

Resurrection Sunday; the person and work of Jesus Christ

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[0 : 00] the years of being here, so I've been here for a little while now. I've always done at least a month or six weeks of Easter meditations before we even get to Easter Sunday. I've sort of laid the ground of everything that led up to the crucifixion, the death, the burial, and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. And I recognize that this year has been one of those years where this is the first Sunday, and I've done none of that, and it's Easter Sunday already. So this morning is, I'm actually going to take you through, once I find where I am in the Bible. Here we go.

Pastors feel under great pressure, you know, not to look at the index page because, you know, it's here somewhere. At least it wasn't yesterday. But no, it's, it's, I'm going to be reading from Matthew 27 and Matthew 28, and then I'm going to be sowing in 2 Corinthians 5 into the message, just to bring it all together. But if we can read together Matthew 27, verse 11 through to 26, and then we'll turn over to chapter 28. I'll give you the verses in a minute.

So Matthew chapter 27, beginning at verse 11. Now hear God's word.

Now Jesus stood before the governor, and the governor asked him, Are you the king of the Jews? And Jesus said, You have said so.

But when he was accused by the chief priests and the elders, he gave no answer. Then Pilate said to him, Do you not hear how many things they testify against you?

[2 : 02] But he gave him no answer, not even to a single charge, so that the governor was greatly amazed. Now at the feast of the governor was accustomed to release, sorry, now at the feast, the governor was accustomed to release for the crowd any one prisoner whom they wanted. And they had then a notorious prisoner called Barabbas. So when they had gathered, Pilate said to them, Whom do you want me to release for you? Barabbas, or Jesus, who is called Christ. For he knew that he was out of envy. It was out of envy that they had delivered him up. Besides, while he was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent word to him, have nothing to do with this righteous man, for I have suffered much because of him today in a dream. Now the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowd to ask for Barabbas and destroy Jesus. The governor again said to them, Which of the two do you want me to release to you? And they said, Barabbas. Pilate said to them, Then what shall I do with Jesus, who is called Christ? They all said, Let him be crucified. And he said, Why? What evil has he done? But they shouted all the more, Crucify him. So when Pilate saw that he was gaining nothing, but rather that a riot was beginning, he took water and washed his hands before the crowd, saying, I am innocent of this man's blood. See to it yourselves. And all the people answered, His blood be on us and on our children. Then he released for them Barabbas. And having scourged Jesus, delivered him to be crucified. Matthew 28 verses 1 through to 10.

So Jesus has been crucified, which we just read. He has been buried. A guard has been put at the tomb. And now in 28 verse 1.

[4 : 54] The guards trembled and became like dead men. But the angel said to the women, Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here, for he has risen.

As he said, Come, see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead. And behold, he is going before you to Galilee. There you will see him.

See, I have told you. So they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy and ran to tell his disciples. And behold, Jesus met them and said greetings. And they came up and took hold of his feet and worshipped him. Then Jesus said to them, Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee. And there they will see me. Well, may God bless the reading of his word, the hearing

of his word, and the proclamation of his word in a moment. Have your Bibles open at Matthew 27 and 28. You'll know where I am.

Now, this morning's message is straightforward enough. It's not difficult to read and understand what's happened. The focus is clearly the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. In fact, the focus is always the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

But more importantly, how the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ affects you. When Jesus rose from the dead, sits at the right hand of the Father and is Lord over all, no person can escape the Lordship of Christ. Their response to the Lordship of Christ will determine how God deals with them. But you cannot escape the Lordship of Christ.

[7:01] Christ. And so this morning, it's going to be fairly straightforward. I'm going to tell you how it happened, and then I'm going to tell you why it happened. I'm going to tell you what happened, and then I'm going to tell you what it means. Because what it means really matters. Okay?

The true definition of a biography, in comparison to an autobiography, is that when someone writes an autobiography, it's because they're still alive. But when someone writes a biography, it is because the person has died, strictly speaking. And so if we're to read this, it's better to read it as an autobiography, because he lives, rather than a biography of something that happened. Jesus lives, risen from the dead. So our attention this morning is why did it happen? What happened, and why did it happen? More importantly, why could no other person in the whole of human history complete what Jesus completed? Why did it have to be God, the Son, dying on the cross for us, in order for us to be with God? Well, very simply, there's only one person who can mediate. Now, a mediator has to bring two parties together, not one to the other person. And sometimes we view the cross as God sending His Son to bring people to Himself, which is not the case. Christ is the mediator, and a mediator has to bring two parties together. And at the cross, God is not only bringing us to Him, but Jesus Christ is bringing God to us.

And that is really important to understand, because God cannot get close to us without Jesus, and we cannot get close to God without Jesus. Jesus Christ is central. So here's the summary.

Jesus is put on trial, but Pilate finds no fault in Him at all. But Pilate is persuaded by the crowd. He's unwilling to upset the crowd any further, because he's already had trouble with these Jews in the past. He doesn't want to get on the wrong side of them. He wants to keep on the right side of them, and so he goes along with their demands. He says to them, well, what do you want me to do with Jesus? I mean, I've never seen a judge in human history. Not that I've ever sat in a courtroom for any reason, might I add. But I have never seen a judge turn to the jury or turn to the gallery and say, well, what do you want me to do with him? What do you want? But Pilate does that very thing. Well, he doesn't want to deal with Jesus, so he hands him over to the crowd in many ways.

[10:10] But Pilate knows that he's about to crucify an innocent man. Pilate knows, there is no doubt about it. It's very clear that he knows he's about to crucify an innocent man. Several times he says, I find no fault in him. Pilate's wife even had a dream telling him, have nothing to do with this innocent man. So here's the question. Why did God allow, ordain, an innocent man to die?

Well, God wouldn't do that. Well, God did do that. Exactly what God did. But it's not a man who died. It's rather the man who died. It matters. Jesus Christ was crucified, he was dead, he was buried. But then God raised him from death itself. Death could not hold him back. And that raises a second problem, because if God wanted Jesus alive, why not just keep him alive in the first place? Right? If God wanted Jesus alive, why not just keep him alive in the first place?

Why the cross? Why was it necessary? Why did God have to reconcile us to himself in that way?

Well, simply put, the reasons that God has is what we call the gospel. The gospel is God's reasoning of how an alienated person from him can be reconciled. The gospel explains how reconciliation is possible through Christ with God in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ.

God knows that you cannot be with him, and he cannot be with you without Jesus. Simply put, if we jump to the conclusion ahead of time, is this. Not a single person in here wants to meet God without belonging to Jesus. You cannot afford to meet God without belonging to Jesus. You cannot afford to meet God all by yourself. You need a mediator, and that mediator is Jesus. So here's the trial.

The trial is a bit of a mismatch of events. Pilate clearly doesn't know what to do with an innocent man. He doesn't want to crucify him. He wants to let him go, but the crowd has more pressure over Pilate than Pilate has over his own will. He sort of bends to popular opinion. And the crowd has shouted out, crucify him. Just get rid of him. Destroy him. We don't care what you do with him. We just don't want him. And Pilate doesn't know what to do with an innocent man. But Pilate also knows

that at this time, a prisoner is allowed to be released. So what better way to get an innocent man off the hook by bringing out one of the worst criminals you got in the jail? Let's bring out Barabbas, known for killing everybody, it seems. But it's interesting that he would choose Barabbas.

[13:28] I think it's more interesting that God would ordain it in such a way that it would be Barabbas that would come out. Why Barabbas? I think for this reason. Because Barabbas means son of the father.

Bar is son. Abba is father. Son of the father is what Barabbas means. It's a bit like Simon Bar-Jonah.

Simon, son of Jonah. So when Pilate brings out Jesus and he brings out Barabbas, he's basically saying to the crowd, who do you want? Do you want the son of the father, small f? Or do you want the son of the father, big f? You can have one son of the father, but which one do you want?

Son of the father, small f, who is a filthy criminal? Or son of the father, big f, who is the innocent man? You choose. You choose which son of the father you want, small f or big f? And they say, give us Barabbas and crucify him. There is no doubt whatsoever that Pilate knew that Jesus was an innocent man. Who will the crowd let go free? Well, it ain't going to be Jesus. So Pilate now has this terrible situation on his hand, terrible circumstance to find himself in. What do you do with an innocent man? I mean, what do you do with an innocent man? And several times Pilate says to the crowd in different ways, I find no wrong in him. I find no wrong in him. I find no wrong in him. Well, if you find no wrong in him, let him go. But he doesn't. Just hands him over to the crowd. And the crowd say, give us Barabbas and crucify him. There is no doubt that Pilate knew he was crucifying an innocent man.

I think a striking thing here is Pilate's wife. You know, out of nowhere, she has this dream. Well, not out of nowhere. God clearly gave it to her. And she goes to her husband saying, have nothing to do with this? I've suffered terribly in this dream. And it's caused me so much turmoil inside. I've had to come to you in the middle of a courtroom session and tell you to have nothing to do with this innocent man. John, I don't read a lot of poetry, but every now and then I dip and dive. And there's a few people I like. And, you know, Myers and Macefield.

[16:39] Myers, St. Paul is probably one of the best ones. You know, let no man think that sudden in a minute all is accomplished and the work is done. But with thine earliest dawn, thou should begin it scarce, where it ended in the setting sun. Nothing is completed in a day.

Macefield. Macefield has a wonderful poem that captures Good Friday. And it captures the moment where Pilate's wife, where Pilate's wife is speaking to him. And this is what it says.

Pilate is now responding to his wife in the poetry, not in scripture, but in poetry. This is how Macefield understands it. Now listen, wife. Whatever dream befalls, never again send word to me in court to interrupt a case. The Jews made sport of what you dreamed and what you bade me fear about this Jesus man. The law is clear. I must apply them. Ask nothing more than the proved truth. Pilate is interesting, isn't it, that in verse 24 of chapter 27, Pilate, seeing that he was getting nowhere with the crowd at all, took a bowl of water and washed his hands of Jesus.

Pilate is, just took a bowl of water and washed his hands before the crowd, as if to say, I am innocent of this man's blood. I can imagine it myself, that Pilate's standing there thinking to himself, it'll be okay. It'll be all over and forgotten within a week.

[18:32] It's all right. It's big news today, but give it a week. It'll be gone. I grew up having to read and pray out of the prayer book, common book of prayer, say the creeds and get them right, which was not always easy. This is what one of them says. I believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, his only begotten son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried. All over and forgotten within a week? I don't think so.

Yesterday's news? I don't think so. And here we are over 2,000 years later, still remembering what happened. But I think the striking thing to all of this is that there was another man who washed his hands, and not just his hands, but his disciples' feet. Jesus, less than 24 hours earlier, also took a bowl of water, took off his outer garment, got down on his knees, got his disciples' feet, and washed them.

And Peter's saying, no, Lord, no. And Jesus says to Peter, if I do not do this, symbolizing the cross, if I do not do this, you can have no part of me. And Jesus was showing in the feet washing what he was just about to do on the cross, that only the cross can make us close and clean with God.

So here you have Pilate washing his hands of an innocent man, yet crucifying him. And Jesus bowing his knee to sinners to wash their feet. The King of glory. Then why the cross? Why did all of this have to happen? Why was the cross so necessary? Well, as Jesus said in the feet washing, you can have no part of me unless I do this to you, unless I do this for you. So here's the meaning of everything that we've just heard. This is the meaning. This is the explanation. [21 : 17] Jesus must die on the cross because reconciliation with God is an act of mediation. Two parties need to be brought together, not just one to the other person. Two people need to be brought together.

God needs to be brought close to us, and we need to be brought close to God, because there is something that separates God from us, not just us from God. Jesus is the mediator, which means that he is the one who stands between us and God, bringing both of us together. It is the only way that we can be close and clean with God. Why? Very simple. Sin gets in the way. Our sin offends God, which means that it will not let us get close to God. We cannot get close to God without Jesus because our sin gets in the way.

Why can't God get close to us without Jesus? Well, for the same reason. God cannot get close to us because God, when he comes into contact with sin, must judge it, and if we are sinful, we must be judged.

So there's a problem. Our sin means we can't get close to God, and our sin means that God can't get close to us without judging us. Now you see the cross. Now you begin to see a mediator, one who stands in the middle of both parties, understanding that both need a solution, that God needs a solution so as not to take his wrath and judgment out on sinful people. And we need a solution to be able to come to God and not receive judgment but forgiveness. And there's only one place where that can happen. We cannot get close to God without Jesus, without God judging us. And God cannot get close to us without Jesus to us without Jesus without him judging us. The judgment of sin is the problem.

So this is how it happened. 2 Corinthians 5, 21. For our sake, he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. Simply put, God will not, God cannot judge an innocent man. Okay? God will not, God cannot judge an innocent man. But as we have seen, Jesus is innocent, but not anymore. At the cross, Jesus Christ, the only one who could, takes our sin upon himself. And in exchange for that sin, he gives us his righteousness. And God doesn't judge us because he cannot judge an innocent person.

[24 : 13] If we have been given the righteousness of Christ, the reason we escape the judgment of God is because God cannot judge an innocent person. Because God, the Son, has exchanged his righteousness for our sin.

And the reason, the reason why God judges his Son is because his Son is no longer righteous in that sense, but has taken our sin upon himself. And God must judge sin, so he must judge his Son. And that's the great exchange. That's how both parties can be brought together at the cross. Because God must be judged. Just. He can't say, oh, let it go. Rub it under the carpet. Who cares? Gone and forgotten. That's an unjust person acting unjustly. And God is just. And the only way the just judge can judge justly is by exchanging the righteousness of Christ for our sin and judging him in our place. And that is exactly what happened. At the cross, you see Christ overcoming two obstacles, our sin, our sin, and God's judgment upon our sin. And Jesus takes care of both. By giving us his righteousness and by taking our judgment.

When Jesus was in the garden, he prayed. If it is possible, if this can happen any other way, if man can be reconciled to God any other way, then can it be so? And God didn't answer.

[26 : 01] And God didn't answer because the answer was clear. It cannot happen any other way. So here's the exhortation. Jesus is both your way to God and your way to escape judgment.

Those who turn to Jesus in repentance, belief, for the forgiveness of sins, will not experience judgment, but will only experience grace, forgiveness, and assurance. Jesus is judged in our place. Now this means that we can now live in the assurance of sins forgiven. This means that on the last day, when I stand and you stand before God, I know exactly what I'm going to hear.

When I have to stand before the judgment seat of God, and I get to hear those words from God, I have the verdict on the last day today, so I know what I'm going to hear, and so do you.

It is not guilty in Christ Jesus. For God cannot judge innocent men, women, boys, and girls.

[27 : 20] And at the cross, you were not just forgiven, but you were made innocent. innocent, innocent before God. Well, how can I know that I'm saved?

How can I know that I'm saved? You may be sat there saying, well, how can I know that I'm saved? How can I know that the death of Jesus Christ was for me? How can I know that the life of Jesus Christ was for me?

How can I know that the resurrection of Jesus Christ was for me? How can I know? Very simple. Because God said so. What more do you want?

Because God said so. In faith, trusting the promises of God, you are reconciled to him.

You go from hearing the truth to knowing it. You go from hearing the truth to experiencing the reconciliation that can only come by faith in the promise and work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

[28 : 34] This is what it says. If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you are saved.

Say it again. If you confess with your mouth, that means say it. And mean it. And believe in your heart that God raised him, Jesus Christ, the Lord and Savior, from the dead, you will be saved. And the reason you will be saved is because God said so. The reason you will be saved is because God is saying, this is my work.

The reason you will be saved is not because you have done something, but because God has said, this is the way that it is. God is not wanting something from you.

He wants you. Okay? He is not wanting something from you. He wants you. And the way he gets you is by giving you his son in this way.

[29 : 50] Let me finish with this. Several years ago, I mean, this is back in the day, in London, as you come out the subway and the underground and you come out onto the main street, you can come across these big boards, these advertisements.

And on one of those boards back in the day, back in the 80s, there was Jesus Christ crucified. His arms wide out, nail-pierced hands, crown of thorns, sign above his head.

With a caption underneath, he could have just folded his arms. And yet, on the cross, we hear these words.

That Jesus says, My God, my God, why have thou forsaken me? And you are the reason why.

You are the reason why. The reason why Christ was forsaken is so that you could be accepted. Sin must be rejected.

[31 : 10] The bearer of sin must be forsaken. And the righteous are welcomed in. He could have just folded his arms, but he didn't.

He opened them up to the world. So, in short, this morning, confess your sin.

Believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead and you will be saved. And God will hear you. God will hear your prayer of confession.

Make it. Amen. Amen.