

The Word Became Flesh

Jesus Is Crucified

Fairview Missionary Church | Angola, IN

Scripture: John 19

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So, we have three weeks left in the book of John in a series that we have been calling "The Word Became Flesh." We're almost there, almost to the end, and I want you to remember that John is authoring this book. The reason why he wrote the gospel of John is to share with us why he believes that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah who came to save the world. This is his eyewitness account.

These are first-hand stories of what took place and what these things mean for us who would come later. And so John wants to share with us his opinion. Thus far in the story, Jesus has performed many signs, many wonders, many miracles. He has made the amazing claim to be the great I am. And the Jews would not have missed that when he used these "I am" statements, he was claiming to be the same God of Moses.

He was claiming to be God. He has healed the blind, he has raised the dead, and John tells us that he has been investing in His disciples, teaching them, and training them, and preparing them, because there is a time when Jesus is no longer going to be here. It will soon be their turn to take the lead, spreading the good news of who Jesus is. But the main reason that Jesus came has yet to be accomplished.

We know that Jesus came to take away the sins of the world by offering Himself as a sacrifice in our place. And this is now where we head today in John chapter 19. If you have your Bibles, I encourage you to open up with me to John chapter 19, as I just set the scene again so you know where we are at in the story. Jesus has been teaching His disciples in this upper room in Jerusalem of Israel, celebrating the Passover feast with His disciples.

This is not the first time that He has done this, but it would be the last. After the dinner, they made their way to the Garden of Gethsemane over the Kidron Valley, and Jesus has been arrested. Jesus has just finished his mock or sham trials before Anice and Caiaphas. It's not a real trial. They had already convicted him guilty. He has been brought before Pilate, the Roman governor, because the Jewish leaders want him killed.

Pilate has already tried to release Jesus because he believes that Jesus is innocent, but the Jewish leaders aren't having it. And this is where we pick up the story today in John 19:1. Let me pray, and then we will jump in because we have a lot to cover today. Heavenly Father would come before you. I pray that You would prepare our hearts for what You want to speak to us today.

It's not going to be an easy lesson. John chapter 19 is not an easy chapter. It's not easy for us to read, and so I pray that You would speak to us through Your Spirit this morning. We ask this in Jesus' name, amen. Again, before we start reading John chapter 19, I just want to warn you that this is the most difficult chapter in the entire book of John.

It is going to be difficult for us to hear and to read some of the things that are going to take place, and so I just want to give you that warning. We start in John chapter 19 verse 1. "Then Pilate took Jesus and had him flogged. The soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns, and they put it on his head. They clothed him in a purple robe, and they went up to him again and again saying, "Hail, king of the Jews," and they slapped him in the face.

Some have suggested that Pilate made the decision to have Jesus flogged in hopes that it would satisfy the mob and the Jewish leaders without having to crucify Jesus. Remember, he's already come to the conclusion that Jesus has not done anything that is deserving of crucifixion, but he knows that there is about to be a riot on his hands, and so possibly he comes to the conclusion, "Let's just have Jesus flogged and maybe that will suffice what they are trying to do." But here is the question, what is a flogging?

A flogging is not a simple slap on the hand. A flogging in the Roman world was when they would take the prisoner, and they would tie them often to a pole or to a stump, and they would tie them in such a way that intentionally their back was stretched about as tight as it could go. They would either be hanging there from the pole or hanging over the stump that was there.

And a Roman soldier had a whip in his hand that was now and is now often referred to as the cat of nine tails. And in that whip, there would be multiple leather strands that would come out of it, and each strand often had sharp pieces of bone or metal or even shells that they could find. They would tie them into the leather. And the Roman soldiers, usually two or three, so they could take turns because they would get wore out, would hold on to that, and they would crow hop into the person and whip it into their back.

Of course, as they would whip it down into their back, the pieces of bone and shell and other things, the whole intent and purpose was that it would stick into the flesh. It would wrap around their back to the front, and the soldier would rip it off them, intentionally ripping the flesh so that after the flogging, the back would be reduced to raw flesh. Of course, the cuts would work around into the front, and it didn't just stop in the back, they would whip the bottom side as well, and certainly onto the legs.

There was this theory that they would do no more than thirty-nine hits with the whip, because the Romans started finding out that after 40, the people would die. And the whole point was to take them as far and as close to death as they could without them dying. Many would lose consciousness in the midst of this, and so this was a beating that you and I could hardly comprehend and one that we would never want to picture.

John also tells us that the soldiers made a crown of thorns, and this crown of thorns was made with a material that had thorns that stuck out from the twigs roughly two to three inches. And they would form it into a circle. Again, some theologians believe that they actually made it more into a crown so that it would cover not just around the front and the back, but all the way over the top. And when they made this crown of thorns, John tells us that they pushed it into his scalp.

They would push it down as far as they could until these sharp points would stick and hit the scalp. Early church fathers, origin, and Tertullian said that they believe he had this crown on the entire time until his death. John then tells us that after the flogging was done and they had put the crown of thorns onto his head, that they took a purple robe and they wrapped it around his back and it would cover to the front.

And purple was a sign of royalty. It was an expensive cloth, and so they were beginning to mock him with this crown of thorns and this purple robe that they had placed on. John tells us that they began to slap him in the face. Other gospel writers tell us that they put a staff in his hand and that the soldiers also had staffs and that they were hitting him and mocking him, saying, "Prophecy who has hit you," meaning that it possibly was to a point that he was so marred that he could barely see.

And again, imagine being hit over the head when you have the crown of thorns and the stick is hitting that and pushing it further and further onto your scalp. Now, also imagine that purple robe being put on you and it's staying there as we will see. Pilate will bring Jesus back out with the purple robe. But of course, before he goes to the cross, they rip that purple robe off. And I want you to know how our body responds. Of course, a scab would form, and a scab would probably form in that material so that when they ripped it off, it would reopen all of those wounds that had potentially started to scab over.

The entire point of a flogging, the entire point of a crucifixion was humiliation. It was to humiliate those that were there. This physical and emotional abuse that Jesus endured is the likes of which that you and I will probably never know. And this is only the beginning. We move on to verse 4.

Once more, Pilate came out and he said to the Jews gathered there, "Look, I am bringing him out to you to let you know that I find no basis for a charge against him, which should let you know the type of culture that we are in, where he thinks this man is innocent, and he's willing to do this to him. When Jesus came out wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe, Pilate said to them, "Here is the man." As soon as the chief priests and their officials saw him, they shouted, "Crucify!

Crucify!" But Pilate answered, "You take Him and crucify Him. As for me, I find no basis for a charge against Him." If Pilate's goal was to try to suffice the people and to save Jesus by having Him flogged, it certainly didn't work. And here is our first point today. Some people today still try to save Jesus by saying, "Jesus is not God.

He wasn't right about everything, about everything." Just as Pilate maybe was trying to save Jesus by having him flogged, having Him humiliated so that maybe everybody would just move on with their lives. And you and I need to be reminded that Jesus doesn't need me to save Him, He has saved me. These attempts of trying to somehow stand in the gap for Jesus are just as wrong as what Pilate did.

Pilate still claims here there is no basis for a charge against him. This man doesn't deserve to die. We go on in verse 7. The Jewish leaders insisted, "We have a law, and according to that law, he must die because he claimed to be the Son of God." Now, when Pilate heard this, John said he was even more afraid, and he went back inside the palace. "Where do you come from?" He asked Jesus, but Jesus gave him no answer.

Here, John shares with us that the religious leaders finally share their true charge against Jesus. They want Him dead because He claimed to be God. Did you know that this is the same reason that people reject Jesus today? They reject Him because He claimed to be God, and if He is God, then He deserves to be God of their lives, and yet people don't want God Him to be God of their own lives, and they are willing to off any competitors.

People want to sit on the throne of their own lives. They want to make their own decisions. They want to be the god of their lives. And when somebody else comes and tries to take over control or tries to push them in a certain direction, they are willing to do whatever it takes to remain on the throne. Verse 10, "Do you refuse to speak to me?" Pilate said. "Don't you realize that I have the power either to free you or to crucify you?" And Jesus answered, "You would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above.

Therefore, the one who handed me over to you is guilty of a greater sin." Pilate was stunned. He was shocked that Jesus refused to beg for his life as so many had done before. But Jesus knew who was really in control. You see, in that moment, Pilate thought that He was the one who had the power. He was the one who was going to make the decision of whether this man was going to live or He was going to die.

But we find out that Pilate only had the power in that moment to do what was wrong and not to do what was right, because he was afraid of the Jewish leaders. He was afraid that they were going to start a riot. He was afraid that he was going to lose his position as governor. He was afraid of what would happen if he didn't give in to their request. So, Pilate, thinking he had power in reality, had no power, and the same is true today. Real power is the ability to do what is right.

Real power, real freedom comes in the ability to make the right decision not to be controlled by evil. I talk to people often who want to ask me questions about my faith, and they sometimes say they feel bad for me because they think that I'm living my life following a set of nonsense rules and that I'm somehow being burdened by these rules and, you know, things that God has given to me.

And I can't help, but as we have these types of conversations with unbelievers, as they think I am the one that's in chains, they think I am the one that is burdened because I am doing my best to follow these commands that

God has given me, and they think they are living a life of freedom when in reality every single one that I talk with is actually in bondage to sin. They are the ones that are being controlled by evil, controlled by addictions, controlled by the desires of the flesh.

True freedom comes in Jesus Christ. We go on in verse 12. From then on, John tells us that Pilate tried to set Jesus free, but the Jewish leaders kept shouting, "If you let this man go, you are no friend of Caesar, for anyone who claims to be a king opposes Caesar." They knew which buttons to push, didn't they?

When Pilate heard this, he brought Jesus out and he sat down at the judge's seat at a place known as the stone pavement, which in Aramaic is Gabbatha. It was the day of preparation of the Passover, and it was about noon by this point. "Here is your king," Pilate said to the Jews, but they shouted, "Take Him away, take Him away, crucify Him." "Shall I crucify your king?" Pilate asked.

"Well, we have no king but Caesar," the chief priest answered. Finally, Pilate handed him over to be crucified, so the soldiers took charge of Jesus. Pilate would now make his final judgment. The sentence had been cast before the people. Most theologians believe that this trial would have begun around 6:00 AM and so it's six hours of going back and forth and trying to make up his mind.

And finally, Pilate comes out to this place known as the stone pavement where he would sit on the judgment seat and proclaim that Jesus would be death, would be killed. Pilate acquiesces to the mob's shouts of away with him and he hands Jesus over to be crucified. There are still times today when people are angry enough with God just as these Jewish leaders were that they wish Him dead.

It is far more common for people simply to want God to disappear than to deal with their issues and even blame Him for their issues. I want to remind you, and I will say this multiple times today and multiple times next week. Of course, we know that the sentence that Pilate gave for Jesus' crucifixion is not the reason that he died. Jesus was laying down His life by becoming the Passover Lamb who would take away the sins of the world.

It was His choice, not pilots, not the Jewish authorities. He made the decision that that would take place. Verse 17. Carrying His own cross, John tells us that Jesus went out to the place of the skull, which in Aramaic is called Golgotha. There they crucified Him, and with Him two others, one on each side and Jesus in the middle. Again, we see that John is sharing details, specific details, to prove the eyewitness account that he knows exactly where Jesus was crucified.

He knows that He was crucified in the middle of two other people. He knows that He carried the cross to the place where He would be crucified. And just so you know, I know that we often have this picture of Jesus carrying the entire cross, but it is far more likely that He just carried the cross beam, which still could have weighed 100 to 200 pounds. You remember the condition that he is in, right? They've ripped off the purple robe, all of his back scars and wounds are opened up again. They tie the cross beam to his shoulders, and he is forced to carry it to Gaul Gotha.

Crucifixion in this time and age was so awful and so degrading that polite Romans wouldn't talk about it in public. They refused to discuss it because it was so grotesque. John goes on in verse 19, "Pilate had a notice prepared and he fastened it to the cross." It read, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." Many of the Jews read this sign for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city, and the sign was written in Aramaic, in Latin, and in Greek.

The chief priest of the Jews protested to Pilate, "Do not write the king of the Jews, but instead that this man claimed to be king of the Jews," and Pilate answered, "What I have written, I have written." He finally grows a backbone. It's a little late, right? It truly is amazing that Jesus had a sign that was over His head that was proclaiming the reason that He was being crucified, and that sign read in three languages, "King of the Jews."

It's amazing because kings of this world often gain power to their throne through other people dying, but Jesus proclaimed to be king of the entire world through His own death.

Jesus, King of the Jews. Verse 23, "When the soldiers crucified Jesus, they took His clothes, dividing them into four shares, one for each of them, with the undergarment remaining. This garment was seamless, woven in one piece from the top to the bottom. "Let's not tear it," they said to one another.

"Let's decide by lot who will get it." "And this happened," John tells us, that the Scripture might be fulfilled that said, "They divided my clothes among them and cast lots for my garment." So this is what the soldiers did. Do you see here that Jesus literally gave everything? Everything, all the way down to His clothes.

So, if you are reading this and picturing this and understanding this, if they divided up the four pieces of clothes that he was wearing and he only had the undergarment left and they took that off, that means, again, the point of the cross was humiliation. That means that Jesus actually hung on the cross naked. The whole point was to humiliate others, to convince them not to do whatever it is that they had done that caused them to be on the cross.

And yet in the midst of all of this, we know that God is in control of everything that is happening for the Romans without even knowing it have fulfilled the prophecy in Psalm chapter 22:18 that says, "They divided my clothes among them and cast lots for my garment." This was God in control of everything even in this moment. Verse 25, John tells us that near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother's sister, married the wife of Clopis and Mary Magdalene.

And when Jesus saw His mother there and the disciple whom He loved, this is John standing nearby, He said to her, "Woman, here is your son." And don't think woman is a derogatory term, it was a term of endearment. And to the disciple, he said, "Here is your mother." And from that time on, the disciple took her into his home. And so John took care of Mary going forward. It is amazing to me. We can talk about why Jesus chose John to do that. We don't have time to talk about that.

You can research it. It's interesting. There's a couple theories because, of course, Jesus had brothers and sisters that could have taken care of her. Why did He choose John? But here's the more amazing truth, that on the cross, in the midst of the pain and the humiliation and the suffering that He is enduring, when it would have been totally logical and understandable for Him to be thinking about Himself, even in that moment He was thinking about others. He was thinking about His mom. He asked John to take care of her.

It truly is amazing that when we were on the, when He was on the cross, we were on His mind. He was thinking about us, that's why He was doing it. Let's go on to verse 28. "Later, knowing that everything had now been finished, and so that the Scriptures would be fulfilled, Jesus said, "I am thirsty." A jar of wine vinegar was there, so they soaked a sponge in it, and they put the sponge on a stalk of hyssop plant, and they lifted it up to Jesus' lips, and when he had received the drink, Jesus said, "It is finished." And with that, he bowed his head and gave up His Spirit.

John tells us that in that moment, Jesus proclaims that everything that He had come to do was now finished. Jesus had successfully carried out His mission. He had become truly the Passover Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. And the Jews would not have missed that. The symbolism, the fact that John tells us it was a hyssop plant that the sponge was attached to, that he took the drink from.

Again, remember, they're celebrating Passover, and what did they use to wipe the blood of the lamb around the doorpost? It was a hyssop plant. The very mention of that would have taken their minds all the way back to that, that Jesus is fulfilling that promise here. And Jesus' final word. It's three words in our English translation. It is finished, but it is one word in Greek. Jesus said, "To tell us." And this can also be interpreted.

It's fully appropriate to interpret it not just it is finished, but also to interpret it as paid in full. Again, John is sharing specific details, proving that he is an eyewitness, that Jesus bowed his head. He said these words. He spoke to me. It gives evidence to his witness. And again, we are reminded that Jesus gave up His Spirit.

No one took Jesus' life from Him. He, in a manner unlike any other man, gave up His Spirit. I'm not sure if you've ever taken the time to think about this before, but death entered the world because of what took place in Genesis. Remember Adam and Eve sin and sin brought death into the world? What do we know about Jesus? Jesus came into this world perfect. He was sinless and without fault because a sacrifice had to be sinless and without fault.

And so if Jesus was sinless and without fault, I'm going to ask the question, "Is it true that He could not die unless He gave up His Spirit because death had no hold over Him because He had not sinned? The only way that Jesus could have died is if He willingly gave up His Spirit because He is not a sinner like you or like me. He chose to give it up.

Verse 31, "Now it was the day of preparation," John tells us, "And the next day was to be a special Sabbath. Because the Jewish leaders did not want the bodies left on the cross during the Sabbath, they asked Pilate to have the legs broken and the bodies taken down. The soldiers therefore came and broke the legs of the first man who had been crucified with Jesus, and then those of the other. You might say, "Well, that doesn't make any sense.

Why were they breaking the legs of these people that were being crucified?" Well, it's because by breaking their legs, the crucified man could no longer push themselves up and get a breath of air and they would suffocate. One of the things that we have not talked about yet, and we don't have a lot of time to discuss this, but on the cross there was a little platform there where their feet would be placed, and that platform was there intentionally, because when they would hang their arms up in the position that they would put the body in was such a way that the only way they could get a breath was if they pushed themselves up.

So, if they could no longer push themselves up, they would suffocate, but that means that the entire time they are on the cross, the only way they are surviving is every time they want a breath, they have to push themselves up. Now, think about Jesus. We've talked about what happened to His back, and you know that the cross beam and the cross was not some fine-sanded piece of wood. It certainly would have been very rough there. And so, every time he takes a breath, his back is rubbing up and down that wood.

And so, they ask that the legs be broken of those that are being crucified because they're concerned that a special Sabbath is coming up and they don't want it to be ruined by these guys hanging on the cross. Think about that. How their minds were working in that moment. But in verse 33, John says, "When they came to Jesus, because they broke the legs of both of the guys next to Him, they found that He was already dead, and so they did not break His legs.

Instead, one of the soldiers pierced Jesus' side with a spear, bringing a sudden flow of blood and water. And again, in that moment, unknowingly, proving that God is in control, unknowingly, the Roman soldier fulfills another prophecy in Psalm 34:20 that says, "Not one of his bones will be broken." Now, I'm not a doctor, but I've read some articles about this from doctors that do make the claim that the flow of blood and water from the wound have led them to believe that Jesus died from a ruptured heart because something happens physically there.

But what I do know is the Romans were satisfied with this evidence that Jesus was actually dead. He actually was no longer alive. Verse 35, "The man who saw it has given testimony and his testimony is true. He knows that he tells the truth and he testifies so that you also may believe." John is speaking about himself.

These things happened so that the Scripture would be fulfilled, not one of his bones would be broken, and as another Scripture says, "They will look on the one they have pierced." John claims again to have seen this with

his own eyes, and the soldiers not only fulfilled a prophecy of not breaking his bones, but they also fulfilled a prophecy in Zechariah chapter 12:10 that says, "They will look on Him whom they have pierced." As we see these prophecies being fulfilled and Jesus had no control over this taking place, He was already gone, He had given up His Spirit.

You and I need to be reminded that even in this horrific moment, which we now see as an act of love, that God is in control of everything, so that the very smallest prophetic message would be fulfilled. God is in control. Let's wrap up verses 38 through 42. Later, Joseph of Arimathea asked Pilate for the body of Jesus. Now, Joseph was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly because he feared the Jewish leaders.

With Pilate's permission, he came and took the body away. John tells us that he was accompanied by Nicodemus, the man who earlier had visited Jesus at night. Nicodemus brought with him a mixture of myrrh and aloes about 75 pounds. You remember Nicodemus from John chapter 3? Taking Jesus' body, the two of them wrapped it with the spices and strips of linen. This was in accordance with Jewish burial customs.

And at the place where Jesus was crucified, John tells us there was a garden. And in the garden was a tomb in which no one had ever been laid. And because it was the Jewish day of preparation, and since the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there. And most theologians believe that that tomb in the garden was Joseph's tomb of Arimathea, that he put Jesus in His own tomb. But this moment of taking down Jesus' body and preparing it for burial would certainly be a moment that Joseph and Nicodemus would never forget.

The removal of the bloody, dirty body of Jesus from the cross and taking out the iron spikes that would have held it there would have been both difficult physically and emotionally, so much so that this job was usually left to servants, especially in the case of rich men like Joseph and Nicodemus, and yet they knew that they had to do this themselves. I'm not sure how many in our culture could truly understand besides morticians what this would be like, how difficult it would have been.

When I was in Israel, I had the opportunity to go to both locations that claim to potentially be the tomb of Jesus. There's the one in a garden that is just a little bit of ways from the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, which is the one that is more believed to be the tomb of Jesus. I visited them both, and I just want you to know it doesn't really matter which one it was because both are empty, all right? Both are empty. His body is not there. This is the dark before the morning.

Joseph and Nicodemus preparing the body for death. We'll talk a little bit more about that next week when we get into the resurrection. But at this moment, at the end of John chapter 19, it's the death of a dream. It's the death of hope. It truly is the death of faith as the disciples have to be thinking to themselves, "Now what?" And you and I, as we're reading the story, what if the story ended there? John chapter 19, what if that was the end of the story?

If it truly was the end of the story, then our Christian faith would be like every other faith in the world that ends with the death of its leader. But I am here to encourage you that we have two chapters left to go. John 19 is not the end of the story. These men will lay this broken body in the tomb in the garden, but we will be reminded in John chapter 20 next week that Jesus is only borrowing the tomb. I saw a teenager walk in with the shirt today that I thought was funny.

It was using text language, and on the top it said YOLO, which stands for "You Only Live Once." And then the next line said, "JK," which means just kidding, and then the bottom line said, "BRB, be right back," right? So, you only live once, just kidding, be right back because he's going to come back to life, all right? He is only borrowing that tomb. Theologian Tasker says this, and I think this is an interesting note that I did not pick up on until I read this.

The fall of the first Adam took place in a garden, the garden of Eden, when they brought sin into the world. And isn't it convenient or part of God's plan that it is in a garden where his body was laid, that the second Adam,

Jesus Christ, will redeem mankind from the consequences of Adam's transgressions. It started in a garden and it ends in a garden. Here's the application for us today.

As we read about this great act of love, Jesus sacrificing Himself, taking our place on the cross. Remember when we celebrate communion, it's understanding that you and I, because of our sins, are the ones that deserve to die that death. That placard that was above him that said, "King of the Jews." Again, many theologians believe that that placard that would have been above the cross of those that were crucified was often put around those people that were carrying their cross and on it were written what they were being crucified for, their faults, their crimes that were committed.

It reminds me of a book that I had to read when I was in middle school or high school called *The Scarlet Letter*. Have any of you ever read that book, right? Where the sin is put upon her. Could you imagine what it would be like if today we lived in a world where you and I had a placard that was placed around us and etched on that placard is everything that you and I have ever done wrong, not just done wrong, but even thought. Could you imagine that? How embarrassing, how shameful would that be?

And yet as we read what Jesus did, I want you to imagine that the reason Jesus died on the cross is so that He could take your placard, your sign off of your neck and He put it on Himself. He said, "I'll carry that for you." And so after everything that Jesus went through on the cross, the humiliation, the pain, the suffering, the loss, the question for you and I today should be, "Are we too embarrassed to live for Him?" As we read about Joseph and Nicodemus, Joseph was afraid of the religious leaders, and he wondered what they would think if they knew that he believed in Jesus.

Nicodemus talked to Jesus late at night in the dark and private because he didn't want to be seen with him. Jesus gave everything, and yet these men were fearful. Jesus gave everything for you, and the question and for me, and the question we should ask is, what will we give in return? Will we allow Him to be the God of our lives? Or are we going to try to stay on our own throne and be our own God?

The Scriptures teach that He paid a price, that only He could pay so that you and I could be forgiven and have a relationship with Him. This is the good news. It's the story of Jesus. And I know it's difficult for us to comprehend, and it's a weird image to say that we are washed by the blood of Jesus. It can be a grotesque image or seen in our mind, but it's understanding that in the Old Testament, we read that without the shedding of blood there isn't forgiveness of sin, a price needs to be paid.

And so they would offer sacrifices. And it was this image that that blood, that animal was paying the price for my sin. And here we have Jesus that is saying, "I will take on your debt. I will take on your burden. I will die on the cross in your place so that you can have a relationship with me." And so the apostle Paul says that in order to have that relationship, it's as simple as recognizing your sin, recognizing that we all have a plaque that we're wearing that God can see that has all the things we've ever done and we've ever thought.

And then it's proclaiming with our mouth that Jesus is Lord and believing in our heart that God raised Him from the dead. It's believing John chapter 19 and John chapter 20 really happened. I hate to ruin the excitement and the surprise for you next week, but Jesus does come back to life. It's believing in that, it's putting your hope in that, that the same power that raised Him from the dead will raise us from the dead. That is how we have a relationship with the Creator of the universe.

He paid the price that only He could pay so that you and I could be forgiven. And today, as we close, I told you it's a difficult chapter. It's not fun to read John chapter 19, but I am excited that John chapter 20 will come next week. The altars are always open. There will be people here that would love to pray with you if you have questions.

But my prayer for us as we go out into the world is that you and I would not be ashamed of who Jesus is and what He has done, but that we would proudly proclaim that I allow Him to be Lord of my life and I will do whatever I can to honor and to give back to Him. Let me close in prayer.

Heavenly Father, thank you for the amazing act of love that you showed in sending your only Son Jesus to die on the cross in my place. It was a death and a trial that I truly cannot wrap my mind around. I don't want to see it. I don't even want to think about it because it's so difficult.

But yet, in that moment, Jesus carried my sin and made a way to you possible, and so I come before you with a grateful heart, knowing that my relationship with you is not something that I could ever earn, cannot be good enough, do enough right things. But as Paul said, I'm saved by grace through faith, not by works, so that no one can boast.

May we know You in the love that You have for us. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.