

Mark 15 37-38

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[0 : 00] Let us turn back to Mark's Gospel, Mark chapter 15, and we read at verse 37 and verse 38.

And Jesus uttered a loud cry and breathed his last, and the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The moment of death for all those who are involved is a very, very powerful moment when a life ceases in this world, when a person breathes their last.

It's a very, very, very powerful moment. And here we have this moment in the experience of the Lord Jesus Christ, where he breathes his last.

That's what we're told in verse 37. Jesus uttered a loud cry and breathed his last. Of course, for Jesus, the end had come where all the awful suffering, all the fearful sorrows and hardships and the great sacrifice that he was making, all of that now had come to an end.

Jesus couldn't give more. So often in life, you know, we ask ourselves, what can I give? What can I do? How much can I give? And we all know that the ultimate giving is to give oneself.

[1 : 41] And it was always termed, particularly in the likes of the war, where people were killed in battle. People were killed in whatever way that they paid the ultimate price.

That is, that with their life, you cannot give more than your life. And we know that people have given their life and trying to save other people.

And it is the ultimate, that we talk about it as the ultimate sacrifice. And of course, here it is that we find that Jesus is the one who has, he has made the ultimate sacrifice.

Now, as we see in verse 37, Now, we've said this before, but again, it just brings before us the supernatural way in which Jesus breathed his last.

Because the one thing that a person who was being crucified couldn't do was to give out in their last moment a loud cry. Because part of the form of what happened in crucifixion, one of the things, of course, that did happen there was that the body, the chest was compressed and the person suffocated.

[3 : 11] And so it was impossible to give out a loud cry. And yet that's exactly what Jesus does. This is the cry of victory.

This would be the cry that ties in in John's Gospel, chapter 19, where Jesus cried out, It is finished. When he cried out with this loud cry, this is what he was saying.

It is finished. He had completed everything that had been given to him to do. So that's why we're saying it's a supernatural cry. And of course, when this moment came in the death of Jesus, there was also various phenomenon occurred all around.

There was the earthquake, the splitting of the rocks. There was the darkness. There was the tomb. There was, well, the darkness before. There was tombs opened. And that is why the centurion who was facing the centurion who was in charge of operations, that he made that declaration.

It tells us that, verse 39, And when the centurion who stood facing him saw that in this way he breathed his last, he said, Truly, this man was the Son of God.

[4 : 25] And so we find that something, it's almost, you would almost say insignificant, but it's most certainly not.

Tied in where it says, Jesus uttered a loud cry, breathed his last, and the centurion saying, Truly, this man was the Son of God. That we find in verse 38 that the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom.

Now, I suppose if you ask yourself, you'd have to remember what the layout, and we won't spend much on that, the layout of the temple was like.

You remember that there was a big outer court where the worshippers came with a sacrifice. And, of course, sacrifice was at the very heart of Old Testament worship.

When you came to worship, it was the one thing that was always brought before your mind, before your heart, is sacrifice had to be made. And that should always be in our own thinking as well.

[5 : 28] As we come today, as we seek to worship God, we've always got to remember that sacrifice is at the very heart of our worship. If it weren't for the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, then we couldn't be doing what we're doing.

He is the one who has made the way open for us. He is the one who has done everything that has to be done. So when you came into the outer court of the temple, then there was this great big curtain which separated the court to what was called the holy place.

And when the priest would go into the holy place, he would have to wash his hands in the brazen laver. And in the holy place, there was a golden candlestick and the table of the showbread and altar of incense.

But as you remember, then there was another huge curtain. And this curtain separated the holy place from the most holy place. And in the most holy place, which sometimes was termed the holy of holies, it was there that the Ark of the Covenant was, which symbolized the presence of God. And as you remember, nobody was allowed in there except the high priest and only once a year. So there was this great big curtain.

[6 : 57] It was about, I think, if I remember right, about 60 feet tall and about 18 feet or 30 feet wide, I should say. So it would be 18 meters, but 60 foot or whatever like that, and 30 foot wide.

And there was the colors of blue and purple and scarlet thread was intertwined and woven in a beautiful way to form this cherubim.

So that there was a cherubim, it was like a tapestry in the curtain, in this massive curtain. And so this was something, this was pointing about this really, real exclusion zone.

It was the one place that nobody on pain of death was ever allowed to enter. You couldn't go in there, apart from the high priest, as we say, once a year on the day of atonement.

Now, if we were to look into the temple 2,000 years ago, at the time that Jesus died, at the time that Jesus breathed his last, it was 3 p.m.

[8 : 17] Because Jesus was on the cross for six hours from 9 in the morning to 3 in the afternoon. And it was at 3 p.m., 3 o'clock, that he breathed his last.

Now, if we were to focus in on the temple, you would find there that the priests would have been at work preparing the evening sacrifice. So as they were preparing the evening sacrifice, all of a sudden, this extraordinary thing happened, would have happened before their very eyes, where the curtain was just ripped, torn apart from top to bottom.

And for the first time ever, the priests would be able to see in there. Only the high priest, remember, had ever been in behind that curtain.

And for the first time ever, they would be able to see in. It was an extraordinary thing. You remember, 60 foot high and 30 foot wide, and just torn in two.

In the very same way as maybe you're finished, or you've been writing on a piece of paper, and you realize what you've written is wrong, and you get the paper, and you just tear it in two.

[9 : 32] Like, that's it. It's finished. I'm finished with that. It's done. And so that's exactly what happened at this particular moment.

And we've got to ask ourselves, what was the significance of that? Well, there are various things.

One thing is, the Lord is really saying, there are no more exclusion zones.

It's like saying the old way is finished. There is now a new and a living way has been opened up in Jesus Christ.

There are now no separation barriers between Jew and Gentile. All now are one in Christ Jesus. So that at this moment, when Jesus says it is finished, this extraordinary event takes place.

And the Lord is saying, this is it. That was in the past. It was so essential. It was teaching what Jesus was going to do. But now we are into the new, and here we come into this new and a living way.

[10 : 46] And so for us today, it's one of the most wonderful things to realize that we are in this new and living way.

And of course, when you think about it, if we had lived in Old Testament times, the one thing that would have been brought before us is the perpetual nature of sacrifice.

Because we would always have to be coming back again and again and again and again to the temple with our sacrifice. Because there was this constant shedding of blood.

And without the shedding of blood, there is no remission of sin. And so here we have the Lord Jesus saying, yes, all that went in the past. That was all speaking about me. And it's true without the shedding of blood. There is no remission of sin. But I've shed my blood once and for all.

[11 : 45] Everything beforehand was pointing to this moment. And so we find that here's this, as we say, a very powerful moment.

This is a complete sacrifice for sin. And what does that speak to us about? Well, there's two or three things. First and foremost, it speaks to us about the fact that there is no other way to God but in and through the Lord Jesus Christ.

And when we study the Word, we see that everything is brought together to make it so plain and clear to us that there is no other way to God.

We cannot find God's peace. We cannot find salvation apart from Jesus Christ. Now, sometimes we can try and fool ourselves into believing that God will accept us just as we are.

That we don't need Christ's sacrifice. That we don't need His work. That we ourselves are good enough within ourselves so that God will accept us.

[13 : 00] You see, there's something about our makeup, about our nature. And while we would all agree and say, well, I know I'm not perfect.

I know that there's a lot about my life that isn't right. But then we would say, well, but I'm not that bad. And the bottom line is that it's something, well, it's a natural thing.

We love ourselves. Now, you may say to yourself, well, hold on a minute, that's quite a strong statement to make. No, it's not. It's a fact of life. We love ourselves because, naturally speaking, the greatest instinct we have is self-preservation.

And that instinct is at work because we love ourselves. The Bible says no man ever yet hated his own flesh. So that, naturally speaking, we do love ourselves.

And because we love ourselves, we think that God must love us just as we are as well. And that God will accept us just as we are.

[14 : 08] That's the way human logic naturally works. But the Bible says no. No.

That we, in and of ourselves, irrespective of what we think, we are not good enough. There isn't, within any one of us, sufficient good that God will accept us just as we are.

And that is why God sent his Son, Jesus Christ, into this world. To do for us what we couldn't do for ourselves. And that's what this is all about, is where Jesus is opening up this new and living way, where he is opening up by his death.

He is the door into this salvation. And so, we see that there is no other way. Now, again, the Old Testament way of sacrifice and the whole structure of the temple and its exclusion zones, and it's the exclusion zone on the pain of death, was highlighting also to the people the holiness of God. That he is fearful in his holiness. And that there are areas and aspects that we just cannot go near. And that's part of what the whole Old Testament structure was at pains to point out.

[15 : 52] Because God's immediate wrath and anger would fall down on anybody who was bracing enough to try and say, you know, I want to see you in there.

And if you're told, you know, the presence of God is in there. This is where God's presence is symbolized, in the most holy place. And you say to yourself, I want to go in there.

You couldn't. Because you would have been struck down dead. That is highlighting this majestic holiness. Because the holiness of God cannot meet with sin.

And God, that's why God has to deal with sin. In order to remain just and true in himself. He has to make a way whereby our sin is dealt with.

And that's what Jesus did on the cross. He took our sin on himself. But again, this is highlighting to us the awfulness of rejecting it.

[16 : 58] Of a person saying, oh, well, I know. I know all this. But it doesn't really matter. It does. It matters more than anything else in the whole world.

And to reject God's way, great way of salvation, is in a sense like trampling underfoot the very blood of Jesus Christ.

And so we find that there is this new and a living way. But you know something else that's, I suppose, very interesting here is that in the curtain in the temple, we said there was this beautiful tapestry with a cherry boom.

And it's here, this cherry boom is pictured here as guarding the holiness of God. And we have to ask ourselves, where do we first come across a cherry boom?

And you have to go back to Genesis chapter 3. Do you remember in Genesis chapter 3 at the time of the fall? And when Adam and Eve had sinned and God had come after them.

[18:10] And God had spoken with them. And then there was that awful moment of expulsion. Where they were both put out of the garden.

You remember that there was to keep them, to prevent them from coming back into the garden and coming to the tree of life. A cherry boom was sent with a flaming sword which turned in every direction.

To keep Adam and Eve from going back into the garden. And so in a sense, here's this cherry boom which is guarding, as it were, the very holiness of God.

Although it's only a picture, a tapestry of. And yet here the Lord is like ripping right down the cloth, the beautiful tapestry.

And it's like removing the cherry boom which had before symbolized barring entrance into the garden. And it's like the Lord saying, I've opened up a way back into the garden.

[19:20] It's like an invitation to come back in. That's what God has done in Jesus Christ. It's where he's taken away the sword.

In fact, no, he hasn't taken away the sword. He couldn't take away the sword. What he has done is he has caused the sword to fall on his son.

That's tied in with Zechariah where it says, awake, O sword, against my shepherd. And that's exactly what has happened.

Is that the sword of God's anger and God's justice and God's wrath has now fallen down upon the shepherd.

And through that, the door back in is open. And that's where you and I are today. The door has been opened up for us again.

[20:20] This new and living way. You know, we often read about the garden. It was a garden of delight. It was a wonderful garden. I'm sure we often wish and say, oh, I would love to have been able to get back into that garden.

What would it have been like? Well, what Jesus has done has opened up an even greater garden. A garden of total spiritual delight.

Of total spiritual fellowship. And what we enjoy here is just, it's like a fleeting moment. And it's like a little taste of what will be.

We cannot enjoy the fulfillment of it here because of sin. Because of what we are. Because of the environment we live in. Because of so many factors.

But the Lord has given us sufficient. A little taste of what is yet to be. And all this is tied into that amazing thing that happened just behind closed doors.

[21:29] Where the curtain was ripped in two from top to bottom. And what freedom and what liberty the Lord has given to us now through this.

I hope that nobody in here today will say, well, that's all very interesting. That was 2,000 years ago. My friend, this is bang up to date.

All this that happened all these years ago is here for you and for me today. I hope nobody will turn away from it.

But that we will all enter in through this new and living way. Let us pray. O Lord, our God, we pray to enable us to go on from strength to strength.

We have to confess, O Lord, of how weak and frail we often feel. And we also marvel at your grace and provision for us. We give thanks, O Lord, for having revealed to us the way of salvation.

[22:38] How awful it would be if we didn't know. If we had never heard. But help us, Lord, not to be amongst those who might hear and yet choose to refuse.

We ask, O Lord, that all of us here may enter in through this new and living way. That we may find the restored Eden.

That we may indeed come to a greater understanding of the Lord's work in us and for us. We pray then to do us good.

Grant us your grace in everything. And take us all home safely, we pray. Forgive us all our sin in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[23 : 42] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.
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