

AT CALVARY PART ONE

Date: April 9, 2020

Scripture: Luke 23

Hey, good morning. My name is Phillip Townsend. During this season of Lent, we're reflecting on the miracles of Jesus throughout the gospel accounts. We'll see how each one of these miracles points us to the greatest miracle of all, the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. The miracle of Jesus we'll be focused on today is found in Luke 23 as Jesus is led from His trial to His execution.

In this account, I want to show you the miracle of Jesus taking your place. This is also known as substitutionary atonement and it simply means this: Jesus went to the cross so that you and I could walk free. Let's begin together. I'll start in verse one.

Then the whole company of them arose and brought him before Pilate. ² And they began to accuse him, saying, "We found this man misleading our nation and forbidding us to give tribute to Caesar, and saying that he himself is Christ, a king." ³ And Pilate asked him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" And he answered him, "You have said so." ⁴ Then Pilate said to the chief priests and the crowds, "I find no guilt in this man." ⁵ But they were urgent, saying, "He stirs up the people, teaching throughout all Judea, from Galilee even to this place."

Luke 23:1-5

¹³ Pilate then called together the chief priests and the rulers and the people, ¹⁴ and said to them, "You brought me this man as one who was misleading the people. And after examining him before you, behold, I did not find this man guilty of any of your charges against him. ¹⁵ Neither did Herod, for he sent him back to us. Look, nothing deserving death has been done by him. ¹⁶ I will therefore punish and release

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him.”¹⁸ But they all cried out together, “Away with this man, and release to us Barabbas”—¹⁹ a man who had been thrown into prison for an insurrection started in the city and for murder.²⁰ Pilate addressed them once more, desiring to release Jesus,²¹ but they kept shouting, “Crucify, crucify him!”²² A third time he said to them, “Why? What evil has he done? I have found in him no guilt deserving death. I will therefore punish and release him.”²³ But they were urgent, demanding with loud cries that he should be crucified. And their voices prevailed.²⁴ So Pilate decided that their demand should be granted.²⁵ He released the man who had been thrown into prison for insurrection and murder, for whom they asked, but he delivered Jesus over to their will.

Luke 23:13-25

By the end of our time together today, I hope you'll be able to see the gospel radiating through this text, particularly the miracle of Jesus Christ taking your place. Because you see, not only did Jesus walk to the cross while Barabbas walked free, Jesus walked to the cross while you, while I, walked free.

First, let me explain the significance of what's happening in this First Century moment. All of this takes place in Jerusalem during the time of the Passover when it was customary for the Roman governor named Pilate to release one Jewish prisoner. It was an act of clemency, an act of goodwill toward the Jews.

There were two men under consideration for release. The first was a man named Barabbas, a well-known criminal who had been found guilty of rebellion and murder. The second was a man named Jesus, a Teacher who was found to be innocent of all charges. But even though Pilate was convinced that Jesus was innocent, he feared the people and ultimately caved under their pressure.

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Essentially the choice that Pilate was setting before the people in this moment was this, will you crucify an innocent man or a murderer? While the answer to that question should be clear to anyone with any sense of justice, the angry mob looked upon the innocent Lamb of God and demanded, "Crucify him. Crucify him." So, Jesus went to the cross and a murderer walked free.

Let's put all of this in perspective. Here we have an unjust people making unjust accusations, conducting an unjust trial, releasing an unjust criminal, seeking an unjust execution, all of this against a just man, an innocent man. In fact, the only innocent man to ever walk the planet.

When we read this, our hearts, they naturally become enraged at the injustice against Jesus. We think, how could they? How could they do something so evil, so callous and against Jesus of all people? But this is when the voice of the Holy Spirit begins to speak and He speaks a painful truth that our hearts need to hear and receive today. That truth is this, you will never appreciate that the cross was done for you until you grieve that the cross was done by you.

You will never appreciate that the cross was done for you until you grieve that the cross was done by you. Until you see yourself standing there with that shrieking mob, with your heart full of hatred and hostility, with your voice demanding the death of the innocent Son of God, then you do not understand the depths of your own sin or your own desperate need for a Savior.

Because you see, the words that Peter preached to the men of Israel in Acts 3 are just as indicting of us today when he said, "The God of our fathers, glorified his servant Jesus, whom you delivered over and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he had

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decided to release him. But you denied the Holy and Righteous One, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you and you killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead."

You see, this story is about something far more profound than a man named Barabbas evading justice. This is a story about the power of the gospel for all people of all time. You see, in this story, you're not just some random bystander in the crowd, friend. In reality, you are Barabbas. I am Barabbas. We're murderers. We're the worst of all criminals standing guilty before a Sovereign King and the rightful punishment is physical and spiritual death, complete and utter separation from the holiness and goodness of God.

When Jesus traded places with Barabbas that day, He simultaneously traded places with every sinner who ever had or ever would call upon His name. A miraculous exchange was taking place in that moment that would reach its ultimate climax with Jesus hanging on a cross bearing the sins of the entire world. Isaiah said it this way, "He was pierced for our transgressions. He was crushed for our iniquities. The punishment that brought us peace was upon him and by his wounds we are healed."

This is the point of it all. For everyone listening to this podcast right now, if you have put your faith in Jesus Christ, then understand He took your place. He took your place. Because Jesus took your place, you will never have to stand trial for your sins because Jesus already answered for every one of them in your place.

Every rightful accusation against you was heaped upon Him. That means there is no longer any condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. Every accusation against you is now a lie because Jesus took your place, friend. It means you will never

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experienced the wages of your sin, because Jesus already paid the price for every one of them in your place, past, present and future. Every sin was laid upon Him and in exchange you've been given the perfect, spotless, righteousness of Jesus Christ. You have been clothed in the royal robes of the King. You've been adopted as a son, as a daughter of the Most High God. You've been given a new name, a new identity and a new eternity. You're now chosen, forgiven, redeemed, restored, beloved, secure and united with Christ forever.

Just think about this for a moment. This is the mystery and the irony of the cross, that death has been defeated by death, that the sinless one became sin in order to save sinners, that the judge of the whole world has become the justifier of law breakers, and the innocent Son of God cried out on that cross, "Oh God, I am forsaken," so that for all of eternity you would never have to. I want you to ask yourself this question today, who was it that delivered up Jesus to die on the cross?

Ultimately, it wasn't Judas out of greed. It wasn't Pilate out of fear. It wasn't even the Jews out of envy, but it was the Father out of love. God so loved the world, He so loved you, He so loved me, that He gave us Jesus. Would you just take a moment right now to pause and feel the weight of that truth?

As we close, we don't know what happened to Barabbas after his release. Did Barabbas surrender his life to Jesus, or did he continue in a life of sin and rebellion? We don't have that answer, but we do know that Barabbas had the same opportunity each of us has today to repent and believe the gospel. All of this points us to the resurrection, which is not only the ultimate miracle, but the resurrection is the ultimate validation that the Father accepted the life of Jesus in place of yours. Because you see, not just anyone can die in your place. Only a perfectly sinless substitute could

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satisfy the demands of a radically Holy God and there is no one, no one, who meets those demands except the person of Jesus Christ.

As we look forward to resurrection Sunday and all that it means, I want to invite you to reflect on the miracle of this substitution, this great exchange that Jesus Christ took your place.

Let's pray together.

Lord Jesus, we are forever changed by the power of this gospel. We can't even understand the depths of Your love that You would take our place, that You would walk to a criminal's cross so that we could walk free. No matter how many times we hear that, God, please don't let our hearts grow numb to it. You have done the impossible on our behalf and right now we come before You in worship and awe and wonder and gratefulness for the cross. In Your name we pray, Jesus. Amen.