes out bearing his cross.

Now, as we know, it wasn't the whole cross that he would be carrying, but it would be the cross beam. Because at the crucifixion site, there was already in the ground, there was a base of the cross.

So that when they came to the actual crucifixion, it would be by pulley or ladder that the cross beam would be raised up.

But Jesus went out bearing the cross. So he was carrying the cross beam. And as we know, the other gospel writers are telling us about it as well, that he couldn't.

He was falling under the weight of it. And no wonder, because remember, we saw the fearful flogging he had. And many people died under a Roman flogging because there was no limit.

[3 : 26] Like in a Jewish flogging, there was a limit to how much a person, how many whips a person would receive under Roman. There was no limit. People often died under it. The whip had bits of leather.

The whip would have bits of bone in it, bits of metal in order to lacerate completely the skin. And it was a horrific thing.

So Jesus had lost, through all the abuse and violence, he had lost so much blood. He was so weakened. And that's why he couldn't carry it. He was stumbling under it.

So they compelled this man, Simon of Cyrene, to carry the cross for him. And the person who was being crucified had to walk carrying that cross.

And we've got to remember, the Romans crucified many, many people. They didn't crucify their own. Romans weren't put to death by crucifixion. Other ways, but not crucifixion.

[4 : 25] But crucifixion was something that was used extensively under Roman rule. And this is what they always did. They compelled the person who was to be crucified to carry that cross and to walk quite a distance with it.

And, of course, this would be used as a deterrent. Because if you saw somebody going on their way to be put to death on this, that would act surely in many people's minds.

That, I just, I'm sure it was, it had a, it was used anyway as a kind of a warning, as a deterrent. Look what's happening to him. This could happen to you as well.

Be careful. So this is why they walked with it. And it's quite interesting how Jesus, earlier on, when he speaks to and when he's preaching, he uses the very idea here of discipleship.

Remember what Jesus said, if you're going to follow me, you know what you have to do? In order to follow me, you have to take up your cross daily. You have to deny yourself in order to follow me.

[5 : 41] And I'm sure a lot of people didn't understand or couldn't fully comprehend to a certain extent. And yet here is Jesus, and he is taking up his cross. And he's taking up his cross in a way that you and I will never have to take up our cross.

Irrespective of how difficult or how painful the experiences of life are, yet what Jesus endured transcends anything else.

And he has to take up his cross. And he does it not for himself, but for us. So Jesus was taken outside the city and he was taken to this place called Gotha.

And again, it has often been highlighted, just in passing, the great significance between the Old Testament picture of Abraham and his son Isaac carrying the wood, going for the sacrifice, remember how God had asked Abraham, commanded Abraham to take his son and to offer him as a sacrifice.

Of course, it broke Abraham's heart, but he did. And we find that it's Isaac who's carrying the wood, the son who's carrying the wood. God was using this as a picture, an Old Testament illustration to the father of the faithful, to Abraham, of what he, the God the Father, was going to do with his son.

[7 : 04] But there was one difference. God stopped Abraham. When Abraham had gone almost all the way, God said, Enough. I have seen and I can see your faith, your belief, your understanding, because Abraham believed that God would raise Isaac from the dead.

So God stopped Abraham. But there was no voice from heaven this time. There was no word from heaven. There was no command saying, Enough. No voice saying, Leave him alone.

Remember this Jesus who was going there on his way to death is the very Jesus that God from heaven testified, the Father testified, saying, This is my beloved son.

My beloved son. And yet at this very moment, the Father is allowing his beloved son to be so violently abused and put to death in the most horrific and cruel way.

And we have to ask why. Well, it is for one reason and one reason only. This is the moment where we see God's love at its highest point. God who loves his son with an eternal, infinite, holy delight.

[8 : 26] And yet, you know what it says in the Bible? He spared not his own son, but gave him up for who? For us. He gave him up totally.

So this is what we're talking to the young folk. Here is love. Now, a lot of people cannot see love on the cross. And at one level, there is no love on the cross, because it's the most horrific, barbaric thing, where you see evil and enmity and anger and hatred and bitterness and all kinds of things, not in Jesus, but all around it.

But here is love. Because at this moment, Jesus is paying, and he's going to be paying the penalty for sin. That's why he came.

Because God, the cross shows us what God thinks of sin. God doesn't treat sin lightly. We do. We become accustomed to it. We think, ah, it's no big deal.

But it is. God shows us. If God is doing this to his son, what will he do to those who reject his son, who reject the only way of salvation?

[9 : 35] So the cross shows us what God thinks of sin, but it also shows us what God thinks of us, his love. He loved, this is my beloved son, but I'm going to give him up totally, because I love you.

It's extraordinary. And if we ever doubt God's love, let's go back to the cross. Ask the Lord to take you back to what he's doing to his son here, because of his love to and for us.

It really is, it is quite extraordinary. And so Jesus is taken to this place called Gotha. As we said, the victim was laid out on the cross piece, and the nails were driven into the hands or into the wrists.

And then the cross piece was lifted up either by pulley or by ladder, and then the feet put one on top of another, and these big iron nails driven through.

Crucifixion was, I believe it was invented by the Persians, but different people developed it, and it was, if we can use the word perfected, but certainly the Romans used it big style, and they had taken it down to a fine art.

[10:49] Josephus, the historian, said of crucifixion that it was the most wretched of deaths. Cicero, writing, said, a most cruel and terrible death, incapable of description by any word, because there is no word to describe it.

That's how awful crucifixion was. Now, when Jesus was hung on the cross, Pilate had inscribed that here is Jesus, King of the Jews.

And it was written, well, it says in Hebrew, but here Aramaic, which was the language that Jesus would have spoken in, the language of the people. It's a language he would have taught the scriptures in, in Aramaic, in Latin, and in Greek.

And so the inscription was in these three languages. And I think there's quite a huge significance in that. Because if we were going to use Aramaic in this instance as a language in which Jesus would have been teaching the people, we can use this as a description of how Jesus is Lord over religions.

There are masses of religions all around the world. Here is Jesus. He's the king. Doesn't look like a king at this moment, but he is the king.

[12:03] And as not only the king of Jews, but the son of God, he demands that all will bow before him. Because there is no other way of salvation. People say, oh, you're terribly bigoted.

How on earth have you the right to go and say that there is no other way of salvation? Because the Bible says this is God's word. This is not something that's been made up by people, by great minds or theologians and say, let's invent some way.

This is the truth. This is the life of Jesus. There was never anybody like him. He was and is the son of God.

He did what nobody else could do. He's unique amongst all the world religious leaders because he died, yes, but he defeated death.

No other religious leader has ever done that. He defeated death. He said before Andy Wood and he did. He rose from the grave and he is triumphant today sitting seated on the right hand of glory.

[13:09] There is no other way. So he is saying, look, among to all the religions of the world, look, turn to me.

I am the only one. But it was also written in Greek. Now, Greek, as we know, if we were to think of the Greeks, we think of artistry, of culture, of beauty, of great minds, of intellectual thinking.

And I believe that this is also saying to us that Jesus is Lord over everything. He's Lord over the culture. He's Lord over the art.

He's Lord over all these things. People might not think that. And they say, oh, no, that's got nothing to do. Who made us? The Lord. Who gave creativity?

Who is it that made us so that we become creative beings? Whether it's in the world of art or in music or in literature or in whatever. It's a Lord.

[14:14] He's Lord over everything. And again, it was written in Latin, which was the language of the government. It was the language of the Romans.

It was the language of, as we say, of government and of courts and such like. And again, it is saying to us, whether people like it or not, that the Lord is Lord over all authorities in this world.

And we're told that ultimately governments are responsible to God. People forget that.

Governments forget that. People in power forget that.

But they are ultimately responsible to God. And one day, they're going to have to give an account for what they have done. Because they, at the end of the day, are answerable to God.

So on the cross here, we have this great picture where Jesus is demonstrating at this moment that he is Lord over everything.

[15:21] And that's one of the things that we've always got to take on board as well. And then we find that on the cross, the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, they took his garments and divided them into four parts.

Now, it was always the custom at the time that the execution squad got whatever the Persian had. And it was very basic. It was the whole scene of the cross was a fearful place.

And the Persian was, their clothing was removed. And there was always, if it was the custom of the day, an outer garment. There would have been either like a scarf or a kind of a head shawl or something.

There was a belt. There were sandals. And there was inner garment. And here Jesus has this one. We're told it's seamless, which is interesting. And there's a sermon there in itself.

Because the high priest wore a seamless robe. So we can see there's so much parallel here in demonstrating that Jesus, of course, is the ultimate high priest.

[16:26] But we find that they don't tear up any of the clothes. What did they do? They sort of have a weekend of lottery or they sort of gamble for it and throw dice or whatever.

But little did they realize as they were doing that at the foot of the cross that they were fulfilling what the scripture said. We were singing about that. They divided my garments among them.

And for my clothing, they cast lots. So here's Jesus on the cross. Now, for the last while, we've lost all sight or all focus upon disciples or anybody else.

But all of a sudden, the spotlight comes back in. And we see below the cross, there is one disciple there. There's John. But there's more than John.

Because we find below the cross, and there were many below the cross, But standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother and his mother's sister, who people think was Salome.

[17:29] And if that, this is what many reckon, that Salome was married to Zebedee. And if that is true, then that John, that Salome was her daughter, that Salome was the mother, I should say, of John, who wrote this, John the Apostle.

And that's why it would make complete sense. Because a lot of people say they cannot understand why Jesus handed his mother over to John. But it would make sense, because John, if Salome is the wife of Zebedee, then that would make John, the Apostle John, also, like John the Baptist, a cousin of Jesus.

So that sending, giving Mary over is not such a strange thing. Because a lot of people say, of course, it's kind of strange. Send him away.

I know that John is a disciple that he loved most of all. But why? Because it was a home that Mary would have been familiar with. But anyway, we find here that the focus then turns in upon Mary and John.

And here is Mary, and what a broken-hearted mother we have here. And it goes back, you cannot help but go back to the temple. Remember in the early, very, very, when Jesus was just a little baby, when Mary and Joseph came to the temple, they met old Simeon.

[19:01] And Simeon began to give wonderful prophecies regarding Jesus. But then he turned to Mary and he said to Mary, you know, he said, a sword will push your own soul also.

And I'm sure Mary often wondered, what does he mean by that? Because before this, Mary knew that she was the most privileged of people.

That the Lord had chosen, God the Father had chosen her to bear and to carry the Son of God. What an honor, what a privilege.

And I'm sure that this wasn't what Mary was expecting. That a sword would push her own soul also. Now, of course, when Jesus would have been growing up, Mary would have recognized that there was something special about Jesus.

Now, all parents think that their own children are perfect, but they aren't. Here is the only child that was ever perfect in this world.

[20:11] Because Jesus had no sin. He never sinned in anything that he ever did. It wasn't that he was abnormal in any way, but he was just, he was so right.

Now, of course, what we may have said, see, our judgments about things are often quite ski-whiff in the way we think about things.

And some of the things that we would have expected Jesus to have done, he didn't. And other, likewise, because his whole ministry was very radical. So there might have been aspects of Jesus' life which might not have conformed to what we would have thought.

But the thing is, he was sinless. He never sinned. He never did. He never thought anything that was wrong or said anything that was wrong or did anything that was wrong. So Mary realized this is a special, special boy growing up.

And yet, Mary had to learn, mother and all, though she was, that there was somebody even closer to Jesus' heart than she was. And that was his father in heaven.

[21 : 15] Remember, it was a 12-year-old boy when he got lost and they were searching all over Jerusalem looking for him. They found him in the temple and Mary began to scold him saying, we were beside ourselves with worry.

And he said, do you not realize I must be about my father's business? This comes before anything else, before any other relationship.

And along the way, there were times when Mary was being reminded of this. There was a member in the time in the crowded room and they came and they said to him, oh, your mother and your family, they're looking for you outside.

And Jesus said, who is my mother and who are my brothers? Those, he said, who will do the will of my father in heaven. He wasn't dismissing his own family. But he was showing that even closer than the natural ties of life comes the spiritual tie between us and the Lord.

And so here we come to the fullness of Simeon's prophecy. The sword is pushing into Mary's heart. It says, Pink wrote and puts it so beautifully, she it was who first planted kisses on the brow that is now crowned with thorns.

[22 : 32] She who guided these hands and feet now nailed, guided in his first baby movements. Did a mother ever suffer like her? His disciples may desert him, his friends forsake him, his nation despise him, but his mother stands at the foot of the cross.

Now it doesn't tell us anything that Mary said. Nothing is recorded. but it's very, very interesting that in all the agony that Jesus is going through, in the fearful pain and suffering, he still thinks about his mother.

And the last words that he ever spoke to anybody in this world, yes, he spoke to his father after this, and he made a general statement, not to anybody, but just when he said, I thirst.

But the last words that were directed to any people in this world before his death were to his mother and to the disciple whom he loved, which just shows us how powerful our family and our friends are in this world.

Jesus demonstrates that, even from the cross. Even there in all his agonies, he's thinking down and outwards. And Jesus still thinks like that.

[23 : 56] And he understands the pains and the agonies that families go through when they lose loved ones. And I know in this church there are many broken hearts here today.

Jesus understands all that. As we were looking at that recently, at the different aspects of what Jesus went through, where he suffered every kind of, he understands those who are the victims of abuse.

he understands those who are being mocked and reviled. He's experienced all that. He understands the brokenness within family circles and within friendships.

He's been there. He's part of it. And there's nothing like having somebody who's been where you are and understands. and that's the Jesus we have today.

And that's why we're to go to him and to say, Lord, help me. My heart's hurting. And he will. He won't leave. He won't. He'll never turn away from the broken heart.

[25 : 01] He'll never turn away from those who cry to him. And so we find that Jesus commits his mother to the care of John. Now we know at this time that Jesus' half-brothers, they didn't believe in him.

They were to come to believe in him later. And we believe that Joseph, Joseph was a lot older than Mary, that Joseph had died. That that is why Jesus is putting his mother into the care of John and who many believe actually was a close relation.

So we find this incredibly tender scene here at the cross. the greatest relationship of all is the relationship that we have with the Lord Jesus.

And it enhances every other relationship. Our lives are short. And we would love to hold on to who we have and what we have, but we can't.

We're just passing through. Death is a great enemy that separates and divides, but it cannot separate our bond with Jesus.

[26 : 12] That's what we're told. Paul goes through every possibility and he says, can, he goes through things, every conceivable enemy, even death itself. And he says, you know, death cannot separate.

Who shall separate us from the love of God? Shall tribulation, shall this, shall sword, shall death, no, he said. And persuaded that nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus.

Christ. I hope today that you are resting in Jesus Christ. Because this world is a lonely place, it's a dangerous place, it's an uncertain place.

Jesus Christ is the only one who is certain. And I know that there are times that even our faith struggles. Sometimes the blows in life can shatter, we can be filled with our fears and our doubts. But the Lord will take you back. He'll take you back from wherever you are right now, take you back to see he and he alone is the one who never moves.

[27 : 25] May we all have that security in life. Let us pray. Oh Lord, our God, we pray that we might know the reality of Jesus as our Lord.

May we know that peace, may we know that stability, may we know that strength, may we know that upholding. Lord, keep us, keep our feet from falling, keep our eyes from tears.

Watch over us, we pray, and guide us and uphold us, fill us with your goodness, and may that through goodness and mercy follow us all the days of our life so that we will then dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Oh, may that be true for all of us. Take away our sin in Jesus' name. Amen. We're going to conclude singing from Sing Psalms in Psalm 103. Sing Psalms Psalm 103, and we're going to sing from verse 12 to verse 18.

Psalm 103 from verse 12 to verse 18. Sing Psalms, it's on page 135. From verse 12 to verse 18.

[28 : 36] The tune is before the throne. As far as east is from the west, so far as love has borne away our many sins and trespasses and all the guilt that on us lay.

Just as a father loves his child, so God loves those who fear his name, for he remembers we are dust and well he knows our feeble frame. Each human life is like the grass and like a meadow flower it grows, its place will never be recalled, once over it the tempest blows.

But everlasting is God's love for those who fear him and their seed, for those who keep his covenant and carefully his precepts heed. These verses, 103, 12 to 18, and it's page 135 before the throne, as far as east is from the west.

As far as east is from the west, so far his love has borne away, how many sins and trespasses, and all the guilt that on us lay.

Just as a father loves his child, so God loves those who fear his name, for he remembers we are dust, and well he knows our people frame, and well he knows our people frame.

[30 : 21] Each human life is like the grass, and like a meadow flower it grows, its place will never be recalled, once over it the tempest flows, but everlasting is God's love, for those who fear him, and their sin, for those who keep his covenant, uncarefully is precepted, uncarefully is precepted.

Now may the grace, mercy, and peace of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit rest and abide upon each one of you now and forevermore. Amen.