

Good Friday - The agony of loneliness and distress

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[0 : 00] Well, good morning. Thank you. Good Friday. It's one of those days in the church calendar. It's probably the day on the church calendar which is most complex in terms of our feelings and emotion because we've read the rest of the book. We know what happens at the end and we are ready to celebrate and rejoice in the risen Lord Jesus on Sunday morning.

But Good Friday is important and Good Friday has to have happened because we couldn't have had Easter without Good Friday. And the other thing about Good Friday is it's really hard.

It's a really hard, and I'm going to read you quite a lot of Mark chapter 15 in a few moments. It's quite a hard read. So what I'm going to invite you to do, the words will be on the screen, but just listen to Mark's narrative of Good Friday from Mark chapter 15.

If you want to follow the words on the screen, feel free to do so. If you want to close your eyes, do that as well and just allow yourself to hear the words and be in that situation.

If you close your eyes and go to sleep, we might throw something at you. Very early in the morning, the chief priests with the elders, the teachers of the law and the whole Sanhedrin made their plans.

[1 : 35] So they bound Jesus, led him away and handed him over to Pilate. Are you the king of the Jews? asked Pilate. You said so, Jesus replied.

The chief priests accused him of many things. So again Pilate asked him, Aren't you going to answer? See how many things they're accusing you of. But Jesus still made no reply, and Pilate was amazed.

Now it was the custom at the festival to release the prisoner whom the people requested. A man called Barabbas was in prison with the insurrectionists who had committed murder in the uprising. The crowd came up and asked Pilate to do for them what he usually did. Do you want me to release the king of the Jews? he asked. Knowing that it was out of self-interest that the chief priests had handed Jesus over to him.

But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have Pilate release Barabbas instead. What shall I do then with the one you call the king of the Jews? Pilate asked.

[2 : 41] Crucify him! they shouted. Why? What crime has he committed? asked Pilate. But they shouted all the louder. Crucify him!

Wanting to satisfy the crowd, Pilate released Barabbas to them. He had Jesus flogged and handed him over to be crucified.

Just let me pause at that moment. A simple sentence, verse 15. He had Jesus flogged and handed him over to be crucified.

The soldiers led Jesus away to the palace, that is the praetorium, and called together the whole company of soldiers. They put a purple robe on him. They then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on him.

And they began to call out to him, Hail, king of the Jews! Again and again they struck him on his head with a staff and spat on him. Falling on their knees, they paid homage to him.

[3 : 40] And when they had mocked him, they took off the purple robe and put on his own clothes on him. Then they led him out to crucify him. A certain man from Cyrene, Simon, the father of Alexander and Rufus, was passing on his way in from the country.

And they forced him to carry the cross. They brought Jesus to the place called Golgotha, which means place of the skull. Then they offered him wine mixed with myrrh, but he didn't take it.

And they crucified him. Dividing up his clothes, they cast lots to see what each would get. It was nine in the morning when they crucified him.

The written notice of the charge against him read, The king of the Jews. They crucified two rebels with him, one on his right and one on his left. Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking

their heads and saying, So, you who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, come down from the cross and save yourself.

In the same way, the chief priests and the teachers of the law mocked him among themselves. He saved others, they said, but he can't save himself. Let this Messiah, the king of the Jews, come down from the cross that we may see and believe.

[4 : 55] Those who crucified him with him also heaped insults on him. At noon, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon.

And at three in the afternoon, Jesus cried out in a loud voice, Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani, which means, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

When some of those standing near heard this, they said, listen, he's calling Elijah. Someone ran and filled a sponge with wine vinegar, put it on his staff and offered it to Jesus to drink.

Now leave him alone, let's see if Elijah comes and takes him down, he said. With a loud cry, Jesus breathed his last. The curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom.

And when the centurion stood there in front of Jesus, saw how he died, he said, surely, this man was the son of God.

[6 : 00] Thanks, Josh. So before that chapter, those verses that I read, was the narrative in Gethsemane.

And just I wanted to add this, because my theme is the agony of loneliness and distress. They went to a place called Gethsemane, he began to be deeply troubled and distressed.

Jesus knew what was going to happen. And as John Comer describes him, the God-man felt all those feelings that we would feel.

Of distress and trouble. I think I'd be feeling lots of other things as well, like absolute terror. My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow.

In Mark 15. He fell to the ground and said, take this cup from me, yet not my will, but what you will. Jesus wasn't saying, wasn't going to the cross with a skip and a jump.

[7 : 11] This was a horrible, horrible thing. And Jesus knew that it was going to be a horrible, horrible thing. And he was scared.

Or at least he was troubled and distressed. And he said, please take this away from me. Do I have to do this?

Not in a whiny voice that children sometimes have when you have to make them eat their sprouts or something. But is there any other way? Is there any other way?

No, there's not. The only way. And he knew that. Yet not what I will, but what you will.

But recognize the emotional agony that was in Jesus' communication with his father at that point.

Next slide, please. The trial of Jesus.

[8 : 15] The mock trial of Jesus. The charade of justice. He was bound. Tied up. He was achieved with many things that he didn't apply.

Lots of people made up all sorts of stuff. He's done this. He's done that. He said this. He said that. He's going to be doing this. He's going to be doing that. He's a danger. He's a bad man.

Crucify him. Was the cry of the crowd. A bit, not like lock him up, lock him up. But crucify him. Kill him.

We, the crowd, want you to kill him. And Pilate, wanting to satisfy the crowd, released Barabbas to them.

Isn't there a theme there about how easy it is for us to want each to satisfy the crowd and not stand up for the truth of who Jesus is?

[9 : 21] Not stand up for the truth of what we believe. And then this dreadful situation.

Jesus, he had Jesus flogged and hand him over to be crucified. And the flogging was a beating with ropes, with bones woven into them.

So it broke his skin. I don't want to do a horror story. I'm not very good at scary films. And I don't watch them because they frighten me too much.

But we mustn't lose sight of what happened to Jesus on Good Friday. His body was broken. His skin was broken as he was flogged.

And he was handed over to be crucified. Here you are. You have him. He was alone and abused.

Next slide, please. And then he was mocked.

[10 : 29] The soldiers led Jesus away and called the whole company together. Come on. Come and join in. Come and join in the pylon of this man who we've already had flogged.

He's looking a bit bedraggled and blood covered. But now we're going to mock him. Put a purple robe, a robe of royalty on him.

Put a crown of thorns on him. Let's pretend that he's a king. Let's pretend that we're worshipping him. Hail, King of the Jews.

Falling on their knees, they paid homage to. But at the same time, they struck him on the head with a staff and spat at him.

It's a particularly unpleasant thing to be spat at. It's a particularly violating thing to be spat at.

[11 : 35] But just the other part of that, being struck on the head with a staff. A staff wasn't a little stick. It was a stick with a sort of lump on the end.

And it was for bashing lions when they were attacking the sheep. It was this huge thing and they bashed him on the head with it. Alone and humiliated.

Our Jesus. Our Saviour. Alone and humiliated. Next slide, please. And then the crucifixion. They brought Jesus to the place of the Skullgog author.

They divided up his clothes. And I don't want to go into this in great detail, except to say all the pictures, all the paintings of Jesus on the cross, have him wearing a loincloth.

He didn't wear a loincloth. He was crucified naked. They divided up his clothes. And that was deliberate to humiliate him.

[12 : 43] The whole point of crucifixion was to utterly humiliate in death the person who was being crucified.

And people walked past and shouted insults at him. Standing completely, sorry, hanging completely exposed on a cross.

And the pastors by chucking insults at him. They crucified him. He was alone and exposed.

Next slide, please. It was nine in the morning when they crucified him. And at twelve o'clock, it went dark.

And at three o'clock, he cried out, why, my God? Why have you forsaken me? He hung on that cross for six hours.

[13 : 50] Exposed. Humiliated. He hung on that cross, knowing that this was part of God's plan.

Knowing that he had to do it. My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? What a feeling.

What an agony of loneliness. What a sense of, I'm absolutely alone here.

And with a loud cry, Jesus breathed his last. He didn't go into a deep faint or a coma. He wasn't a little bit poorly.

He was dead. And those apologists who try and create a myth that Jesus didn't really die, he just was in some sort of suspended animation, are wrong.

[14 : 59] And it's a terrible, terrible lie. I wish it was true. I wish Jesus didn't have to die for me. But he did. He did.

And he was dead. He was dead. Surely this man was a son of God. Too late, fella.

Too late. You should have realised that before. Alone and agony on the cross.

Next slide, please. There's lots and lots to say about Good Friday. But I didn't want to, well, I haven't got lots of time.

But I want to turn finally to Isaiah chapter 53. He was led like a lamb to the slaughter. On Good Friday, as Christians, it is our duty and responsibility to pause and remember but realise the agony of loneliness and distress that Jesus went through.

[16 : 19] now we know and I know in the back of my head I can't wait for Easter Sunday morning because it's a wonderful celebration and we'll be here together rejoicing in the risen Lord Jesus.

The truth that because Jesus died and rose from the dead we can have relationship with God. All those wonderful things that we believe and we celebrate and we sing about.

But we can't and we mustn't and we shouldn't lose sight of the truth of the Good Friday narrative.

The loneliness of agony and distress. The starkness of the abandonment he felt.

His friends had already run away. no one was there to defend him. Mocked humiliated exposed beaten cruelly really cruelly why?

[17 : 30] Because he was pierced for our transgressions. This happened because of my behaviour of your behaviour he was crushed for our iniquities.

The punishment that brought us peace was on him. What an astonishing thing. The peace that we have the peace that passes understanding the peace that makes no sense except with our relationship with God.

That peace he bought it. on Good Friday in the death on the cross by his wounds were healed. All that flogging all those breaks of skin and blood pouring out as he's flogged all that break of skin and blood pouring out as they shove a crown of thorns on his head all those wounds after my healing are to make me whole.

And that's a miracle. That's the miracle and the wonder of Good Friday. And we must never ever lose sight of the truth that without the miracle of Good Friday we have no Easter Sunday.

[19 : 08] Thanks be to God. Amen.