

The Death of Jesus

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[0 : 00] The following message is given by Walt Alexander, lead pastor of Trinity Grace Church in Athens, Tennessee. For more information about Trinity Grace, please visit us at TrinityGraceAthens.com.

So Mark chapter 15, verse 33. And when the sixth hour had come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour.

And at the ninth hour, Jesus cried out with a loud voice, Eloi, Eloi, lama sababachthani, which means, My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

And some of the passersby, hearing it, said, Behold, he's calling Elijah. And some ran and filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on a reed, and gave it to him to drink, saying, Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to take him down.

And Jesus uttered a loud cry and breathed his last. And the curtain was torn in two from top to bottom.

[1 : 13] 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.

There were also women looking on from a distance, among whom were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the younger, and of Joseph and Salome.

And when he was in Galilee, they followed him and ministered to him. And there were also many other women who came up with him to Jerusalem. And when evening came, since it was the day of preparation, that is, the day before the Sabbath, Joseph of Arimathea, a respected member of the council, who was also himself looking for the kingdom of God, took courage and went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus.

Pilate was surprised to hear that he should have already died. And summoning the centurion, he asked him whether he was already dead. And when he learned from the centurion that he was dead, he granted the corpse to Joseph.

And Joseph brought a linen shroud, and taking him down, wrapped him in the linen shroud, and laid him in a tomb that had been cut out of the rock.

[2 : 35] And he rolled a stone against the entrance of the tomb. Mary Magdalene and Mary, the mother of Joseph, saw where he was laid.

The grass withers, the flowers fade, but the word of God abides forever. May God bless preaching and the hearing of his word. One of my favorite stories, just in general, but one of my favorite stories about the great preacher Charles Spurgeon is the experience he had of ministering alongside his grandfather.

Mr. Spurgeon recounts the story for us years later. He says, I was announced at a certain country town, and I quote, it does not often happen to me to be behind time, for I feel that punctuality is one of those little virtues which may prevent great sins.

But we have no control over railway delays and breakdowns, and so it happened that I reached the appointed place considerably behind the time.

He's trying to make it somewhere to preach, and he's behind. Like sensible people, he continues, they had begun their worship and had proceeded as far as the sermon.

[3 : 50] As I neared the chapel, I perceived that someone was in the pulpit preaching, and who should be the preacher but my dear grandfather.

He saw me as I came in the front door and made my way up the aisle. At once he said, here comes my grandson. He may preach the gospel better than I can, but he cannot preach a better gospel.

Can you, Charles? He says, as I made my way through the throng, I answered, you can preach the gospel better than me. Pray, please, go on. Oh, he would not agree to that.

I must take the sermon, Charles continues, and so I did, going on from the subject there and then, just where he left off. There, he said, I was preaching on, for by grace you have been saved. And so Charles Spurgeon, the prince of preachers, began to preach. A few minutes later, Charles felt a pull on his coattail.

[4 : 58] It was his grandfather who wanted to say a bit more. And so he did. His grandfather stands up, takes the turn again, preaches for about five minutes, and then sits down.

When he finished, Charles was allowed to go again to his dear grandfather's delight. Mr. Spurgeon remembers years later, now and then, he would say in a gentle tone, good, good.

Once he said, tell them that again, Charles. And of course I did, tell them that again. I seem to hear, Mr. Spurgeon says years later, that dear voice, which is so long, which has been so long lost to earth, saying, tell them that again.

Tell them that again. This morning, as we open our Bibles to one final look at this moment, at the suffering of Jesus Christ, my job is to tell you again, the wonderful story about Jesus Christ and him crucified.

My job is to tell you that. Again, and for some of you, you know it well enough, and that's such a wonderful place to be in this morning. You spent years studying the truth about Jesus Christ and him crucified.

[6 : 20] You rejoice in the peace and security. You know because of the gospel, but I dare say, because of indwelling sin and the battle that continues to rage, you must hear it again.

For others of you, you know you don't know it well enough, and you're learning so much these days. You're so aware of what you don't know. You're so aware of what you're learning about the death of Jesus Christ and our behalf, and to keep you learning, you too need to hear it again.

for still others, you think you know it well enough. You may have prayed the prayer.

You may have walked down the aisle. You may have gone to church your whole life. Perhaps you've even led Bible studies and small groups and prayer groups, but do you know what you think you know well enough?

Do you know it so well that it's become precious to you, treasured to you, vital to you, more important than anything else? My job is to tell you that again until the gospel of Jesus Christ becomes the most important thing to you.

[7 : 37] For as Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15, I came to you, delivered to you as of first importance, would I also receive that Christ died for sin? Only one thing can be most important, it could be anything, our career, our family, our exercise routine, our adventures, our talents, our hobbies, but one thing should be most important, and that's what we're going to focus on this morning.

The main thing of our lives must be the main thing of the Bible, Jesus Christ and Him crucified. The main thing of our lives must be the main thing of the Bible, Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

We're going to break this out in three points of alliteration. Taylor would be very proud of me. The first point is the cry. Point one, the cry. Quite obviously, this text takes us into the deepest agony of the cross.

Verses 33 through 37 take us into the final cries of agony of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, on the cross. After describing the pushing and punching, slapping and spitting, crucifying and mocking of the past three hours, Mark takes us into three hours overwhelmed by darkness.

Verse 33, when the sixth hour had come, that is 12 p.m., there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour, that is 3 p.m.

[9 : 08] So from 12 p.m. to 3 p.m. on that first Good Friday, the whole land was dark. Douglas Webster says it well. At the birth of the Son of God, there was brightness at midnight.

At the death of the Son of God, there was darkness at noon. After three hours, Jesus cries out from the cross beyond a few simple words along the way.

Jesus breaks His silence for the first time since the Garden of Gethsemane when He says, verse 34, My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

Why have you forsaken me? Now, this is right up there. This is the deep end. This is right up there. Some of the most perplexing words in Holy Scripture.

What are we to make of this? What are we to make of this cry? What are we to make of the fact that the final words, the last words of Jesus Christ are why have you forsaken me?

[10 : 17] Did the Father reject Him? Did the Father turn away? Now, the smart guys, I guess we could say, the scholars, they come with all sorts of theories. Some say, well, this cry is just Jesus

quoting Scripture.

I mean, after all, this is Psalm 22, verse 1. So Jesus is quoting Scripture to say that His experience is similar to the experience of the psalmist. So that must be what's going on. Jesus is just quoting Scriptures.

Now, others say, Jesus felt forsaken. Now, we can feel forsaken in our lives. You know, we can battle with aloneness and isolation and we can feel forsaken. So that's what it was.

Jesus wasn't forsaken. He's the Son of God. How could the Son of God be forsaken? Some folks go on to say the reason He felt forsaken was this crisis inside His soul.

The divine part of Him knew He wasn't forsaken. The human part of Him was clouded by what was going on and so thought He was forsaken. But none of these seem adequate to me.

[11:14] And I'm not alone. I've consulted with the smart guys. In a word, the cry means Jesus died as a substitutionary, wrath-absorbing sacrifice for sinners.

Jesus, the cry, this cry means Jesus died as a substitutionary, wrath-absorbing sacrifice for sinners. That's what's at the heart of this darkness and this cry.

There's a couple things we need to see right off. The darkness symbolizes the judgment of God.

You remember the last plague on the Passover? We studied Passover several weeks ago.

The last plague before the Passover, before the 10th, was darkness over the whole land. So too, darkness in the Old Testament for prophets, when prophets were judged, when God was judging the people and judging their prophets, He made them dark.

They could no longer see visions. They were in darkness. Even the day of the Lord, all throughout the Old Testament and in Mark 13, as we saw, when the Son of Man returns in judgment, the sun will be darkened.

[12:23] So, this darkness does not overcast skies. It's not an eclipse. This is a supernatural darkness signifying the judgment of God arriving.

Jesus also has already explained that the cross will be about the judgment of God. As we've seen all throughout these chapters, Mark is not overly focused on physical pain.

Jesus says His death will be a baptism. Jesus will be plunged under something at the cross. We believe in real baptism.

You know, we believe in full immersion. So, Jesus will be, well, that's what the word literally means and that's the only way this metaphor for the cross makes sense, actually. But He'll be plunged under. And similar to the way the world was judged and plunged under water with Noah, the water is a judgment of what Jesus must be plunged under.

Jesus also says that His death will be a cup that He must drink. All throughout the Old Testament we know the cup is the cup of God's judgment and wrath.

[13:36] So, the cross will require that Jesus is submerged and drink, and require Him to drink down the wrath and the judgment of God. That is what is going on with the darkness and with what Jesus has talked about about the cross.

And so, the cry means the promised judgment and wrath is falling on Jesus. Christ. Now, these days, most of us don't know what darkness is really like.

Even if we're far out in the country, we pride ourselves on being close to the country, even if we're far out in the country, we can still see lights somewhere. I was reading recently about Ernest Shackleton.

They actually found his boat. I don't know if y'all saw that a couple weeks ago. And in 1914, the explorer, Ernest Shackleton, took his crew from England by sea to Antarctica.

The plan was to land, to walk across Antarctica, to cross the South Pole, and then continue on their mission. But they had to abandon the mission because their ship got caught in polar ice, and that's what they found.

[14:49] Sunk. Over the next several months, they had to fight to survive. They had to fight starvation. They had to fight frigid temperatures. But of all the difficulties they faced, Shackleton biographers say the worst difficulty was the darkness.

From mid-May to early, or late July, the sun never rises on Antarctica. No daylight for more than two months.

Biographers say there is no misery worse than the polar night. You don't know where you are. You don't know who you are.

You don't know who beside you. You don't know where you're going. You can see nothing. Absolutely nothing. And yet, our text takes us into a misery worse than the polar night, the judgment and the wrath of God. After three hours on the cross, Jesus cries out, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

[16:04] The New Testament, the rest of the New Testament, helps us understand what is going on. 2 Corinthians 5, 21 says, for our sake, God made him to be sin, who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Galatians 3, 13 says, Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us. What these verses, they're helping to shine light into that darkness, understand what's going on. We've already seen that Jesus is being offered up in exchange for us. We are Barabbas. He's offered up in exchange for us. He's ransoming us, he's rescuing us and freeing us. And we've already seen that Jesus is the sacrifice for us. But now we're seeing what happened to Jesus as the sacrifice. That's what these verses are trying to alert us to.

Not the physical pain, but the spiritual agony. He becomes sin. He becomes a curse.

[17:09] The Bible says, cursed is the man who dies on a cross. Oh, that wonderful cross. All our sins are placed on him.

This is the core of the gospel. All our sins are placed on him. All our sins are credited to his account. All of our sins are assigned to him, and for three hours he is treated like he did every single one of them.

Now, you and I know sin is an internal moral problem for us. Sin divides our hearts, distorts our understanding, disrupts our relationships, defiles our lives, and enslaves us.

We want to be free from sin, but sin is a deeper moral problem for God. Some say God should just forgive sin, but God cannot forgive sin.

God cannot overlook sin. God cannot just act like sin didn't happen. If he did, he would not be just and would be unworthy of worship. In fact, the reality is every act of sin and injustice is stored up the wrath of God.

[18:14] So far from being able to just sweep it away, every act of evil and injustice and sin is storing up more wrath. John Sott says, the wrath of God is his steady, unrelenting, unremending, uncompromising antagonism to evil in all its forms and manifestations.

sin presents a deep moral problem for God. He loves his people, but he hates sin. This is his treasured possession, but he hates sin.

And in order for him to remain just, he must punish sin. And so what's going on here, what they're telling us when he said he became sin is that on the cross, God put forward Christ as a substitutionary, wrath-absorbing sacrifice for sinners.

What that means is, is that for three hours, the judgment and wrath of God is poured out on Jesus Christ. For three hours, the sinless Son of God is judged for our sin.

For every look of porn, every drunken stupor, every harboring of bitterness, every careless word, every lash of anger, every seemingly slight irritation, every ungrateful grumble, every morsel of gossip savored, every story of slander shared, every arrogant boast, every look down of contempt, every crude joke, every perverse pleasure, every act of half-hearted obedience, every failure to love our neighbor, every click formed to keep out the unwanted, every consuming desire to fit in, every lie propagated, every failure to stand for the truth, every failure to trust God.

[20:10] All the wrath reserved for every sin that would have taken eternity to pour out on us is poured out on Jesus for these three hours. So what does it mean that Jesus is experiencing the judgment and wrath?

What does it mean that it's falling on Jesus? The great Scottish preacher John Duncan said with tears streaming down his face, do you know what Calvary is? Do you know what it is? What is it? It's damnation. And he took it lovingly. After three hours, what this cry is, is the cry of damnation. R.C. Sproul helps us. This cry represents the most agonizing protest ever uttered on this planet. It bursts forth in a moment of unparalleled pain. It is the scream of the damn for us.

So what's this cry? It's my cry. It's your cry. If you trust in it.

[21:22] it's the scream of the damned. Of Jesus enduring the damnation we deserve.

Immediately the crowds think he's calling Elijah. What? What's going on? They even give him that sour wine. Elijah's, remember, Elijah went up to heaven in a fire.

Fire of glory. He was rescued up to heaven immediately. So people thought Elijah was the one who had come to rescue the righteous people when they were in pain. The saint of lost causes or something like that.

Well, there's no rescue for Jesus Christ. They give him the sour wine to kind of sober him up and say, let's see if Elijah comes down to help him. Jesus will not be rescued.

And so it says, verse 37, Jesus uttered a loud cry and breathed his last. So what does it mean that Jesus, when Jesus said, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

[22 : 36] It means that as a substitutionary sacrifice, Jesus is left to suffer and die. Richard Baucom said, to be forsaken by God means that he has allowed this to happen and does nothing to help.

What Jesus experiences is the concrete fact, and that's a lot of restraint in the way he's writing, because he's wicked smart, is the concrete fact.

So it's not, what he's saying is not this wrestle between his soul, his human soul, the divine soul, that's not what's coming out of here, it's the concrete fact that Jesus has been left to suffer and die. It means that as theologians say, Jesus is our propitiation. Taylor wrote a great article on the blog several weeks ago, you could go consult that, but propitiation is a word, helps us understand that the heart of the cross is not Jesus taking our sins away.

Now that's a wonderful thing. All my sins, all my debts have been paid, all my sins have been washed away. Blessed be the Lord, but the heart of the cross is not that he's taken our sins away.

[23 : 48] The heart of the cross is that he's absorbed all the wrath that was due for their sins.

That's far better. It means the cup that should have been poured out on us was endured and exhausted forever by Jesus.

Now, we've got to be very careful here. You know, it's not as though God the Father is angry and Jesus steps in to calm him. It's not as though Jesus persuades God the Father to love us.

That's not what the cross is about. The cross is about all members of the Trinity working together to save sinners. John Stott helps us. It cannot be emphasized too strongly that God's love is the source, not the consequence of his saving death.

That's what atonement means. So, God's love is the source, not the consequence of the atonement. God does not love us because Christ died for us. Christ died for us because God loved us.

If it was God's wrath which needed to be propitiated, it is God's love which did the propitiating. Now, that's a helpful category. It rescues us from a bad view of God.

[24 : 57] So, out of love for lost sinners, God, the Father, the Son, and the Spirit intervened to save. God the Father plans, God the Son, endures, and God the Spirit enables to God be the glory.

Now, briefly, let me just say two things in application. The first is the cross can free us, free us from being paralyzed by criticism and by what other people think.

The reason is, sin was your sin was so bad, it cost the Son of God his life. Can anyone say any worse about you?

No. No. Wonderfully, though, the cross says something incredibly good to you. even though you're worthy of damnation, you receive life, joy, and freedom because of his sacrifice.

Can anyone say anything better to you? The wonderful liberating effect the cross can have. The cross also reassures us that even in our darkest moments, God will not forsake us.

[26 : 19] Jesus prays Psalm 22 so that the experience of Psalm 22 might never repeat as it did on Calvary.

Sometimes life is so dark, so dark, but it will not be totally dark because of Jesus.

Jesus. One more story from Corrie ten boom, who was a righteous Jew who helped rescue Jews in Holland from Nazi Germany as her sister, Betsy, this is the very end of the book, lay dying on a stretcher on the floor of a flea and vested barrack.

She spoke to Corrie for one of the last times. She said, we must, we must tell people what we've learned here. We must tell them there is no pit so deep that he is not deeper still.

They will listen to us, Corrie, because we've been here. And those stories are so precious, but that's the story in a much more precious way.

[27 : 44] That's the story of the cross. There's no pit so deep, because Jesus drained the deepest pit. Psalm 22, 24, I mean, this is what he fulfilled.

For he has not despised or abhorred the affliction of the affliction. He's proven it by sending his son to endure the worst affliction imaginable, and he has not hidden his face from him, but has heard when he cried to him.

Praise God. Point two, the curtain. The curtain. Immediately, after he breathes his last, look at verse 38, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom.

Now, this is kind of odd that this just pops into the scene. I mean, the curtain is not, I mean, the temple was not on Golgotha. It was not like next to the cross, but it pops into the scene and before we can understand what's going on here, there's some important parallels running through the gospel of Mark.

There's several similarities between the baptism of Jesus, the transfiguration of Jesus, and the crucifixion of Jesus. One is, they're all visions. They're all visions.

[28 : 55] 1, 9, and 16. They're all these incredible visions. They're all at decisive moments of the gospel. They all include Elijah. References to Elijah, John the Baptist, looking like Elijah, calling on Elijah, and in each one, Jesus is proclaimed to be the Son of God.

So God the Father proclaims it from heaven at the baptism. This is my Son with whom I'm well pleased. God the Father proclaims it again in Mark 9 at the transfiguration. This is my Son. Listen to him. And again here at the crucifixion, the centurion says, truly this man was, we know that's not true, the Son of God.

But even more significant than those parallels that just run between those three accounts are the parallels that run between the baptism and the crucifixion. There's a reference to the Spirit in both. So at the baptism, the Spirit descends like a dove. I don't know what this is, but maybe it's the Spirit coming down and a dove. and a reference here in verse 37, he breathed his last is a, literally, he exhaled the Spirit is what that means.

[30 : 08] There's also a reference to tearing in both. The tearing of the heavens to bring down the dove and bring down Jesus in Mark 1 parallels with the tearing of the curtain in the temple.

That word tearing is only used two times in the Gospel Mark right there and right here. What's all that mean? The tearing of the curtain means no more sacrifices are required.

Anyone can draw near to God. So the tearing of the curtain is signaling something that Jesus does to his death. It means no more sacrifices are required. Anyone can draw near to God.

If you've ever tried to read the Bible in a year, you may still be stuck in Leviticus. Because it's where Bible plans go to die because it's so hard to understand that Leviticus is this book of sacrifices and requirements for an unclean people to relate to God.

I mean it's a book answering the question how can a holy God be with his people? Do you remember God promised to go with his people? But then things got a little they went south you know they got a little off to a rocky start even the golden calf and the grumbling and God was ready to get done with his people why?

[31 : 24] Because of his holiness and so he said I will go with you and I'll dwell in the tent in the center of the camp but I must keep my space maybe social distancing before it was in vogue I will stay in the holy of holies and there will be a massive curtain separating me from you I will live in that tent but only certain people can draw near to me on certain occasions first off no Gentile can ever draw near to me second Jews can draw near to me only under certain requirements after offering sacrifices they can come into the temple but only the priest can come once a year on the day of atonement into this room called the holy of holies all other days there will be this curtain separating me from you my holiness from your sinfulness but as we've seen again and again Jesus says he comes to judge the temple remember that with the fig tree and everything he comes to judge this place it should have been a house of prayer for all nations it has become a den of thieves and so he comes to bring judgment the curtain between the holy of holies and the rest of the temple is torn in two what's it saying

Mark is saying Jesus is the final sacrifice Jesus is the final sacrifice that whole institution of sacrifices are over Hebrews 10 says every priest stands daily at his service offering repeatedly the same sacrifices which can never take away sins but when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins he sat down in the right hand of God waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet for by a single offering single sacrifice he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified so that's what's going on that's what helping us understand this is not a physical torturous crucifixion this is a sacrificial offering this is the one in line with all those other blood and goats and pigeons and things like that but this is a final one this is the end no

other sacrifices are required for people to approach

God but there's something else to see and y'all might be you know not but there's something else to see here verse 37 it says he breathed his light last literally he breathed out the spirit now at the baptism the spirit came on him like a dove but here he breathes it out now this is a way to say someone died but Mark is saying something significant here the point is not that the spirit left Jesus the point is the spirit is no longer only at work in Jesus remember he said it's better for me to go to the!

! because I'll send the helper and so the spirit this is Mark's way of saying it that is different than the other places in the New Testament the spirit is no longer bound by Jesus the spirit comes out of him so that he can begin working in the world very Mark like but incredible then then tearing of the curtain. In the baptism, the tearing of the curtain was, it was torn in two so that God could come down and be present in Jesus Christ. I mean, the heavens were torn in two so that God could come down and be present in Jesus Christ. But now the curtain is torn so that God can come out of the temple and be present and active among all people. The curtain is torn in two, not just so that Jews can approach God without fear. The curtain is torn in two so that God can get out. Jesus can get out. Spirit can get out so that Gentiles can approach God as well.

You see what's going on is that, yes, it's a judgment on the temple, but it's also the moving of God out of the temple to all nations. Now in the Chronicles of Narnia, which I just love so much when the children are talking, in the first book, when the children are talking, well, it depends, I guess, what order you read them in or what you, you know, once your argument ends on that, but that's a side note. When the children are talking with the beaver and wrestling with fear about the white witch who has made it Narnia, always winter and never Christmas, the beaver says, they say, Aslan is already landed. They say, Aslan is on the move. A funny feeling of confidence and joy took over the children, so to the tearing of the curtain. She take on the same confidence. That's what happens. That's the story of the book of Acts, the Spirit of God coming down and coming out into all the world, going all the way to Rome, going to Samaria, going to all the Gentile regions and rescuing people from death to life. So because of the sacrifice of Jesus, the Spirit is no longer bound to Jesus. He's no longer bound to the people of Israel. The Spirit is on the loose in every tribe, tongue, people, and nation, and the people of Ethiopia, praise God, and the people of Athens, [36 : 53] Tennessee, bringing them to a knowledge of the truth. And strikingly, this is only seen by us. So Paul, I mean, Mark is writing from Rome. Two people years later, the centurion didn't see the tearing of the curtain, but he's saying, It was torn for you.

Don't go out for a sacrifice, kind of what he's saying. But take this gospel all throughout the world. Point three, the confession. The confession. Verse 39 and following captured the confession of the centurion in the response of the others. Look at verse 39. And when the centurion who stood facing him saw that in this way he breathed his last, again that word, he said, Truly this man was the Son of God.

Now, the centurion was a Roman soldier. He's one of the ones who, perhaps he's one of the ones who spit on Jesus and slapped him. Maybe he swung the hammer that nailed, the nail through his hands and feet.

Regardless, he was one of the ones who hung around three hours in the darkness and watched him die. What was it, though, that stood out? What was it? He saw him, saw that in this way he breathed his last.

What was the way he breathed his last that stood out to the centurion? Was it that he screamed? Now, after being flogged, after being beaten, after being crucified, as your lungs just continue to sink down, now I'm not a medical guy, so don't trust me for stuff, but you sink down and you're unable to breathe, no man screamed on the cross. So that must be it. Is that what it is? Is that what stood out to this centurion that he couldn't breathe, but somehow screams out? I think, well, think what the text is saying. The centurion saw that the crucifixion didn't kill Jesus.

[39 : 07] This is not a story about a man dying. This is a story about a man giving up his life.

Jesus offered his life as a sacrifice, and when the wrath of God was satisfied, he breathed his last.

You remember John 10, no one takes my life from me, but I lay it down of my own accord.

I have the authority to lay it down. I have the authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father. He's mine. So Jesus didn't die. Jesus offered his life. The confession means Jesus proves he was the Son of God through his sacrificial death. He proves he's the Son of God, not by being crucified, but by giving his life away. The greatest proof that Jesus is the Son of

God is not, this is in the Gospel of Mark, the greatest proof that he's the Son of God is not his deeds, not his signs and wonders, not his coming kingdom. The greatest proof that Jesus is the Son of God is his sacrificial death, his obedience to the end and the giving up of his life. Now notice who immediately recognized him as the Son of God. Now Mark tells us in 1.1 that this is a story of Jesus, the Christ, the Son of God. God the Father tells us he's the Son of God in Mark 1, and only Jesus hears it. He tells us in Mark 9, but only disciples hear it. The demons tell him he's the Son of God several times. Jesus himself hints that he's the Son of God several times, but the first human being to identify Jesus as the Son of God in Mark's Gospel is a Roman centurion. The first human being to identify Jesus as the Son of God is not someone who's known Jesus. It's not one of his family members. It's not one of his disciples. It's an outsider. You've been with us this series. That is just so Mark.

[41 : 18] The end. Not telling us how another insider found Jesus, but by another outsider. And so through his death, the temple becomes a house of prayer for all nations.

Then this chapter kind of meanders along, if we're honest. Tells the story of Moses. I mean, not Moses. Mary. Magdalene Mary, mother of Jesus.

Salome. A couple people we've never seen their names before. Includes details about their name. Tells the story. So they stay to the end. They watch Jesus die.

Then it tells of Joseph Arimathea, who confirms that Jesus is dead. You know, kind of that. He goes and tells Pilate. Pilate gets the centurion. So there's three witnesses that he died.

Then he buries him, which the women witness as well. Why all these names? Why all this careful detail?

[42 : 26] In many ways, I think it brings us back to the beginning of this Gospel. All these names and all these individuals are mentioned for the people in Rome to tell them this is what actually happened. Mark is not preserving the stories of what was passed down for hundreds of years and he tried to piece it together.

Mark is preserving Peter's eyewitness testimony and his drop in names to prove it. He's saying to the people of Rome, Jesus was crucified.

Paul said there's over 500 witnesses to his resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15. He said Jesus was really crucified. He really died. Some people say he faked it, you know, and came back, nursed back the wound and got back up there, you know.

He really died. He was really buried. He's saying to the people of Rome, if you don't believe me, go ask him. But Mark is concluding this last look at the death of Jesus to ask us a string of questions too.

Who do you say this man is? Who is he? What is this?

[43 : 44] Just another good man? Just another man tortured by the Romans? Spiritual man, a prophet? See, the Son of God.

It's forcing a question on us. Who are you? You one of the disciples? Hang around? And forsaken? Are you one of the women who hang around but still stay at a distance? Or are you like this centurion? Who sees something in the death of Jesus that you can't unsee?

It's pushing us to ask, do we know a lot about Jesus? Or do we know him? Have we come to say, is this the Son of God?

Sent to save the world? The Christ. Rebecca Manley Pippert says, dust, rusty nails, and blood notwithstanding, the ground at the foot of the cross is the only vantage point from which to view life clearly.

[45 : 12] To see things there is to see things. To see things there is to see them truly. The main thing of our lives must be the main thing of the Bible, Jesus Christ and him crucified.

What it's saying is to see things there is to see them clearly. Is if you don't come to understand who this guy is and your relationship with him. You'll never understand anything.

He's the way, the truth, and the life. Anyone who comes to him might have eternal life. May God help us. Father in heaven, thank you for the privilege of sitting under these words and this wonderful gospel another time.

Oh Lord, we pray you drive these truths deep into us. We might love you, trust you, serve you, and follow you all the days of our lives.

So we offer our lives and our hearts to you sincerely and completely. We don't want to play the game. We want to follow you and be disciples.

[46 : 29] Oh God help us, we pray. In Jesus name, amen. You've been listening to a message given by Walt Alexander, lead pastor of Trinity Grace Church in Athens, Tennessee.
For more information about Trinity Grace, please visit us at trinitygraceathens.com. Thank you.