

That You May Believe in the Cross, Part 5

Various Scriptures

Pastor Jeremy Cagle, December 2, 2018

Turn in your Bibles to the Gospel of John. And as you're doing that, by way of introduction, it's been said that people often die the way they lived. They often go out of this world the way that they lived in it. Some have a deathbed confession at the last minute. Some people repent and believe like the thief on the cross right before they die, but that's pretty rare. For most people, they die in the same state that they lived in.

Just to give you a few examples of this, to get your mind around our subject for today, in history, Voltaire was a French philosopher from the 1700's who hated the Christian faith. He absolutely abhorred Christianity. He said it is the most infamous superstition ever created by stupid men. Pretty strong words, right? It's pretty harsh. And he said that the Christian faith would disappear shortly after his lifetime. The ironic thing about that is after Voltaire died, a Bible Society bought his house and printed Bibles from his house. But at his death, interestingly enough, Voltaire said this, he said (one of his dying words), "I'm abandoned by God and man and would give all I own for another six months to live." It's a chilling thought, isn't it? He said, "I've rejected the Christian faith. I'm throwing it away, but now I have nothing left. God has left me, man has left me, and I'm dying all alone."

Another example of this, we could look at the life of Sigmund Freud, the founder of the Modern Psychology Movement. He lived a life very similar to Voltaire because he despised Christianity and religion as well. As a professing atheist, Sigmund Freud said, "Religious doctrines are all illusions and no one can be compelled to consider any of them true." In other words, "This is all just made up. There is no God, there is no soul. There is no heaven and hell. It's just a figment of your imagination." But on his deathbed, Sigmund Freud, as he was preparing to die by a physician assisted suicide, he kept repeating these words in German, *das ist absurd, das ist absurd*, which means "This is absurd". He couldn't understand what was happening to him; why he had to suffer like this, why his life had to end. He rejected God in this life but when it came time to die, Sigmund Freud realized he had nothing left either.

We could look at other examples of this, but the point is that people die the way they live. They go out of this world the same way they were in it. Which is important for what we're talking about this morning. Because this morning, we're going to talk about the death of what should be considered the most important Man who ever lived, the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus died the way He lived. He ended His life the way that He lived it. And that's what I want to talk to you about this morning.

If you're joining us for the first time today, we're in the middle of a series called the "That You May Believe" series. Because John says that he wrote this book so that you may believe. At the end of the Gospel, John 20:30-31 says, "Therefore many other signs Jesus performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in

His name.” John says, “That’s why I wrote this book. That’s why it’s in the Bible, so that you may believe and be saved.

As we’ve talked about this these past couple of weeks, one thing John says that you have to believe in is the death of Jesus Christ. It’s the cross. That’s what gets you into heaven. There’s 21 chapters in the Gospel of John. It’s a long book. There’s 15,000 words in it. And half of the book, half of those words, nine chapters is devoted entirely to the cross. And John could have written about anything in Jesus’ life, and he focused on this because that’s what saves you.

If you want to look at this in John chapter 19, this is just a passage I want to read to you in John 19:16-18. Richard just read some of this a moment ago. But in John 19:16-18 it says this, it says,

16 So he then handed Jesus over to them to be crucified. 17 And they took Jesus, therefore, and He went out, bearing His own cross, to the place called the Place of the Skull, which is called in Hebrew, Golgotha. 18 And there they crucified Him.

If you notice, as you read that, the word “crucified” is repeated twice there for effect. John says, “They crucified Him. Can you believe this? They really crucified Him. Of all the things to do to the Son of God, of all the things to do to the Messiah, they nailed Him to a cross.” He says, “What a horrible thing to do.”

John goes on to tell you how certain people responded to that, which we talked about last time. About how the soldiers and Jesus’ friends and the undertakers who buried Him, how they responded to this. And in the midst of all that, he gives you some of Jesus’ final words. He tells you what Jesus said as He was dying. If you look down in verses 28 through 29, it says,

28 After this, Jesus, knowing that all things had already been accomplished, to fulfill the Scripture, said, “I am thirsty.” 29 A jar full of sour wine was standing there; so they put a sponge full of the sour wine upon a branch of hyssop and brought it up to His mouth. 30 And therefore when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, “It is finished!” And He bowed His head and gave up His spirit.

Those are some of the final words of Jesus on the cross. If you notice, John just has a few of them. He has another one up there in verse 26 through 27. So, John has three final words of Christ on the cross, but there were more than that. As I told you last time, there are four Gospels, four accounts of the life of Jesus Christ. And the other Gospels say that there’s more that Jesus said as He died. Way more than that. Nobody remembered everything that Jesus did, nobody got it all down. Some remembered one thing, some remembered another. But when you put them altogether, if you notice in your bulletin, there are seven things Jesus said from the cross. If you guys pull out this handout, you can kind of follow along as we go through this. But there are several final words that Jesus said on the cross.

If you were an eyewitness to the cross, or if you were talking to an eye witness of that, you would be talking to someone about a horrific event, right? And there’s no way they would remember everything that was said. They wouldn’t have the mental capacity to do that. And so, the different Gospel authors remembered different things. What I want to do this morning, is go

through this list with you. I want to go back and forth in the Gospels so you can see what was said from the different perspectives of the author.

So far, we've talked about the physical side of the cross and how horrible it was, but I think we understand that Jesus died for spiritual reasons, right? His death was for a spiritual cause, the forgiveness of sins. Which means that the spiritual side of this had to have been worse than the physical side. Does that make sense? The spiritual side had to be more intensive. But the problem is, we can't look into His soul to see what was going on spiritually. We don't have the ability to do that. But what we can do is study His words. We can open up the Bible and see what the Son of God said as He was dying. And that gives us some picture of what was going on, on the spiritual end of things.

The Bible says, "Jesus was the truth," which means He always spoke the truth, even on the cross. And it says that "He was the Word made flesh," which means He spoke the right words even on the cross. And what I want to do this morning, is walk through what He said with you. And I'm going to dive right into this. We usually have a longer introduction, but there're seven of these things. I was sweating this whole week trying to figure out how am I going to have seven points. I usually have three. But we're going to just jump right on in. So, if you're taking notes this morning, there are seven final words Jesus said from the cross. They're all there in your bulletin, but you're welcome to write them down as we go through as well - seven final words that our Lord said as He died. As you're going to see, they're about as different from Voltaire and Sigmund Freud as you could be. They really don't have anything in common. We're going to look at these in order, so you can see it as it happens, which means we're going to be flipping back and forth quite a bit in your Bibles. But I want you to see the consecutive order of how this plays out.

With that said, the first final word Jesus said is this, He gave a prayer for forgiveness. This is how He started it all out. This is where it begins. It began with a prayer of forgiveness. And if you want to keep your finger in John and turn with me to the Gospel of Luke, this is seen in Luke chapter 23. If you think about it, it's amazing that the first thing Jesus said on the cross was a note about forgiveness. It's amazing that it was even on His mind. Because I don't know about you, but if all this happened to me, this would be the last thing on my mind, not the first, right? I mean, if I went through what He went through, I would not be thinking about that. Because if you remember from the past couple of weeks, at this point in the story, Jesus has been betrayed and arrested and put on trial. And at His trial, the leaders of the Jews, the holy men of Israel (not the unholy), the holy men hit Him over and over and over again. They beat Him to a pulp, and then they took Him to Pilate, the governor of Rome, and then Pilate did it all over again. Even though he said, "This is an innocent man," even though he said Jesus had done nothing wrong, Pilate flogged Him and then handed Him over to be crucified. And what does Jesus say in response to that? I mean, what's the first thing out of His mouth? If you look in Luke 23:33-34, it tells us what He says right off the bat. Verse 33, it says, "When they came to the place called The Skull, there they crucified Him and the criminals, one on the right and the other on the left. But Jesus was saying, 'Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they're doing.'"

Just a couple of things to point out here. For one, this would have occurred right away because verse 34 says that as soon as He said this, the soldiers cast lots (didn't read all that to you). It says, "And they cast lots, dividing up His garments among themselves."

I told you last time people were crucified naked to embarrass them back then. And their clothes were given to the soldiers as a payment. It's pretty a gruesome business, especially if you consider the type of beating that Jesus went through. You wouldn't want clothes like that after someone had died. But clothes were expensive back then. They were handmade. And as part of your payment for killing a man, they gave you His clothes and you would go and sell them. The way it would work is that they would take your clothes off, nail you to a cross on the ground, the horizontal beam. And then they would raise you up and tie you to the vertical beam that was in the ground, and they would divide up your clothes on the ground while you watched.

The first thing out of Jesus' mouth as all of this is happening, is right here. "Father, forgive them for they do not know what they're doing." That's amazing, isn't it? I don't know anyone who's died like this. He starts off by asking the Lord to forgive them. "Show them mercy. Don't show Me mercy, show them mercy. Don't help Me out, help these people out."

And then He goes on. He says, why that He's praying this way, He says, "For they do not know what they're doing." Some of your translations say, "For they know not what they do," which is a good translation of this. I like this one here because it shows the ongoing nature of what he's doing here. In the Greek, this is a continuous thing. He says, "They don't know what they keep doing," is the idea. "They don't know what they're doing over and over and over again. They don't know what this means, they don't know who I am. They don't know why I am here and they don't know what I'm dying for. They're completely in the dark." Jesus says, "I'm dying for them, if they would just believe it. I'm saving them, if they would just repent. So, Father, forgive them for they know not what they're doing."

This doesn't mean God will forgive them, because many of these men won't believe in Him. And this doesn't mean they're innocent, because they're not. God will hold them accountable for what they're doing. But this means that forgiveness was on His mind as He died. When He comes back to rule, judgment will be on Jesus' mind. You can read about that in Revelation 19. But right here, forgiveness is on His mind. That these men could be forgiven of the worst sin imaginable - nailing Jesus to a cross. You can imagine talking to one of these guys in hell and saying, "What did you do to get here?" And he says, "I nailed Jesus to a cross." Or talking to them on Judgment Day and you say, "That Jesus? The one on the throne? You nailed Him? Stand away from that guy." That's the worst thing possible. But Jesus says, "They could be forgiven if they would believe."

This is followed up by a second thing in the Gospel of Luke right here that goes right along with this. And a second word from the cross is this, it's a promise of salvation. Luke starts with a prayer of forgiveness and then he gives us a promise of salvation, because those two ideas are directly connected. This is where forgiveness leads. This is where mercy leads. It leads to salvation.

If you look down in verses 39 through 43, this is a little longer. But as Luke goes on to talk about what was going on at the cross, he says, "One of the criminals who were hanged there was hurling abuse at Him." That's an interesting phrase there – "hurling abuse". The idea is that it was so harsh and cruel that it's like throwing rocks at Him.

39 One of the criminals who were hanged there was hurling abuse at Him, saying, "Are you not the Christ? Save Yourself and us!" 40 But the other answered, and rebuking him said, "Do you not even fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? 41 And we indeed are suffering justly, for we are receiving what we deserve for our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong." 42 And he was saying (the man on the cross), "Jesus, remember me when you come in Your kingdom." 43 And He said to him, "Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in paradise."

That's the next final word there. You see it at the end. "Today you shall be with Me in paradise."

Now, I just read that context to you because this is interesting, because it's said to one of the worst people at the cross. Luke seemed to have an interest in the bad characters that were there. John talked about some of Jesus' friends. Luke just talks about His enemies. And he mentions the soldiers and how bad they were. And he mentions someone who is probably worse than the soldiers. It's the thief on the cross.

For convenience sake, the Romans would crucify people several at a time. It was almost like an assembly line kind of thing for them. And so verse 33 says that they crucified Jesus and the criminals; one on the right and the other on the left. You guys have seen the paintings of the cross, and there's always two crosses on the side, one in the middle.

Luke calls them criminals, but the Gospel of Mark calls them robbers or thieves. If you were looking at the cross, that would have been hanging above them on the cross. It would've said "Robber". And in the middle, Jesus' would say "King of the Jews," right? So, they stole something. It must have been worse than that because you weren't typically crucified for stealing. There might've been violence involved, there might've been some type of rebellion. And you really get an insight into what kind of men these guys were when you consider how they treated Jesus. Because verse 39 says that one of them hurled abuse at Him. But if you read the other Gospels, they say that both of them did it. So, while they're dying on a cross (these two men), while they're suffering next to Him, going through the same things He is, the same horrors, the same humiliation, they're insulting Him. You want to talk about a nasty person. They're going to hell abusing the Son of God.

And something happens because one of the men changes his mind, he rebukes the other one. So, here's Jesus in the middle and this guy's rebuking that guy. And then he turns to Jesus and he says, "Jesus, remember me when You come into Your kingdom."

I told you before, probably, nobody looked less like a king at that moment than Jesus. And this thief noticed that something was different about Him. He really was the Son of God, and he says this. And the question is, what would Jesus say to that? I would probably say something like, "No way, you scumbag. After all, you just said, I'm not going to lift a finger to help you." Or you

could say something like, “Well, maybe I could help you if you could come off the cross and do something to help yourself. Right? You need to stop stealing and go to church and read your Bible and donate a bunch of money.”

If you notice in that verse 43, Jesus doesn't say that. He says, “Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in paradise.” To my knowledge, that's the strongest affirmation of anyone's salvation in the Bible. And it was said to a guy like this.

“Today” means, “Today, right now, this moment, you die, you go to heaven.” And “you,” He means, “You robber, you thief, you terrible sinner, today, you will be with Me.” It's absolutely stunning. But it's said to remind you that this is what Jesus is. He's a Saviour, amen? I mean, this is what He does. He saves sinners.

Listen, if He could save that guy, He could save anybody. If He could forgive him after all he has done, He could forgive any of us.

The famous agnostic Marghanita Laski once said that, “The one thing I envy about you Christians, is that you have someone to forgive you.” She said, “I have no one to forgive me.” Well, we do have someone to forgive us, and it's the Lord Jesus. In fact, Jesus is going to heaven bringing this man with Him. Isn't that neat? I mean, He's got a few hours to live and He's taking this guy. He's saving him.

The thief didn't do anything to deserve it. It's been said that his hands were nailed down, so he couldn't do anything, and his feet were nailed down, so he couldn't go anywhere. All he could do was believe. It's the only option that he had. And it saved him because Jesus saves sinners. He saves those who believe.

Which leads to another word from the cross, which doesn't seem to go along with that, but it actually does. And that's a provision for His mother. If you want to look back in John chapter 19, this is the next word from the cross. And it actually ties into what we just looked at in an interesting way. That's a provision for His mother. As we just read a moment ago, there's only a few people standing by the cross as Jesus died, just a few friends anyway. And one of them was His own mother.

I can't even imagine what it would've looked like to watch your son die like this. The Gospels talk about one of the prophecies for Mary is that a sword would pierce her heart. Do you remember that? This is the sword piercing her heart. She's watching her own Son on a cross, and her Son notices. And in John 19:26-27 - verse 26, it says, “When Jesus then 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 ...” which is the Apostle John. John always refers to himself as “the disciple whom Jesus loved”. That's the Apostle John. “Then Jesus said to John, ‘Behold, your mother!’ And from that hour the disciple took her into his own household.”

Jewish custom at this time dictated that a woman, particularly a widow, had to have a male provider. She had to have someone, a son or a male relative take care of her when her husband died. They didn't have life insurance back then. They didn't have government programs and

women had very few rights. That's why you read the New Testament and even the Old Testament, you'll read lots of things about taking care of widows, right? The reason is if you didn't have a male provider, you were destitute. So, Jesus with this in mind, as He's dying, He turns to Mary, looks down at her, and he says, "Behold, your son, behold, your provider." And He turns to John, the only relative that He had there. (John and Jesus were cousins. If you look up in verse 25, it says, "Jesus' mother was there standing by the cross and so was His mother's sister." That's John's aunt, many believe - or John's mom, excuse me.) And He turns to John (Mary's only relative standing there) and He says, "Behold, your mother. Please take care of her. Make sure she's okay, make sure she's not lacking anything." And verse 27 say, that's exactly what he did.

Some commentators say probably one reason John knew so much about Jesus life, is because he talked to Mary who was living in his home. You would have done the same thing, right? I mean, you would keep her up all night asking her questions.

If you're wondering "What does this have to do with all these other things that we've looked at?" the answer is simple. Jesus died selflessly. Do you get that? He died as a selfless man, thinking of others, consumed with others. He wanted to save them and forgive them and make sure they're provided for. He wanted to talk about their wellbeing and not His. He wanted to save them from suffering instead of talking about His own suffering. I don't know about you guys, but when you're suffering, when you're in the hospital, when you're hurting, your thoughts are all about yourself, right? Don't look at me like that. You guys know what I'm talking about, right? Am I the only one? You want your Pepto-Bismol or whatever it is that you got to have. It's just natural. Jesus doesn't start out that way on the cross. He starts out thinking about others.

To say it another way, this is why you're saved. This is why you're going to heaven, because Jesus was like this, because He thought of others. If He wasn't thinking of others, you would not be saved. That makes sense? He didn't need this. He didn't need a cross. He could've gone to heaven without one. He went to the cross to save you, because He wasn't thinking about Himself.

An evangelist once led a drunk to the Lord and he told him, he said, "From what you've told me about yourself friend, you can't trust in yourself because you're nothing. You're a drunk. You've lived a terrible life." And he said, "And you can't trust in what you have because you have nothing. You've spent all your money and you're broke." And he said, "You can't trust in what you know for you know nothing. You're ignorant of religious things." But the evangelist said, "You can trust in Jesus Christ because He's everything. He's done everything for you. Will you trust Him today?" We could all say that because Jesus was selfless in His dying. He thought of others. Matthew 20:28 says, "Just as the Son of man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many." This is what this is talking about here. As He was dying on the cross, His thoughts began outward. I'll show you in a minute, they're going to go inward but they start outward. He's focused on the people around Him, the good people and the bad people. If you were on the cross or if I was dying like this, I would probably be thinking about Mary or John maybe, but I wouldn't worry about the soldiers. Definitely wouldn't talk to the people that are insulting me right beside me. That's how Jesus starts the crucifixion.

I need to keep moving for the sake of time, but that needs to be balanced with what we're going to see next, because the next word from the cross is different from that. Our Lord does start off thinking of others, focused on others, talking about others. But as the crucifixion goes on and the pain continues and intensifies, things do shift inward for a moment. And this is where you get an idea of the spiritual suffering of Christ. This is where you kind of got to take your shoes off because you're walking on holy ground and you're coming across something that's hard to get your mind around. But the next thing Jesus says from the cross, is a prayer for understanding. If you want to look in Matthew 27, this is the only one we'll look at in the Gospel of Matthew. But in Matthew 27, Jesus gives a prayer for understanding. We're going through these quickly and I do apologize for that. But we want to get through them all.

So far, we've seen what it was like to suffer physically. We've talked about that a little bit, the effects this had on His body. But this is the one statement Jesus gives us about the effect on His soul, at least the suffering part of it. And if you read in Matthew 27:45-46, it says,

45 Now from the sixth hour darkness fell upon the land until the ninth hour. 46 About the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice saying, "Eli, Eli, Lama Sabachthani?" that is, "My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me?" 47 And some of those who were standing there (probably the soldiers, because they did not speak Aramaic), when they heard it, began saying, "This man is calling for Elijah." (Elijah would have sounded like the word "Eli".)

Just a little explanation of this. From the sixth hour to the ninth hour would have been from noon until 3:00 PM. So, it would have been in the middle of the day. John 19:14 says that Pilate passed judgment on Jesus at the sixth hour. That would be noon. So, from noon until 3:00 PM when Jesus was on the cross, the sky went black. Which would have been a terrifying thing to see on a day like this because it was Passover and Jerusalem would have been full of visitors, and these visitors would have been looking for the blessing of God, right? That's why you came to Jerusalem for the Passover. You were there to offer your sacrifice and be approved by God in a sense.

While they're doing that, in the middle of the day, the lights go out. Matthew says, "Darkness fell upon the land." And verse 36 says that as that happened at the ninth hour, three hours into the cross, Jesus said with a loud voice, "Eli, Eli, Lama Sabachthani," that is "My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me?" That was spoken in Aramaic because it was Jesus' native tongue. In the first century in Israel, you had lots of languages going around. When Jesus was crucified, it was in Greek, Hebrew, and Latin, because they spoke those languages. And in their homes, the Galileans spoke an offshoot of Hebrew called Aramaic. And as He's on the cross and as He's suffering, Jesus goes back to something familiar, something He knew as a child and He asked God, "Why? Why are you doing this to Me? Why are you putting Me through this?"

It's an interesting verse because Jesus was God, which means He had an infinite mind. He knew everything. You and I ask "why," because there's things we don't know. There was nothing He didn't know. So, this wasn't a logical question as much as it was an emotional question. When you're suffering, you ask God "why," not to get a textbook answer, but because you want it to stop, right? In your flesh, you want it to be over, and that's what's going on here. Because it says,

Jesus says, “Why have you forsaken Me?” At the cross, God abandoned His Son. He forsook Him. That was the pain of this. That was the horror. For the first time in history, God the Father turned His back on God, the Son.

Now, we could spend a whole sermon on this. We could spend a whole series on this. Because if you kind of think about this for a moment, God didn't turn His back in every sense of the word because He punished Jesus here. Does that make sense? In one sense, He was facing Him with His wrath and His fury. But in another sense, He was abandoning the close relationship. He was abandoning the fellowship, He was abandoning the love. And for this moment in time, God hated His Son. And this is something our minds can't understand, but for all of eternity, God the Father lived in perfect harmony with the Son. They had a perfect relationship. They never had a cross word. They never had an argument. And then for three hours on the cross, God hated Him with a hatred unlike this world has ever seen. He despised Him and loathed Him and abhorred Him in a way that we can't even imagine. The love was perfect with them for all of eternity. And now, for this period of time, the hatred is perfect. And Jesus asked God, “Why? Why are you doing this? Why are you putting Me through this? When is this going to end?”

I do want to point out to you that the last thing Jesus is going to say is, “Father, into Your hands, I commit My spirit.” Which means that at that point, that wrath was over. Does that make sense? At the end of all this, the relationship is restored. So, before the cross is even over, before He even dies, this anger and hatred is done. But right here in this moment, it's still continuing, and He wants to know why. And we might add that Jesus went through this, so you wouldn't have to. And Jesus went through this at the cross, so you wouldn't have to go through this in hell.

I was listening to a song the other day that said something along the lines of, at the cross, God ignored His judgment and poured on His grace. That's actually not true. At the cross, God poured on the judgment so that He could pour on the grace.

The Bible says God hates sin. He despises it, He loathes it, He abhors it. And He's going to punish sin in one of two places. He's going to punish sin at the cross or He's going to punish it in hell. He will punish it on His Son for these three hours at this moment in time, or He will punish it on you forever in eternity. And Jesus went through this, so you wouldn't have to go through that. He suffered all of this here, so you wouldn't have to suffer it there. He was forsaken, so you wouldn't have to be. Hell is a place of utter darkness, where God abandons His love for you. And Jesus went through this for your sake, if you believe in Him. It was said that as Voltaire lay dying, a priest came in to ask him, “Do you renounce Satan?” And Voltaire replied, “Now, my good man, this is not the time for making enemies.” It's pretty a twisted answer, I would say, wouldn't you? But you know what? He was actually wrong, because he didn't know who his enemy was. His enemy was going to be God, not Satan. God rules over hell and Jesus suffered this, so we wouldn't have to experience that.

Which leads to the next word Jesus says on the cross, and that is a plea for relief. I'll try to go through these next ones pretty quickly. But that is a plea for relief or a cry for relief. This one is found back in the Gospel of John. If you want to go back there with me to the Gospel of John, as Jesus' thoughts turn inward in His suffering, they stay that way for a moment. John 19 is what we're going to look at. And he begins to talk about His physical suffering. He's mentioned the

spiritual side of it, given us an insight into the forsaking that He experienced. Now, he's going to talk about the physical side of this.

This is something that we read earlier. If you look in chapter 19:28-29, it says, “After this, Jesus, knowing that all things had already been accomplished, to fulfill the Scripture, said, ‘I am thirsty.’ A jar full of sour wine was standing there; so they put a sponge full of the sour wine upon a branch of hyssop and brought it up to His mouth.”

Earlier, they offered Him some wine mixed with myrrh, and He turned it down because myrrh would have been something of a narcotic to numb the pain, kind of dull His wits. But He took this because of His thirst.

I think I've mentioned to you in previous weeks, the cross was a very painful event. But one of the worst things about it was the thirst. Because you've lost so much blood, you've lost so much sweat. The thirst became unbearable. You were always thirsty on the cross. There're stories of people dying, taking them a week or more to die, and the whole time they're just raging of thirst.

Jesus talks about that here. It's kind of interesting because it's three words in English. It's one word in Greek *dipsaó*, which means “I am thirsty”. But He doesn't have much strength left to talk. His words are getting fewer and farther between. He is dying. He's gasping for breath, and He says this in one word. And John says that He did this to fulfill Scripture. There are several Scriptures fulfilled on the cross. He just fulfilled Psalm 22 back in the Gospel of Matthew. Here, He fulfills Psalm 69, which talks about the Messiah's thirsting and being given vinegar to drink.

It says in verse 29, that a jar of sour wine was given to Him or a sponge of it. Sour wine was a reference to cheap wine that would taste like vinegar. It was the kind of stuff the soldiers would drink. And because He was on the cross and hanging several feet off the ground, it says they took a hyssop plant or a branch of a hyssop plant, they put a sponge on it and gave it to Him. That's the same plant, interestingly enough, that the Jews used at the Passover to spread the blood of the lamb on their doorpost. The doorpost would have been several feet off the ground. In order to reach that, they would put blood on it and then spread it. And in a similar way, Jesus being several feet off the ground, had to have a hyssop plant and a sponge given to Him so He could drink.

That leads to another word from the cross, which is right below this one in the Gospel of John. I like this one a lot. This is a proclamation of victory. Next, Jesus gives us a proclamation of victory. If you look in verse 30, it says, “Therefore, when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, ‘It is finished!’ And He bowed His head and gave up His spirit.” John skips over one final word here. There is one more thing Jesus says after “It is finished!” Which we'll talk about in a minute. But I would say those are some strange last words. Would you agree? “It is finished?” What does that mean?

I think it was Jay Adams that said that, it used to be in the past, people's last words were recorded. It was a time to reconcile with loved ones. Nowadays, most people are drugged up when they die. And so, their last words are kind of mumblings and that kind of thing. Jesus is very articulate here, and says, “It is finished!” as some of His last words. It's a very strange thing

to say. What is He talking about? He means His mission, His purpose, His assignment is finished. "I came here to do this," His goal, His object, His plan. At Christmas time, we talk about His birth. He was born to do this. This is why He came. Christmas and Easter are directly tied together, does that makes sense? If you notice, He doesn't say, "I am finished!" He says, "It is finished." He doesn't say, "I am done for," He says, "It is done for."

And just to unpack that a little bit, the word for "finished" here is *tetelestai* in Greek, which means "complete" or "terminated". It means "everything is done." The work is over. In a business sense, it means everything has been paid in full. In accounting books at the time, Roman merchants would write this word at the top of their books to say that the account has been closed, the debt is settled, it's been paid. And you would look at their books or their ledger and it would say over and over again *tetelestai, tetelestai, tetelestai*. Jesus doesn't say it over and over again. He says it one time, one statement, to say that, "If you trust in Me, your debt with God is over."

And I want to stop here for a moment and just say a few words about this, because I meet so many Christians who don't get this today. They don't act like they believe it because they live like they still owe a debt to God. And what I mean is they go around feeling guilty all the time. You ask them about their parenting and they feel guilty about it. You ask them about their marriage and they feel guilty about it. You ask them about their job or their school or their prayer life, and it's just guilt, guilt, guilt with them. They're a walking, talking ball of guilt, as if Jesus never died on a cross, as if He never said this. Listen, I understand you want to excel still more and grow in this, and I understand you want to do better and that's commendable. And there's a place for conviction in the Christian life, absolutely. But if you repent and confess it and give it over to God, there is no more place for the guilt. Some of you this morning may be acting like you were never saved at all because you can't get over your guilt.

Listen, Jesus died for your guilt at the cross. He was crushed for your guilt at the cross. He was punished for your guilt. And for you to carry on about it is an insult to Him, in a way. It's saying you don't believe it was finished.

Let me say it this way, are you a bad parent? Of course you are. I hate to burst your bubble, but yes, you are. We all are. Don't look up in the front row. I sit in the front row, that's what I mean, not my wife's side. She does a great job. We'll leave this one here for later comments. Some of you should feel ... I'm just kidding. We're all bad parents, but that's okay because Jesus died for that. He died for bad people. And you don't have to feel guilty all the time. You can live in victory. Are you a bad wife? Yes. Are you a bad husband? Sure you are, but Jesus died for that. Which means that whoever you are, there is hope. Wherever you are at in life, you can have victory. You can have joy. You don't have to keep rehearsing the sins that Jesus died for. You don't have to keep them alive.

A Christian in India once committed a horrible sin that really bothered him for years. And even after he confessed and repented of it, he still thought about it all the time. And so, he asked a friend, he said, "Do you think God's going to forgive me now? What do you think He's going to say about my sin when I meet Him on Judgment Day?" And the friend said, "Well, you're a Christian, so I don't think He remembers it anymore." He's right. If you've given it over to God

in repentance, He doesn't remember it because it's been nailed to the cross. It is finished. It's been thrown as far as the east is from the west, amen? And we need to remember that.

Which leads to one more final word from Jesus here. One more thing He says on the cross. Thanks for hanging in there with me. I know we're covering a lot of material this morning. But this one draws it to a close, and it is a prayer of commitment. In your bulletin, I think it says a prayer of consummation, which is fine. That's a good term. A prayer of commitment is another term for this.

Jesus died committing Himself to God. He starts off with a prayer. "Father, forgive them for they know not what they're doing," and then He gives us a promise and the provision for His mother. Then He prays again, "My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me?" Then He says a few more things, and now it's time for Him to pray again. And you see this in Luke chapter 23. If you want to flip over there one more time, to Luke 23.

I think the best way to die in your prayer closet, amen? I think one of the puritans called it going from glory to glory. And Jesus died that way. He died with a prayer on His lips. If you look in Luke 23:44-46, it says,

44 It was now about the sixth hour, and darkness fell over the whole land until the ninth hour, 45 because the sun was obscured; and the veil of the temple was torn in two. 46 And Jesus, crying out with a loud voice, said, "Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit." And having said this, He breathed His last.

Those were the final words of Jesus on the cross. We've already said a little bit about the darkness or the sun being obscured. But verse 45 gives us another interesting detail. It says, "As Jesus died, the veil of the temple was torn in two." The temple in Jerusalem had several courts, and one of them was the court of priests where the sacrifices were made. You had a court of Gentiles where non-Jews could go, a court of women where the Jewish women could go, a court of Israel for Israelite men. And the last court in the temple, the one right up next to the Ark of the Covenant, the Holy Place of God, most holy place, was the court of priests. And that is where you would bring, the men of the family would bring the sacrifice, and the priests would offer it there to the Lord. The idea was you wanted to offer in the presence of God, right up next to the Ark of the Covenant.

But separating you from the ark was an enormous veil. No one ever went past it except once a year on the Day of Atonement, when the high priest went in there. But one author said, this veil, this curtain was 60-feet long and 30-feet wide, and it took 300 priests to move it back and forth. That's a big tapestry. Another author said a team of horses couldn't tear it apart. It was too thick. But Luke says that at this feast, at this Passover, as the people are bringing the sacrifices in the court of priests, in full sight of the veil, as the sky is black, the veil tore in two right in front of them. I don't know - does Matthew say this? He doesn't say this, but one of the other Gospel authors talk about it. It was torn in two, from top to bottom to show that the separation between God and man was over. The hostility was finished. This showed that the way to God is open to you now. You don't have to go in once a year through that high priest. You can go in anytime you want to through the high priest, the Lord Jesus Christ.

To show that this was really done, Jesus says, “Father, into Your hands, I commit My spirit.” That means God wasn't angry with Him anymore. That means the hostility between the two of them was finished. And it also means the hostility between us and God is over as well.

Which raises the question, how do you respond to something like this? We've just covered a lot of material this morning. We've talked about a lot of interesting information, the life of Christ, His final words, putting the pieces of the cross together from start to finish. But what do you take home from something like this? And I just want to mention a few things here this morning in closing.

One is that you should be encouraged by this because the veil has been torn. Amen? The hostility between you and God or the separation is over. Which should be a great encouragement to you. When you sing this morning, you can sing to a God you can approach. And when you take the Lord's Supper this morning, you can take it honouring a God that you can come to. You don't have to stand at a distance anymore. You don't have to be far away from God. You can draw near through the blood of Jesus Christ. So, that's one thing to take away from this.

Another thing is this, you should have peace, because Jesus says here, “It is finished!” I don't know where all of you are at this morning on this issue, but I do know that peace is a hard thing to come by these days, isn't it? We live in a very turbulent world. And even in places like Canada, where we're in a country that is at peace in many ways. We're not fighting any invaders. People are worked up, aren't they? I have a southern word for it - they live in a tizzy, it seems like. Inside their hearts, they feel guilty and Jesus says, “You shouldn't have to feel that way because it has been *tetelestai*, paid in full. The guilt is over.”

Maybe the most important response to this, one more thing to consider after all we've talked about this morning, is that you shouldn't be afraid of death anymore. You don't have to die like Voltaire and Sigmund Freud, saying, “This is absurd,” or “I've been abandoned by God.” You should die in peace because Jesus died in your peace. He died the death that you deserve, so you could have a peaceful death in the presence of God. Richard Baxter served as a pastor in England from the years 1641 until 1660, and he served faithfully. He had a wonderful ministry, but he paid a price for it because he contracted tuberculosis at a young age and it drove him to his death bed. And as he was dying, he was gasping for air and coughing out blood, Richard Baxter said to a friend, these were his final words. He said, “I have pain, but I have peace. I have such peace in Jesus.” Can you say that this morning? Do you have this peace? I want to remind you, He died to bring it to you. He died so you could have peace. That's why He went to the cross. And let me pray that you would receive that peace this morning, if you haven't. Let me pray that you would trust in Him and be blessed.

Father, we thank you so much for these words of Your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. They're words that we could never plumb the depths of. We can only skim across the surface even if we studied this for all of eternity, which we will be doing. And we could never get to the bottom of what Your Son has done. But we thank you for it, Father. We thank you that we do have this information about our Saviour and what He did on the cross.

Lord, I do pray if there's any here this morning who have not trusted in Him, that they would do so. If there's any here who do not believe, Lord, would You draw them to Christ in faith and repentance. And for those who do believe, Lord, I pray that they would remember what Christ has done. The guilt is finished, the veil has been torn. May they live in light of that today.

As we come to the Lord's Supper, as we honour You in the time of communion, Father, may we reflect on these things to the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. In His name we pray, amen.