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Series: *Holy Week 2020 – What Happens?*

Title: *What Happened When Jesus Died?*

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Scripture: Mark 15:22-39

I know I'm showing my age, but when I was a teen---back in the last part of the last century---back then movie theatres only showed one movie at a time. There were none of the multi-plexes like we have now.

Here's something else, back in the day, theaters had large ornate lobbies. I remember the lobby in the last single-showing theater built in my hometown had sculptures from Greek and Roman times complete with fountains flowing around them. It was pretty fancy! The reason for this design was in those days many films had an intermission; a chance for you get up and walk around, a chance to hit the bathroom, and of course, a chance to buy some more of that pricey popcorn and soda!

Well, one of my favorite Christian writers, Calvin Miller, was around in those days and he shares about a time he went to a movie theater like that. It was showing one of the huge epic Biblical movies that came out in the 1960's. He writes,

"Just before the intermission the crucifixion was presented in breathtaking color and drama. As Jesus died on the screen there in that movie, a terrible dark storm formed behind Him. The camera caught rivulets of blood flowing from the wounds in Jesus' hands. That rivulet of blood would flow down the cross and into a depression in the stone at the base of the cross. Then the rain began to fall. The rain accumulated in that small basin and mingled with the red. Soon the pool filled to overflowing and began trickling down the mountainside. The small red rill combined with other torrents of rushing water, and finally it became a great crimson tide for this world's salvation. But more than that, for my salvation."

The movie ended at this point for the intermission, and Miller joined the crowd and made his way to the theater lobby. He says,

"In the lobby men laughed and chattered as though nothing had happened. Jewelry-bedecked women tossed their heads with lighthearted caprice. Children clamored for a drink at the water fountain. A noisy line formed at the concession booth. It was not that I had gone to that lobby expecting everyone to be collected in little prayer groups or hear them singing 'When I Survey the Wondrous Cross' but I couldn't help being a bit befuddled."

We see the same reaction---or lack thereof---to the cross today. I mean, most people who see the cross are not impressed with it, moved by it. It's so familiar they have forgotten what happened on those rugged beams.

Well, this week we have an opportunity to change that. That's the way it is every Holy Week. I mean Holy Week always opens the door to faith conversations, but that is ESPECIALLY true THIS Holy Week. I believe that because of this Pandemic, people's ears and hearts are more open than ever. Newscasters and celebrities are encouraging prayer and mentioning the name of God in a good light---because people are afraid. So, THIS Holy Week I want us to open God's Word and ask Him to prepare us for these conversations. I want us to ask God to help us share the significance of Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection. I'm praying we'll move a lot of marbles as God gives us unique opportunities to Google chat or Facetime or Zoom with neighbors and friends talking about His great love.

On this PALM SUNDAY, I want us to focus on being ready to answer questions like this: *"What Happened When Jesus Died on the Cross?"*

Okay, open your Bibles to Mark 10:22-39. Follow along as I read:

22 - They brought Jesus to the place called Golgotha (which means "the place of the skull").

23 - Then they offered Him wine mixed with myrrh, but He did not take it.

24 - And they crucified Him. Dividing up His clothes, they cast lots to see what each would get.

25 - It was nine in the morning when they crucified Him.

26 - The written notice of the charge against Him read: "The King of the Jews."

27 - They crucified two rebels with Him, one on His right and one on His left.

Now skip down to verse 33.

33 - At noon, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon.

34 - And at three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?" (which means "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?").

35 - When some of those standing near heard this, they said, "Listen, He's calling Elijah."

36 - Someone ran, filled a sponge with wine vinegar, put it on a staff, and offered it to Jesus to drink. "Now leave Him alone. Let's see if Elijah comes to take Him down," he said.

37 - With a loud cry, Jesus breathed His last.

38 - The curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom.

39 - And when the centurion, who stood there in front of Jesus, saw how He died, He said, "Surely this man was the Son of God!"

Okay, with those words in our minds let's seek the answer to our question: What happened when Jesus died on those crossbeams?

Here's what to say to your neighbors and friends who bring that up.

(1) The first thing that happened on the cross is Jesus SHOWED us how much God LOVES each of US.

As Romans 5:8 says, ***"God commends His love toward us in this, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."***

I'm told that in St. Paul's Cathedral in London there is a life-sized marble statue of Jesus, writhing in anguish on the cross. The inscription on the statue says: ***"This is how God loved the world."***

I like that because the cross is the clearest revelation of God's great love. Jesus died in the way He did, to show us the extent to which God's love would go.

If Jesus had refused the cross, if in the end He would have decided to come down from the cross, then there would have been a limit to the love of God---a point beyond which the love of God would not go. But He didn't, so the cross reveals there is no limit.

Jesus died for ALL of us, because God loves ALL of us. As Jesus said in John 3:16, ***"For God so loved THE WORLD, that He gave His only Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."***

As many of you know, my son, Daniel is in the Air Force. He's a pediatrician specializing in Infectious Disease. Last week, like so many of our military doctors and nurses, Daniel got orders to leave his hospital in Norfolk and help with this pandemic. He was sent to a base far from his family to be part of a team of doctors and nurses who will fly to places in the world where U.S. Citizens are suffering from Covid-19 and bring them home. His orders are for a six-month deployment.

Now, I see the importance of that mission. I'm thankful for our military. I'm proud of their working to help. I'm proud of Daniel. But I admit, my first thought was, *"I don't want MY SON to go. If he does, there's a good chance he will get this virus. And I don't want that to happen."*

I mean, I'm conflicted here. Yes, I want this pandemic to end. Yes, I want people to get the treatment they need. But not at the cost of my son.

Do you get my point?

I love the world---but not THAT much---not THIS father!

Well our Heavenly Father's God's love IS that great. The cross shows us that He loves everyone on this planet--even those people whose behavior makes us think of them as UN-loveable. God loves them enough to give His only Son to die a cruel death because He knows that is the only way pay their sin debt. Let that familiar fact sink in. Say this aloud, inserting your own name: ***"For God so loved MARK ADAMS that He gave His only Son."*** When I think that---REALLY think that it blows me away.

And it leads us to a second thing that happened on that cross.

(2) At the cross Jesus PAID the PRICE for our SIN.

You see, sin has a consequence, a price to be paid. Just as we will be fined if we disobey Governor Hogan's stay at home order, we each owe an UNPAYABLE fine for our sin.

Romans 3:23 says, ***"All have sinned---all fall short of the Glory of God."***

Romans 6:23 says, ***"the consequence of that---the price---the wage we owe for our sin---is DEATH."***

Death is the fine, death is the consequence---the cost. So, when Jesus died on that cross, He was paying that FINE---that COST---for ALL PEOPLE. This is what Paul is talking about in 1st Corinthians when he says that, as Christians, we ***"were bought with a price."***

In New York City on the corner of the Avenue of the America's and West 44th Street there is a sign. It's 25 feet wide, weights 1,500 pounds and uses 306 light bulbs. Those bulbs constantly, endlessly declare how much our U.S. Debt is. It also flashes what each family's share of that debt is. When this pandemic ends and we go to visit the Big Apple, I think I'll skip seeing this sign. It's too depressing! Right now the debt is over 23 trillion dollars and growing. My share is over \$400, 000! That's YOUR share too!

I'm told the clock was not designed originally to run backwards---but that's okay---that function hasn't been needed that often. Plans are in the works to update this grim "tourist attraction" so that it can display not trillions but quadrillions of dollars.

Lucado writes about this clock and says,

"What if Heaven had one of these? A marquee that measured, not our fiscal debt, but our spiritual one? Scripture often refers to sin in financial terminology. Jesus taught us to pray, 'Forgive us our debts.' (Matthew 6:12). If a sin is a debt, do you and I have a dot matrix trespass counter in Heaven? Does it click up at each infraction?"

We lie. CLICK

We gossip. CLICK

We demand our way. CLICK

We doze off while listening to Pastor Mark's online sermon. CLICK CLICK CLICK!"

I added that last one. The point is, spiritual debts are much worse than financial ones. A financial debt, like falling behind on your mortgage, can separate you from your home. But our SPIRITUAL debt---that separates us from God! As Isaiah 59:2 says, ***"Your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear."*** I'll talk about this separation in a moment.

According to Heaven's "debt clock" we owe more than we could ever pay. Because we are sinners, we sin every day, and every sin brings more debt. So, as Paul puts it in Romans 7:24, we ask, ***"Who will deliver me?"*** *Who will FREE me from this unpayable debt?!* Paul gives us the answer in verse 25. He says, ***"Thanks be to God, Who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord!"***

Jesus made our deliverance possible. Because on the cross He died our death. And in so doing, He PAID our sin debt.

Do you remember the old chorus? Sing it with me.

"He paid a debt He did not owe; I owed a debt I could not pay I needed someone to wash my sins away. And now I sing a brand new song, Amazing grace all day long. Christ Jesus paid the debt that I could never pay!"

So, here's what happened on the cross. God showed how much He loves us by paying the price for our sins. But there's one more thing I want to mention.

(3) At the cross Jesus INVITED us into relationship.

He hung on that tree on the top of a hill called Golgotha as an invitation to all mankind to return to God. Jesus said, ***"As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; so that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. Behold I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in."***

The Scripture we read a moment ago records the fact that when Jesus died, the curtain in the temple that surrounded the Holy of Holies was torn in two. The Holy of Holies was that place in the temple where God dwelt. Only the High Priest went in there and he only went in once a year. Even then they tied a rope around his ankle so they could pull him out if God struck him dead.

I mean, as I said earlier, God was separate from people---separated because of our sin. And this curtain was the separator. It was the barrier.

Now, understand this was no chiffon see-through drapery. No, the veil was five inches thick. It was woven of seventy-two twisted plaits, each plait consisting of twenty-four threads. It was sixty-feet from top to bottom and thirty-feet from side to side. This curtain was literally a WALL made of fabric.

Now, I can rip one piece of paper. Or two---or five---but if it gets thicker than that---I can't.

Well, this curtain was not made of paper, it was a five-inches of heavy fabric. No MAN could tear it in half.

Who do you think did it? Here's a hint. The Bible says it was torn from TOP to BOTTOM. Do you know of any sixty-foot tall men or women---with incredible hand and arm strength? I don't!

No, it was GOD's hands that tore that fabric. He grasped the curtain and ripped it in two---inviting us into His presence---because the sin that separates us has been paid for. No more division. No more separation. **"No more condemnation for those who** accept God's invitation **those who are in Christ Jesus."** Romans 8;1

Hebrews 10 says, that because of what happened on the cross, **"...we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus---by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, His body-- so let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings."**

Would you pray with me?

Abba Father, I ask that in these moments You would speak to those listening who have never responded to the Cross of Christ. Once again, I ask You to use that Cross as an invitation, an invitation for them to experience Your life-changing forgiveness and love. And Father, speak to Christians today as well. Convict us of our need to share the Gospel with people. I ask all this in Jesus' name.

Amen