

The Crucified King John 19:16b-18

Well, we have been going through the last couple of chapters of the arrest and trial of Jesus, and tonight we come to the crucifixion. We have just witnessed in the text that Jesus is beaten by order of Pilate and then presented to the people one last time, "Behold your King." He is then rejected by the people, and now we come tonight to the crucifixion of Christ. And this account in John aligns with what we read in the other gospels, especially the Gospel of Mark. But there are some unique features we find in this account that aren't recorded in the others gospels, such as the protest of the religious leaders of the placard that read "Jesus is the King of the Jews." We also have several fulfilled prophecies that are listed, the care for his mother, and the last cry of Jesus on the cross. These are so critical when we seek to understand all that was done for sinners like us.

And just before we jump into the text, there are a couple of things we need to point out first. One is that all human history has been leading up this point and these few verses. It was always God's intent that the Saviour would come and suffer and die as that perfect offering for sin. The sacrificial system in Israel gave that message along with so many other prophecies. Isaiah 53:4-5, **"Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed."** All biblical history and human history leads to this point. God has been directing all events to culminate with this point, and these few short verses. And all of Jesus' life has been directed to the fulfillment of these verses, events, and moment. Jesus said in Mark 10:45, **"For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."** So these verses are critical in understanding the purpose of the life of Christ, and the pinnacle of God's saving of sinners. They really are extraordinary verses that we need to think and dwell on.

The other thing I want us to see in this passage is the one who is still going forth is none other than Jesus. He is committed to doing the will of his Father. He is committed to loving those whom God has given him, and loving them to the end. And many times we look at our circumstances of our lives, and we conclude that God must not care or be concerned or whatever. But love is always displayed and verified by what a person is willing to do to bring a person life. It is known by the extent of sacrifice in that person's life. Someone might say they love you but aren't willing to sacrifice or give up something or time, or effort, or assets than you know they don't love you. Love is always defined in sacrifice. Some sacrifices are small and some are large, but when we love, sacrifice seems so natural that the lover doesn't think of the cost. He just goes forth in love and seeks the welfare of his beloved.

And folks we never have to doubt the love of our Jesus. Yes, life is tough. Yes, we are called to go through things we never thought we would go through. Yes, others who should love us do not love us, but we never have to doubt that not only does God have a plan through our suffering, but we are loved in such a high, glorious, unimaginable way by Christ. And to think, that it is not because we are lovely and

worthy, but he does this even though and because we are sinners. The debt of our sin needs to be paid and there's an intentionality to Jesus in this passage. And here is the thing, seeing this creates in us is a love for others. It creates a heart that loves others even when they do not deserve our love because this is exactly the way Christ loves us.

I am often asked, "How do I love that person?" And the answer is look to the cross. Look to the extraordinary and lavish love of Christ to someone like you. When we see Christ's love it has a sanctifying effect. Christ's sacrificial love should create the most loving community on earth — in the church of Christ. So you want to become like Christ? You want to become a lover of others? We need to look to none other than the willing and voluntary and intentional sacrificial death of Jesus. And I want us to see a couple things today that will help us fix our gaze on our Lord and Saviour and his extravagant and exhaustive love toward those who deserve the opposite.

1. To help fix our gaze on Jesus, need to see the intentionality of Christ. V.16b-17.

You see what is important to individuals by what they keep doing, even if it is hard and difficult. A person who goes to university. They might be given all their course work at the beginning of their journey. And it might look monumental. And many quit before graduation day because the study, assignments, and course work are too much. But some keep going. They get up and go through all the obstacles until they reach that finish line. How or why? There is an intentionality and goal every single day. And it is the same with our Lord. In this passage, he marches on to give his life as your ransom. He knows the Father's ultimate will, and he knows what is needed in your life and mine. Through all the beating and all the shame and ridicule already fostered on him, he keeps going, keeps serving, keeps loving. And remember, one word or command from our Lord and all of this ends. But he is committing to suffering to the end, and will in the end bring all our suffering to an end.

Now look at the the end of verse 16, which really is the introduction to verse 17, "**So they took Jesus.**" This would have been the end of the trial before Pilate, and the handing over of Jesus for the sentence of death. And Jesus would have been handed to the Roman soldiers, and they would have taken him first of all and scourged him again. This would have been the second scourging and one that was more violent than the first one. With Jesus so beaten already, it is incredible that he survived this beating. The skin would have been literally been torn off his back. Many victims of crucifixion died even before getting to their crosses because of this beating. Yet Jesus knows where he needs to die. He knows he needs to die as cursed — cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree. There is no giving up in the heart and life of Jesus.

And then look at the next verse, "**and he went out, bearing his own cross, to the place called The Place of a Skull, which in Aramaic is called Golgotha.**" Again, notice he went out. It is our Lord in this weakened condition that keeps going. He was bearing his own cross, and this would not have been the full cross. The upright or vertical part of the cross would already been at Golgotha, but this would have been the heavy cross beam. And you can imagine how painful that was to have that heavy piece of wood on the open and severely lacerated back of our Lord. And he goes and is led to the place called the Skull or called Golgotha. Now anyone know what Golgotha is in Latin? It is the word Calvary. Many think that this was rock-shaped protrusion outside

the city, but the place where it is has been disputed. But it would have been a place not far off the entrance of the city and a location known as the place of execution.

Also, we have to note that Jesus carried this cross beam, the intentionality of our Saviour is just enormous in the text. And as we read in the other gospels we read that Jesus finally collapses and is unable because of the physical beating and exhaustion of his body to carry that cross any longer, so Simon of Cyrene is taken from the crowd and forced to carry this for Jesus. Now why doesn't John mention Simon? And there are a couple of thoughts by expositors. One an early Gnostic heresy has Simon carrying the cross, and then Simon is nailed to the cross and it is not actually Jesus who died. This heresy is actually also taught by Muslims. Jesus didn't really die and rise again. So the main intention of John's gospel is to present Jesus as Lord and Saviour, so that we might believe on his name and have life through him, so that little fact adds nothing to John's whole purpose and why he chose to write what he wrote. Remember, John says that he could have wrote so much more that it could fill volumes and still would not exhaust the life of Christ.

The other reason could be just what we are mentioning here and that is the main focus is the intentionality of Jesus. Nothing will keep him from carrying out the will of his Father. He is the driving force, not the religious leaders or Pilate. They may think they are in control and having their will accomplished, but it s Jesus. Remember because this really is a wonderful fulfillment of what we see in Genesis 22. There Abraham is told to go to Mount Moriah and offer up Isaac. And we are told Isaac is the one who carried the firewood for the offering. He is carrying the wood for his execution. And listen to Genesis 22:7-8, **“And Isaac said to his father Abraham, ‘My father! And he said, ‘Here I am, my son.’ He said, ‘Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?’ Abraham said, ‘God will provide for himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son.’ So they went both of them together.”** And here is the offering that God provides. It is not the son of Abraham but the Son of God. None other than Jesus who comes and gives his life as that perfect offering for sin.

And think of it, because this is God's justice carried out on Jesus in the place of the sinner. We cannot get away from that point. Listen to what John MacArthur writes about this, **“In stating that Jesus “went out, carrying His cross”... [John] is ... emphasizing that, as at His arrest in the garden, Jesus is still in command of the situation. He is “taken” to the place of execution, it is true, but he is no reluctant victim, compelled to go whither he would not: he goes with his executioners of his own volition and carries the cross for himself. (The Gospel of John [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983], 366)** Thus, Jesus was not a helpless victim but the Shepherd-King laying down his life for his sheep. We often think love has limits. There is only so much we are willing to do no matter how much we say we love someone. But the love of our Saviour is on another level, and has no limits. And the love that drew salvation's plan is shocking. The Father is glorified, and magnified. He is loved by the Son and His justice is upheld, but this simple fact should cause us to gasp in awe. I mean listen to these shocking words and try to feel the weight and the glory of them in who Jesus is loving in this text, **“For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—**

though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die—but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” (Romans 5:6-8)

Do you feel something of the depth of the love of God, the love of Christ for us? He is not a victim but our perfect High Priest who offers up the perfect sacrifice which happens to be himself. And having this kind of love front and centre in our hearts and lives changes us. It alters us. Think about, who are we not loving today? Who are we saying I can't love? As we consider the glory of God's love for us and the intentional love of Christ, how can we not love and forgive and seek to be living and sacrificial examples of God's love in Christ? His love is meant not only to save us but to change us. We carry around so much baggage of people being unworthy of our love. We forget the whole point of the gospel that Jesus died for his enemies. Let his love change you. He actually intentionally goes to the horrific place of crucifixion of his own will. And that is where we turn to now.

2. To help fix our gaze on Jesus, we need to see the crucifixion. 18.

One of the shocking things about the crucifixion of Jesus on the cross is how little information is given. I mean think of it, this verse indicates where the whole life of Jesus has been heading and the whole scene is summarized in four short words, **“there they crucified him.”** There is no description of the nails in his hands and feet. There is no description of the pain, delirium, exhaustion, and suffocation that took place on the cross. And all four gospels just report the mere facts of crucifixion with very little detail.

I mean it is very strange that everything is heading to this point in the whole gospel. It is all about his sacrifice yet when we finally get there, there are only four short words that indicate the crucifixion. Why such brevity? Why is there not more detail on crucifixion itself? And let give you a couple of answers. One is that where crucifixion is not known today and seen today it was very much a part of their life, and the life of most cities controlled by the Roman Empire. And they knew what it was about. And for these disciples of Christ, it was just too painful to go into too much detail in the physical turmoil of the Lord. And so we will not also. This was a form of execution that was reserved for those who were the lowest of the low in society. It was reserved for slaves and those who were thieves or more to the point insurrectionists. It was not a form of execution to bring a quick death, but one in which elongated death in a pain that was almost unbearable and unimaginable. The hands were fixed on the cross beam through rope or nails, and the feet the same way on the lower beam. Because a person hung, his lungs would fill with fluid and he could suffocate, but he could push up with his feet, clearing his lungs, but the pain with the nails in the feet would be beyond description. And this kind of death could take several days. And you can imagine to go into detail of someone who suffered who you love would be unbearable to write. So thus the brevity in words.

But the other reason is the whole purpose of the gospel is not to concentrate on what others are doing to Christ but what he is accomplishing. And the main point here is he has come to drink that full cup of the wrath of his Father for sinners. And beyond the physical anguish of our Saviour is the separation of the Son from the Father. You can hear it in the words of Jesus when he cries, **“My God, my God, why have you**

forsaken me?" And we have to be so careful here, because God cannot be divided. He is three but there is unity that can never be severed. But in some way God the Father not only turns his back on the Son, but his full fury and wrath is poured out on the Son. What was that anguish like? It was like spending an eternity in hell fire under the penalty of our sin. And it is incredible to consider that our whole eternity with God is made possible or exists because of those four words that begin, this verse, **"There they crucified him."** We need to marvel at the depths of love of our God and Saviour.

Look at the verse because all the details here in this whole passage are so significant, John writes, **"There they crucified him, and with him two others, one on either side, and Jesus between them."** Here are two criminals. The other gospels report that they were thieves or individuals who were notorious in trying to usurp the authority of Rome. These could have been two companions of Barabbas. John probably couldn't help but think about Isaiah 53:12, **"Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he poured out his soul to death and *was numbered with the transgressors*; yet he bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors."** Talk about a humbling death. You are innocent and you are executed and hung on a cross with those who are guilty. No doubt this was a further shame that was levelled on Jesus. But what man means for evil; God always has his purposes and good intentions.

Leon Morris writes, **"For the writers of the Gospels this was not an insult but the expression of an important truth. Jesus came to save sinners. He died to save them, and the fact that on the cross he hung between people who were obviously grievous sinners graphically illustrated that truth. His death was a death on behalf of sinners, and his position when he died brought that out for those who had eyes to see. And the Evangelists all record the fact because from their point of view, too, it was important that when he died Jesus was one with evil people. He did not come to earth to live solely among the pious. He came to call sinners to repentance, and one gibe that was hurled at him was that he was a 'friend of sinners.' For the writers of the Gospels this was not an insult but the expression of an important truth. Jesus came to save sinners. He died to save them, and the fact that on the cross he hung between people who were obvious grievous sinners graphically illustrated the truth."**

Wow, what a glorious truth. What amazing love. Here is Jesus dying with sinners and for sinners. The glory and grace of God has to capture your heart as a believer. Even one of those thieves repents, and Jesus even in his agony ministers and gives promises to him. And that dying thief has been with our Lord for the last two thousands years. Imagine the love for Christ. He dies for one who is not worthy of such love. The hymn written by Steward Townsend goes, and it is true for the thief on the cross and also us, **"Oh, to see the dawn Of the darkest day: Christ on the road to Calvary. Tried by sinful men, Torn and beaten, then Nailed to a cross of wood. This, the power of the cross: Christ became sin for us, Took the blame, bore the wrath: We stand forgiven at the cross."**

Folks, I know we need this, but we need to be reminded of this. These truths of Christ because, he intentionally became sin for us, are not just for our eternal welfare,

that we one day will be with Jesus. That is a truth and a promise we celebrate every single day. But these truths of Christ are meant to change us. All of us have trying times and relationships in our lives. We have this classification in our lives — “enemies.” Jesus intentionally love his enemies. He goes forth from the court of Pilate. He goes down the Via Delarosa. He goes to Calvary. And he goes forth in love not just to his Father but all those who trust in him. He truly did love us first in the most dramatic and sacrificial way imaginable. This is our Lord. This is his forever love for you. Where is God calling you to show that extraordinary love to others? What enemies is he calling you to love? It is easy to love others who are like us. But the glory of Christ’s love is he loves people unlike him. Let us put on that love of Christ and seek to exemplify his love that others might see his extraordinary love through us.