

# Good Friday

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Please open your Bible to the book of Luke 23, or turn to page \_\_\_\_\_ in the Bible under the chair in front of you.

## Intro

When you think of Jesus, what comes to mind for you? I would guess that if you were to ask most people in the world today, what they think about when they hear the name Jesus, it seems likely that His Cross is one of the first things that would come to mind. His life and teaching and miracles were astonishing, worthy to be studied over your lifetime. But His death, and the way he died, and the reason He died – I think that is what comes to mind when most people around the world hear the name “Jesus.”

“To remember Jesus is to remember first, His cross.”

-John Knox

And that’s what we want to do this evening. We want to remember His cross. As we’ve read from Luke’s gospel already, we’re simply going to continue to walk through this account that he has recorded for us. Luke has said that he wrote these things so that he might give an orderly account of these events. And we’re going to look and see what took place and hear from Jesus himself as He lays down His life.

Jesus speaks three times from the cross in this account after speaking once on the way to the cross. And we’ll look at each of those this evening.

At this point in the story, Jesus has eaten the last supper with His disciples. He has washed their feet and gave some final instructions. He has gone out to pray in the Garden of Gethsemane where he was betrayed by Judas with a kiss. He was bound and beaten and dragged before the Jewish Sanhedrin in a sham trial in order that they might accuse Him and have him killed. But because they are under Roman rule, they have to get approval from the Romans to have a person executed.

And so early that morning, they take Jesus to Pilate. He finds out that Jesus is from Galilee, so Pilate sends him over to Herod, the ruler of that province. But Herod doesn’t want anything to do with it, so Jesus is sent back to Pilate. And again, Pilate can’t find anything Jesus has done that should warrant crucifixion. But the crowds press in on him, shouting, “Crucify Him!” and so he relents and delivers Jesus over to be crucified.

And that’s where we pick up in verse 26...

### **Luke 23:26-31**

**26** And as they led him away, they seized one Simon of Cyrene, who was coming in from the country, and laid on him the cross, to carry it behind Jesus. **27** And there followed him a great multitude of the people and of women who were mourning and lamenting for him. **28** But turning to them Jesus said, “Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. **29** For behold, the days are coming when they will say, ‘Blessed are the barren and the wombs that never bore and the breasts that never nursed!’ **30** Then they will begin to say to the mountains, ‘Fall on us,’ and to the hills, ‘Cover us.’ **31** For if they do these things when the wood is green, what will happen when it is dry?”

As Jesus is sent away to be crucified, the Romans do something a bit odd. Normally, the one being crucified would carry his own cross. But in this case, because of what Jesus has already endured, He is unable to do it by himself. Luke doesn't give all the details we see in the other gospels, but they tell us that by this point, Jesus has been beaten and scourged repeatedly. He is near death already, so the Romans seize this guy named Simon who is from North Africa (present day Libya), and they make Him carry Jesus's cross.

So now this guy is literally doing what Jesus had commanded – those who would come after Him must take up their cross and follow Him. And it seems likely that Simon becomes a Christian sometime after this. His two sons, Alexander and Rufus are mentioned in Mark's gospel, and Rufus at the end of Paul's letter to the Romans. The family seems to have been leaders in the early church.

And this is how the story begins. Simon is carrying the cross of Jesus, and there is a great crowd gathered, mourning and weeping, Luke says. The scene is very somber and intense and emotional. And Jesus turns to the women there and gives a word of prophecy.

### **Jesus's prophecy**

He calls them the 'daughters of Jerusalem.' And it's remarkable that even in this intense moment of suffering, Jesus has concern for them. He says, there is a terrible day coming, and on that day, you'll wish you didn't have any kids. You'll wish for death with the mountains or hills falling on you.

What's He talking about? He is speaking about the coming judgment on Jerusalem which will take place in AD 70. And Jesus says, “I want you to be aware of this.” It's a gentle warning that they should act now because the time is short.

And He says, “If they’re doing this while the wood is green, what will happen when it’s dry?” The green wood represents Jesus. And the dry wood is Jerusalem. And dry wood burns more easily than green wood. So he’s basically saying, “If an innocent man like me is going to be thrown into the fire by the Romans, so to speak, what will happen to people who actually deserve judgment?” If you think this is bad, what will that be like?

The point is that judgment is coming, so you should prepare accordingly. And the judgment on Jerusalem is a type or a pattern for other times of judgment across history, culminating in that final day of the Lord when Jesus returns. And the message remains relevant – are you prepared for that day? Are you ready for the day of judgment?

Next, we see Jesus’s prayer in verses 32-38...

## Jesus’s prayer

### Luke 23:32-38

Two others, who were criminals, were led away to be put to death with him. **33** And when they came to the place that is called The Skull, there they crucified him, and the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. **34** And Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” And they cast lots to divide his garments. **35** And the people stood by, watching, but the rulers scoffed at him, saying, “He saved others; let him save himself, if he is the Christ of God, his Chosen One!” **36** The soldiers also mocked him, coming up and offering him sour wine **37** and saying, “If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!” **38** There was also an inscription over him, “This is the King of the Jews.”

Now Jesus is led alongside two criminals to this place called “The Skull.” It’s also called “Golgotha” or later, it was known as ‘Calvary,’ which comes from the Latin word ‘calva’ meaning ‘skull.’ Historians tell us it may have looked like a skull and likely had skulls lying around.

Just as another layer here, it would be at this ‘place of the skull’ that Jesus would crush the head of the serpent. This was promised way, way back in Genesis 3:15. The seed of the woman would crush the head of the serpent.

And there on that hill, there would have already been the posts for the crucifixion. Each person would carry their own crossbeam, but the vertical post was there. And notice that this is all setup to happen rather quickly. The trial was early that morning, and now that same day, Jesus has been brought here to be crucified. There was no time for appeals. The sentence was carried out immediately.

Crucifixion was a gruesome means of death. It was intended to be humiliating and painful. Those who were crucified would usually die from suffocation, or being unable to breathe from exhaustion and pain. Roman citizens were not allowed to be crucified. They weren't even supposed to talk about it in front of their children. It was a shameful thing, reserved for the worst criminals. And from historical records, we can know quite a bit about Roman crucifixion and just how gory it was. But notice that the gospel writers say very little about all of that. All Luke says is, "there they crucified him."

Why don't they say more? The gospel accounts each build to this moment, and then they simply record that He was crucified. And I think that part of the reason is that they are not aiming for us as readers to be simply moved to sympathy. We are not just to simply feel sorry for Jesus. We are not to see Him merely as the perfect sufferer. We are to see Him as the perfect Savior.

The issue isn't exactly what He experienced and what were the nails like and how painful was it. The issue is what did His suffering accomplish? What did all of that achieve?

And even later in the epistles, they don't focus on the gory details. They speak about what His death means for sinners. So for example, Peter will say...

**1 Peter 3:18**

For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God,

That's what Jesus is doing on the cross. He was bringing us to God. It's for your sake that Jesus died. There's a world of difference between feeling sorry for Jesus as a sufferer and putting your faith in Jesus as your substitute, the one who took your place and paid the penalty for your sins. Put your faith in Him as Savior.

Jesus's heart for sinners is on display here. And we see that even in what he prays for those who are putting Him to death. He says, "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do."

It's amazing that this was in the heart of Jesus at a time like this. Remember, out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks. And what do we see? Jesus, when He was suffering intensely, despite being completely and totally innocent Himself, His heart isn't angry or bitter or full of self-pity. No, He seeks to love and even bless His enemies.

In this moment, Jesus has been stripped of His garments. They've taken everything from Him, even His clothes.

I've never experienced anything like this. Perhaps the closest I've come is when I've been in the hospital before a surgery, and they make you put all of your clothes in a bag. And you only get that flimsy hospital gown to wear. And you're thinking, I'm just eager for the time when I can put those clothes back on. You feel vulnerable and exposed. And to a much greater degree, Jesus is vulnerable and exposed.

And the people and religious rulers are scoffing at Him. If He's really the Messiah, if He's really the Christ, then come down from there! Save yourself! Messiah's don't lose. They don't die like this. The cross is foolishness to the Greeks and a stumbling block to the Jews. They don't understand.

And there's an irony to their words. It's actually *because* He doesn't come down that He is saving us. He could have exercised His power and come down. But because of His great love, we are saved because He didn't come down but stayed up. He stayed on the cross for you. He drank the cup for you.

You know, your own morality cannot save you. All your good deeds cannot save you. Your parent's faith cannot save you. Knowing some things about the Bible can't save you. No one else can save you. Only Jesus and His shed blood on the cross can save you. And He stayed on the cross so that sinners like you and me might be saved by trusting in Him.

Though it seems like He's losing, like He can't possibly be the Messiah because He's being crucified for all to see, it is in this very act that Jesus is doing what only He can do – laying down His life for the sinners. It is His heart of love and forgiveness on display.

"The cross is the pulpit from which Christ is preached God's love for the world."  
-Augustine

And as Jesus is hung on that cross, He is continually pouring out His love for others. We see it continue in the interaction with these two criminals being hung with Him. Luke writes...

**Luke 23:39-43**

One of the criminals who were hanged railed at him, saying, "Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us!" **40** But the other rebuked him, saying, "Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? **41** And we indeed justly, for we are receiving the due reward of our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong." **42** And he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." **43** And he said to him, "Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise."

One of the criminals mocks Jesus, even as he himself is dying. But the other one, he notices how foolish this is. And he rebukes the first one, saying, "Hey, we deserve what we're getting. But this guy is innocent." Their responses to Jesus couldn't be more different. One reviling, the other recognizing that Jesus is innocent.

And this second thief on the cross goes on to make a request of Jesus. He asks Jesus to remember him in His kingdom. That's quite a bit different than the other thief. It's different than what he may have thought and felt himself just the day before when he had not yet met Jesus. But now, he is calling on Jesus, "Remember me. Remember me when you go to your kingdom."

### **Jesus's promise**

And Jesus, while He Himself is in agonizing pain and dying, speaks this promise. "Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise."

Friends, Jesus is so good at saving people, He can save a person while He is dying on a cross. This man we know as the thief on the cross becomes the convert on the cross. As the last second on the shot clock goes off, he gets in.

And we could say that these two men hanging on crosses with Jesus represent all of humanity, couldn't we? One chooses to reject Jesus and refuse to believe. And the other expresses hope and trust that He is able to save him. And the question for us to consider is – what will you do with Jesus?

You may have seen or heard the video clip of pastor Alistair Begg which has gone around the internet for the past couple years around Easter. And I want to show it to you today because he says it so well...(show video)

Isn't that great? The only reason that we have any hope for salvation is because the man on the middle cross said we could come.

The salvation of this thief highlights the only hope any of us have – it's only because of grace. The one who has authority over all things, in heaven and on earth, He speaks this promise to every sinner who calls on Him in faith, "Truly, you will be with me in paradise."

As we sing in the hymn, "The dying thief rejoiced to see that fountain in his day. And there may I, though vile as he, wash all my sins away."

What a wonderful promise to cling to this Good Friday. So we've seen the prophecy, the prayer, and the promise of Jesus, finally, then we see the plea...

## Jesus's plea

### Luke 23:44-49

It was now about the sixth hour, and there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour, **45** while the sun's light failed. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two. **46** Then Jesus, calling out with a loud voice, said, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!" And having said this he breathed his last. **47** Now when the centurion saw what had taken place, he praised God, saying, "Certainly this man was innocent!" **48** And all the crowds that had assembled for this spectacle, when they saw what had taken place, returned home beating their breasts. **49** And all his acquaintances and the women who had followed him from Galilee stood at a distance watching these things.

Now we come to the final moments of Jesus' earthly life. Mark's gospel tells us that he was led to be crucified at the third hour (which would have been about 9am). And Luke here says that darkness covered the land from the 6<sup>th</sup> hour (or noon) until the 9<sup>th</sup> hour (or 3pm). So this is taking place over a six-hour period, from 9am until 3pm.

The darkness is a cosmic, supernatural sign in the heavens. It symbolizes the evil of this act in crucifying the innocent Son of God. It symbolizes the sadness of this event, as though the very skies lament what is happening. And it points to the judgment of God against sin. In this moment, Jesus is not just enduring the pain of a physical cross, He is also bearing the sins of the world. Our record of sin is being applied to Him. And there is darkness.

We are also told that the curtain in the temple is torn in two. We don't know for sure which curtain it was in the temple, but it was likely the thick one between the holy place and the holy of holies, the inner most part of the temple where God's presence dwelt. And in the moment of Jesus's death, the way in to the very presence of God is opened up. The old system and the Levitical priesthood is now fulfilled because in His death, Jesus has offered the complete and final sacrifice for sins. He has fulfilled the Old Covenant and established the New Covenant as the book of Hebrews teaches.

And in the final moments of Jesus's life, we hear this plea from Him in verse 46...

### Luke 23:46

Then Jesus, calling out with a loud voice, said, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!" And having said this he breathed his last.

Here Jesus is entrusting Himself to His Father. He has accomplished the mission that He was sent to do. And now He commits Himself to the One who sent Him. He shows us how to trust the Father, even in the dark. Luke records for us that Jesus died with complete assurance that God will care for Him, that He is able to trusted even in death.

And this is true for us today. Just as Jesus trusted the Father as He faced death, so too can we when we consider our own death. It is appointed for a man once to die and after this comes judgment. There will be a day when each of us will step into eternity. Will you be ready for that day as Jesus was? Have you committed your soul to the Father?

As we take a step back to consider the whole of this account, we should ask ourselves, “Why the crucifixion? Why was the death of Jesus significant?”

And there are a few reasons. One, because of who Jesus is. He is not just another man being executed by the Romans. He is the very Son of God – the fullness of God in a human body. He is the Messiah, the true King of kings and Lord of lords.

And the death of Jesus is also significant because of what it accomplished. In dying on the cross, Jesus took the place of sinners like you and me. He died to forgive our sins and give us His righteousness. He died to bring us to God. He died in triumph over the devil. He died to reconcile the world to Himself.

The death of Jesus is significant also because of what it shows us. The cross is the demonstration of God's heart toward sinners. It is in this way that God shows His love for the world, that His only begotten Son would be given for us to have eternal life. It is in laying down His life that Jesus redeems a people for Himself from every tribe, nation, and tongue.

Brothers and sisters, why should the day that our Savior died be called ‘Good Friday’? It’s good because it is on this day that we celebrate the only hope we have for salvation – the death of Jesus Christ for our sins.

And it is good because we know that Sunday’s coming. Jesus will not stay in the tomb. And that’s why it’s such good news for us today.

Let’s pray...

## **Lord's Supper**

I'm going to invite the deacons to come now as we celebrate the Lord's Supper together. This supper is an ordinance commanded by Jesus, and we are given instructions for it in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians chapter 11. There we read that we are to do this in remembrance of Jesus.

We are to examine ourselves and so eat of the bread and the cup. So this is a time in which we confess to God and one another any known sin. And we then recall the abundant mercy of Jesus in taking on each of our sins on Himself at the Cross. And because of His shed blood, we can be made new.

And so this table is also for believers in the gospel of Christ as you've heard it this evening. If you're with us and not a member, but are trusting in this gospel for your salvation, we invite you to partake with us as a sign of the unity of God's church. If you're not a believer, then I am glad that you're here, but I would ask that you heed the warnings of Scripture and refrain from partaking.

In just a moment, the deacons will pass the elements. Please hold on to them and we'll partake together as a sign of unity. The bread is gluten-free and the cup is grape juice. In just a moment, we'll return thanks to the Lord and the deacons will begin passing.

As we celebrate the Lord's Supper this evening, we will do it a bit different than at other times. Instead of singing as we normally would, we will end our service by silently partaking together. Now, we don't mean for this to be a legalistic rule for those who might need to cough or have restless little ones. We simply want it to be a time for you to reflect and contemplate the death of Jesus for your sins.

So in a moment, we'll pray, and pass the elements. Then, I will silently stand up and lead us in eating the bread and drinking the cup. And with that you will be dismissed. And we would ask that you leave the auditorium in quiet and silence when you are ready. If you would like to remain for a while, you are welcome to stay and pray or think on the Lord's death for you. Let's remember the Lord's death until He comes.