

Good Friday: The King's Enthronement

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Date: 07 April 2023

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[0 : 00] As we reflect on the crucifixion of our precious Lord Jesus Christ, we will continue to read John's account of this historic event in John 19, 16 to 37.

As we are a needy, unspiritual people without the help of God, let's bow our heads in prayer and plea for his gracious mercy. Heavenly Father, we ask that though we are so undeserving, won't you meet us here in this place?

Address us through your word. Speak to us. God, help us to see with full eyes of faith the truth that you loved us so much that you sent your one and only son to die a death that he did not deserve so that we would have life, that he, though being rich, became poor so that in his poverty that we would have life, that we would have abundant life, that we would be rich.

God, speak to us. Let not this story wash over us in numbness, if we've heard it a thousand times, but help us to understand, to see the weight, the cost, so we'd see how much you love us.

I pray all these things in your heavenly son's name. Amen. Please stand, if you are able, for the reading of God's infallible word.

[1 : 55] So they took Jesus, and he went out, bearing his own cross to the place called the Place of the Skull, which in Aramaic is called Golgotha.

There they crucified him, and with him two others, one on either side, and Jesus between them. Pilate also wrote an inscription, and put it on the cross.

It read, Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews. Many of the Jews read this inscription for the place where Jesus was crucified, was near the city, and it was written in Aramaic, in Latin, and in Greek. So the chief priest said to the Jews, so the chief priest of the Jews said to Pilate, do not write the King of the Jews, but rather, this man said, I am King of the Jews.

Pilate answered, what I have written, I have written. When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they took his garments and divided them into four parts, one part for each soldier, also his tunic.

[3 : 12] But the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom. So they said to one another, let us not tear it, but cast lots for it, to see whose it shall be.

This was to fulfill the scripture, which says, they divided my garments among them, and for my clothing, they cast lots. So the soldiers did these things.

But standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, woman, behold your son.

Then he said to the disciple, behold your mother. And from that hour, the disciple took her to his own home. After this, Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said, to fulfill the scripture, I thirst. A jar full of sour wine stood there, so they put a sponge full of the sour wine on a hyssop branch and held it to his mouth. When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, it is finished.

[4 : 32] And he bowed his head and gave up his spirit. Since it was the day of preparation, and so that the bodies would not remain on the cross on the Sabbath, for that Sabbath was a high day, the Jews asked Pilate that their legs might be broken and that they might be taken away.

So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first and of the other who had been crucified with him. But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. but one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear and at once there came out blood and water. He who saw it has borne witness.

His testimony is true and he knows that he is telling the truth that you also may believe. For these things took place that the scripture might be fulfilled.

Not one of his bones will be broken. And again, another scripture says they will look on him whom they have pierced. This is God's holy and authoritative word.

[5 : 39] Please be seated. One of the most comforting promises in all of scripture that has encouraged saints throughout history has to be from Romans 8, 28.

It goes like this. We know that for those who love God, all things work together for good. for those who are called according to his purpose.

There's so much strength and fortitude that we can draw from this promise because when we are enduring the most horrendous evil, when we're going through the toughest seasons of pain and suffering, it fortifies our faith to know that this is going all according to plan.

when life feels out of control, we can have faith that instead it's all working out for good and the Father's good plan for us.

But if we're honest, it's easy to let doubt creep up and settle in. We can start to wonder, is this really for good?

[6 : 54] is God still in control? Although we know today how Jesus' story ends in resurrection and in triumph, just put yourself in the shoes and the witnesses of Jesus' death this Good Friday.

It wouldn't be hard to let those same doubts creep in as you see Jesus, your King, the one you left everything to go follow, to see Him suffering, humiliated, struggling on the cross.

It in fact would have been an insult to His followers if they heard that. We called it a Good Friday.

However, tonight, we can take heart because John does not neglect us to remind us who is in charge, who is in control.

Through Old Testament reference after reference, John makes it clear to us today that every detail, every character, every action is going exactly as the Father intended.

So much so that despite all His suffering, when Jesus is lifted up on the cross, supported on His four wounds, when He's gasping for air, John shows us that this instead is Jesus' enthronement, the inauguration of His glorious kingship.

[8 : 26] And this account of Jesus' death was written back then and is preached to you today so that you may believe, you may believe in this crucified King and be delivered from your sins.

So today, we will see how Jesus is enthroned as King in verses 16-24, how He acts as King, what His first decree is as King in verses 25-27, and how He dies as our King in verses 28-37.

So looking to our passage tonight, we read earlier in John 19 that despite Pilate's attempts to spare Jesus the death penalty, the chief priests demand Pilate to crucify Jesus, and in doing so, they vehemently deny Jesus as their King, and they betray really what all their scriptures pointed to, who all the faithful saints and the prophets have been waiting for.

they instead bastardize what it means to be a Hebrew by claiming Caesar as their King. Out of a fear and a desire to please the Jews, then, Pilate obliges by handing Jesus over to be crucified.

Many of you need not an introduction to the horrors of Roman crucifixion. You're aware that it was a punishment so severe that it was typically reserved only for slaves and rebels, and that no Roman citizen could be crucified.

[10 : 02] As we will see, the ultimate goal was to combine emotional and mental shame with physical anguish as the victim hung in the air, slowly left to die.

It starts with a gruesome flogging of the victim in which he is scourged with a whip that had knotted sharp pieces of metal and bone into it.

And you can only imagine what kind of damage that it would do to someone's flesh. It wasn't uncommon for the victims of the Roman scourge then to die from ensuing blood loss and shock.

So it's not hard to see then that as he died, Jesus' appearance was so marred beyond human semblance and his form beyond that of the children of mankind just as the prophet Isaiah predicted in chapter 52, verse 14.

The Roman guards then forced Jesus to carry his crossbar, the horizontal piece to the cross, outside of the city to Golgotha. While John doesn't include an explicit reference to this passage, many astute biblical scholars have made this connection from this short verse to Genesis 22 where God tests Abraham to sacrifice his beloved son Isaac.

[11 : 26] So obedient Abraham rises up early, loads the wood for the offering on his miracle child Isaac and leads the two of them to Mount Moriah.

As he binds Isaac and is about to slaughter him, obeying God's command for him in faith. An angel calls to stop him and God provides.

God provides a sacrificial ram instead of Isaac. So Abraham declares and believes that God will always be faithful to provide.

And in this short verse, we see the ultimate fulfillment of that promise of provision all the way back to Abraham to send his promised son as a sacrificial ram to die for our sins.

Jesus carries his cross to the designated location of Golgotha, which we can infer was a public area as we read earlier in verse 20 that many walked past this location.

[12 : 33] It's there where they nailed Jesus' hands or wrists to the crossbar, lifted him up to be pinned to the vertical post by driving nails through his feet. And many of you are well aware that victims of crucifixion didn't die by the nail wounds, but instead by asphyxiation, by suffocation.

The way they hung prevented them from breathing normally. So with their backs all torn up, they were forced to struggle themselves up against the wood on their nail wounds to grasp for air than to let themselves down, only to just repeat this for hours on end.

And throughout this whole event, you have to ask, where are Jesus' 11 disciples? Where are the ones who declared that they would never leave him and that they were able to drink the cup of wrath that Jesus was destined to drink?

In Matthew 20, John and James declare that they want to sit at Jesus' right and left hand and they believe themselves to be worthy of such an honor.

But as Sean observed last year, and it's worth mentioning again, it's not John or James who are crucified at the right or left hand of Jesus, but it's criminals, rebels, insurrectionists, completely alone.

[14 : 04] Jesus is utterly forsaken by those who claimed they would follow him until the very end. And while the Romans likely meant to shame Jesus by numbering among the transgressors, the father, he used this for his purposes.

He was the foretold suffering servant in Isaiah 53 who poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors, yet bore the sins of many and made intercession for the transgressors.

Yet another Old Testament prophecy fulfilled. We see then in verses 19 to 21 how Pilate plays right into the father's plan by enthroning Jesus as king.

It was custom back then to fasten to the cross a description of the crime that the victim had committed. So Pilate chooses to inscribe this, Jesus of Nazareth, the king of the Jews.

And to publicize his crime and to make it even more intelligible to all peoples, Pilate writes this in Aramaic, in Latin, and in Greek. To no surprise then the chief priests protest this sign and demand Pilate to change it to say that Jesus isn't their king but that Jesus was given the death penalty for claiming to be their king.

[15 : 35] This is a fine example of irony that John tends to use throughout his gospel that the faithless Gentile Roman ruler, he's the one that's declaring Jesus as king but God's own chosen people who have claimed God to be their king in times past, they're the ones to abandon and reject Jesus.

Truly, truly, he was abandoned not just by his disciples but by his entire people. But it's not that the gospel writers depict Pilate as having saving faith.

likely it's instead that Pilate's title for Jesus and his refusal to change it was more to mock the Jews. He was mocking their powerless status under Rome by crowning a victim of crucifixion as their king. But little does he know that in the end it's not himself or Rome who has the power but it's God who's orchestrating every detail of this story.

In this God the Father does honor his son. In fact, Jesus' cross is the means of his exaltation and the very manner of his glorification.

[16 : 54] God transforms the cross, one of the most horrific of torture devices throughout history, to be Jesus' throne where he reigns on from on high.

Jesus is our great high priest who is also the sacrificial victim. He is the conquering king who is also the suffering servant.

Still, that doesn't mitigate the humiliation Jesus had to endure on his throne. We read in verses 23 to 25 that they stripped Jesus completely naked by hanging him on the cross again to maximize the shame felt by the victims.

It's like those hung on the cross were forced to expose to all the public world the atrociousness of their actions and deeds but also the imperfections and the weaknesses, the blemishes of their human bodies.

There was no place to hide, no thing you could hide while on the cross. And unlike lying, rebellious, self-seeking Adam and Eve, God does not clothe them with garments of skins.

[18:15] Jesus was intentionally left naked and exposed. And by taking the clothes on his back, the Roman soldiers literally stripped Jesus of every last earthly possession he owned.

With his clothing per custom, the four Roman soldiers decided to divide it amongst themselves. They likely had an easier time dividing amongst themselves Jesus' outer garment, his belt, his sandal, and head covering.

Four things for four people. But with Jesus' seamless inner tunic, they greedily thought, what a waste to split it up. Let's just cast lots to see who would win it.

And why does John include this seemingly off-topic detail to again make the point that this was all fulfilling scripture, this time from Psalm 22, 18.

In fact, when you read the rest of that psalm, you clearly see that it was all about Jesus. For he endorsed the full experience of spiritual forsakenness depicted in that psalm.

[19:24] from a plan set ages and ages ago, this was going all according to the Father's plan. With Jesus now on his throne, we witness his first decree as king, and it's one that just displays how lovely he is.

We read in verse 25 that despite no mention of some of Jesus' closest disciples like Peter and James, John does mention that there are likely four women nearby, which include Jesus' mother. To you mothers here, can you pause and imagine what Mary saw that faithful day? Her beloved son, who never wronged her and obeyed her, honored her without a fault?

To the degree that she couldn't even think of one thing that he did wrong against her? To see this gentle and lowly son with whom she knew he would never even break a bruised reed?

To die a death of evil criminals? Can you imagine just her horror? In recent years, we as a nation have witnessed terrible and wicked murders by the hands of policemen who are meant to uphold justice.

[21:05] And with the widespread use of body cameras, we have literally seen the moments before their death. Two of these men's murders are seared into my mind.

The harrowing videos of the deaths of Mr. George Floyd back in 2020 and Mr. Tyree Nichols just a few months ago. In those videos, do you know who they were calling out for?

Who they're calling out for right before they were killed? They're calling for their mothers. they're crying for their moms to come save them.

And so in verse 26, when Jesus directs his attention to his mother and to the disciple whom he loved, John himself, while he's enduring one of the most excruciating deaths that a man could experience, you might have every reason to expect that Jesus, the man, that he too would cry for his mother to come rescue him, to ease his pain and suffering even just a little.

But no, what Jesus is concerned with is his mother's future livelihood. What? He's concerned for her.

[22:31] So he directs John to take care of his widowed mother, knowing that in their society she had to depend on others for her livelihood. The king, the suffering king, he cared for her.

Isn't that just incredible? Do you see just how lovely and compassionate of a king we serve?

Brothers and sisters, how intentional Jesus is in what he chooses to say.

when he could have easily defended himself during his earlier trials, the Lamb of God fell silent.

When he could have called down a legion of angels to come deliver him from the cross, the King of Kings fell silent.

But when he wanted to make sure that his mom would be okay, he opened his mouth and spoke. today, he has the same kind of compassion towards you, friend.

He is lovingly concerned with your physical and spiritual well-being. So to you struggling friends, suffering ones, be encouraged this Good Friday that while you walk through the valley of shadow and death, while you may not have all the answers for all the trials that you are enduring, know that you are never alone.

[24:01] It is a lie from Satan to believe you are alone. Jesus, too, has experienced firsthand injustice, temptation, despair, rejection, gossip, shame, loneliness, poverty, bereavement, and torture.

He is able to sympathize with you. Jesus is a far better savior than we often think him to be. Put your faith in this gentle king.

For it is this king who has given the ultimate price in verses 28 to 30. I've been intentionally careful thus far to state that this has been going according to God the Father's plan.

The historical doctrine of the Trinity upholds that our one God is three equal and distinct but not divided persons. Each have distinct roles appropriate to themselves, so the Father originates and the Son accomplishes.

And in our passage, we distinctly observe that while it's in the Father's plan, the Son is in complete union with the Father. Jesus knew that everything that he was sent out to do was now finished and his death was imminent.

[25 : 23] So he says, I thirst specifically to fulfill scripture. This makes it abundantly clear Jesus is willingly and actively fulfilling all of the Father's plan for him to die a death for all sinners.

And these two words, I thirst, are really loaded. If there were any doubt that Jesus, though fully God, was also fully man, these two words put those doubts to rest.

Charles Spurgeon, pastor from the 1800, quotes, Jesus was proved to be really man because he suffered the pains which belonged to manhood. Angels cannot suffer thirst.

A phantom, as some have called him, could not suffer in this fashion. But Jesus really suffered not only the more refined pains of delicate and sensitive minds, but the rougher and commoner pains of flesh and blood.

Observe Christ's great condescension for you. Remember earlier, Jesus offered living water, which those who partook of it would never thirst again.

[26 : 39] This same Christ is now thirsty. The great voluntary reversal of the servant king. It's because Jesus says he thirsts, the Roman soldiers get a sponge damp with sour wine to lead Jesus' lips.

This most likely and most directly fulfills Psalm 69 21 from tonight's reading, which reads from verse 20, reproaches have broken my heart so that I am in despair.

I looked for pity, but there was none, and for comforters, but I found none. They gave me poison for food, and for my thirst, they gave me sour wine to drink.

Miserable comforters, the lot of you. Just look out how men have treated the God incarnate from his birth to his death. When Jesus was born, men could not make room for him.

A king murdered thousands of boys at the chance of killing him too. Now Jesus suffers the thirst of divine judgment.

[27 : 51] Man has no soothing cup of water, but shoves a vinegar filled sponge to his bleeding mouth. This drink is not to be confused with the wine mixed with myrrh that was offered to Jesus on his way to the cross recorded in some of the synoptic gospels.

That sedative drink would have numbed some of the pain that Jesus experienced. But he rejected that outrightly, resolving to drink full the cup of wrath from his heavenly father.

Moreover, we've been speaking of Jesus' physical suffering, but these two words give insight to the spiritual dimension of Jesus' suffering on the cross. In Luke 16, Jesus spoke earlier of a parable of the rich man and Lazarus.

The rich man who was greedy and selfish and ungodly, he went to the depths of hell, and in his unquenchable thirst, he begs Lazarus in heaven for just one cool drop of water for his tongue.

So Jesus, enduring our hell, experienced the same fiery thirst so that we would be saved from the terrible wrath that you and I deserved.

[29 : 10] Again, here's Spurgeon, if Jesus had not thirsted, every one of us would have thirsted forever afar from God. With an impassable gulf between us and heaven, our sinful tongues blistered by the fever of passion must have burned forever had not his tongue been tormented with thirst in our stead.

Spurgeon and the rest of the Bible make it plainly clear that Jesus, though he did not know sin, became sin, was a substitute on our behalf to be the propitiation for our sins.

Our very sins were imputed onto Christ. For before, when the Father saw Jesus, he saw the Son with whom he is well pleased with for all eternity.

But now, when the Father saw Jesus, he saw sin. So he, being a holy God, had to turn his face away.

Not only was Jesus abandoned by his people, his disciples, but now his heavenly Father. Truly, truly, the incredible physical suffering was nothing compared to the spiritual experience of cosmic abandonment.

[30 : 34] We can confidently say that no one on earth has experienced or understood the depths of loneliness like Jesus as he hung on the cross.

as Jesus received the vinegary drink, he said, it is finished and gives up his spirit.

Not that anyone took it from him, but that Jesus voluntarily gives up his spirit. Jesus proclaimed that he has triumphantly and faithfully completed the work that he was sent out to do.

He died with a cry of a victor, one who has finished his rescue mission. And in this cry, all the saints hear the declaration of his finished work for our salvation, for all eternity.

Christian, hear Jesus' victory cry. I have completed the work completely and perfectly. But so often we live as if Jesus' last words were, work harder, do better, add to my work.

[31 : 49] Instead, Christian, trust not your experience or your abilities to save yourself, but without fearing punishment for our sins anymore, rest, rest, rest in the perfect work of Jesus for your salvation, for it is finished.

There is no more for heaven now to give. And his suffering and death was not a hoax. He really did die.

As we read in our last verses, a final validation of Jesus' death. According to Jewish law, it would be a desecration to the land if they left cadavers overnight hung on the cross.

They instead were to bury the bodies that same day. Because it was the day of preparation, the day before Sabbath, or Friday, hence Good Friday, and especially because this Sabbath was a particularly special one, a high day, the chief priests insisted on expediting their executions.

As a side note, isn't this just soaked with sour irony that the Jewish leaders had just killed their own true king, but they wanted to get this correctly?

[33 : 08] So per Pilate's command, the soldiers broke the legs of the two men to the right and to the left of Jesus. The heavy mallet they would have used would have not only caused extreme pain or shock, but it would have prevented the victims from using their leg muscles to push up to gasp for air.

With their weaker arm muscles giving out, they would have suffocated to death. When they came to Jesus, they found out that Jesus had already died, so they saw no need to break his legs.

Instead, one soldier pierced Jesus' side with a spear to fully confirm for himself and to us that he died. He really did die, and out came both blood and water.

And we know and believe that it is by this poured out water and blood, Christ's bride, the church, is washed clean from all her crimson stains.

Therefore, it is as the hymn of old sings, rock of ages cleft for me, let me hide myself in thee. Let the water and the blood from thy wounded side which flowed.

[34 : 23] Be of sin the double cure, safe from wrath, and make me pure. Once more, John lays out clearly how this fulfilled prophecies of old.

First being that Jesus' bones would not be broken, found either in Exodus 12, 46, or Numbers 9, 12. And the second being that they will look on him whom they have pierced, found in Zechariah 12, 10. Don't you see, friends, that the evidence of the father's sovereignty is throughout this entire account? And why?

Why does John include all these evidences of God's plan? We find the answer in verse 35. It's so that you may believe. Yes, you.

John and God wrote this account of Jesus' death so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

[35 : 31] For this is the truth you must believe. It is a historical fact that Christ Jesus, God incarnate, walked this earth, died this gruesome death, and as we'll soon hear, resurrected on the third day.

Only by believing and trusting in Jesus' death for the forgiveness of your sins can you have life.

Brothers and sisters, this is the only way to an abundant life.

What that means is that your sin, your rebelliousness, your lust, your anger, your selfishness, your sin, is the greatest problem that you have in your life.

It's not that you need a job. It's not that you're not married yet. It's not that you're sick with chronic illness. The greatest problem in your life is that you have sinned against the holy God, and without the penal substitution of his son, the Lamb of God, the God's wrath is directed right at you.

But God so loved the world that he gave his only son that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life.

[37 : 00] If you don't let believe, ponder this historical account this Good Friday, and please don't delay to start to ask the real questions.

Is this account historically true? Who is Jesus? Did he really die for me? Can God really forgive me? If you do believe, fight to shake off the numbness of hearing the story times over.

Ponder the weight of Jesus' sacrifice. Ruminant on how much it costs to buy you and the love demonstrated to save you.

Finally, finally, see in faith what the gospel of Jesus Christ is. It is as Tim Keller said, the gospel is this, we are more sinful and flawed in ourselves than we ever dared believe.

Yet, at the very same time, we are more loved and accepted in Jesus Christ than we ever dared hope. Let's pray. God, we again ask humbly knowing that we do not deserve such mercy, such kindness.

[38 : 29] give us the faith to see how much it costs to send your one and only son.

Help us to see the sacrifice, the great voluntary reversal of the servant king to come die for us and help us to claim this abundant life for ourselves.

Help us to see the greatest problem is our sin, but you've made a way. There was a chasm, there was no way before, but you've made a way.

Help us to take that to heart, to trust in you, Jesus, for all our soul, all our life, and for the forgiveness of our sins.

Be honored and glorified. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Amen.