Eyes to See — Delivery Transcript

John 19:16–30 (CSB) · Wes Terry · Sunday, April 10, 2022 · *21 Days: Fast & Pray*

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And, Taylor, I really appreciated that time for all of us to get to pray before this time, before the message, as it is important to think of the word being preached as part of worship. We give praise to God, we exalt him. I try and think about my own preaching as a continuation of kind of exalting the Lord. And if I do my job right with the Spirit's help, the goal is that you see Jesus in the text just like you see Jesus in the lyrics of these songs the truth of the gospel in the text just like we sing it in the songs.

And so I hope you'll keep that attitude and mindset. For those of you who are new, my name is Wes. I'm the pastor of the church. I'll just have a little bit more to say. There's a lot of folks who are visiting today, and so at the end of the message today we'll have some ways that you can connect with us if you're comfortable doing something like that. But just a quick thank you for being here. We typically go through books of the Bible in our church, but we've been paused on our journey through the book of Revelation.

So we'll pick it back up a little bit later, but we've been on a three-week pause looking at these 21 days of prayer and fasting, and we're on day 14. Now, the first week was really tough, but also has some really cool encouragements from the Lord. This last seven days has been really, really tough. And not as much encouragement. So the Lord, I think, is testing my resolve here. But I'm sticking with it. I hope you're sticking with it as well. I'm reminded of Daniel in Daniel chapter 10, when he fasts for 21 days.

The Lord doesn't break through until the 24th day. So he's already fasted all 21. Nothing ever happened. Finally, the angel shows up on the 24th day. He says, I'm here because of your prayers, but I got caught up battling the princes of Persia and all this kind of crazy spiritual warfare. It's a really crazy text. We don't have time to get into it today. But it's just a

reminder, just 'cause you don't feel the Lord doing anything or just 'cause you don't see any immediate breakthrough doesn't mean there aren't things happening where you cannot see.

And so I want to encourage you, those of you who are fasting, to stick with it, to be faithful to what the Lord's called you to do and to keep praying for those breakthroughs. I believe the Lord will be faithful to do what he's promised to do as we seek to be faithful as he's called us to be faithful. So I want to encourage you in that and we'll break the fast. We'll break the fast on Easter. Audra asked if I had time on Easter to go with her family to Perini's.

I thought, I'll make time for that, baby. That sounds good. That sounds like a great way to break a fast. And so Perini's, here we come. Easter, Easter night. Our text today is in John chapter 19. So if you want to take your Bible, turn there, John chapter 19. We've been looking at prayer and fasting over the last couple of weeks, but today's Palm Sunday. For those of you who are kind of new to church or new to church tradition. Traditionally the church celebrates the death of Jesus on Palm Sunday.

And if you look all the way back, this was the beginning. This day was the beginning leading up to Easter of the crucifixion and subsequent resurrection of Jesus, but there were a lot of events that took place before that. And this was the day in which Jesus entered into Jerusalem and they were waving palms. That's why we get the word Palm Sunday. They're waving palm branches saying, Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. It's also a day traditionally in church calendar where we focus on the death of Jesus because we focus on the resurrection on Easter Sunday, obviously, and for obvious reasons.

And so I want to do that today. I want us to think about the death of Jesus. You don't have to think very hard about it. When you think of big movements in the past, even political movements, they almost always have an icon or a symbol associated with them. You can think back to Hitler's Germany. So Hitler's Germany had what symbol? The swastika, right? Is that what it's called? The swastika? When you see a swastika, it immediately conjures up some kind of an emotional response, and you have associations in your head.

Marxism has the hammer and the sickle, comrades, right? That immediately conjures up in your mind some kind of association. Has anybody ever seen the yin and yang sign before? The little black and the white with the dots and the balance of the universe? Well, that communicates something. It communicates a worldview and ideology. Buddhism has the little flower. I can't remember exactly how that all looks. Every worldview has a symbol. The Dallas Cowboys have the star. No, I'm not. If there was one symbol that encapsulated the Christian faith, what would that symbol be?

It's the cross, right? Islam has their crescent moon, Judaism has their star. We have our cross. And I wonder if we really understand what the cross actually means, because the cross is all over the place in our culture. There's a cross in our little baptistry back here. You can

walk throughout this campus. There's crosses everywhere. We've got this one Sunday school classroom back there. It's got flags all over the back wall. Almost every single flag has a cross. And it's not just Christians who have crosses scattered throughout their homes and stuff like that.

Even in our culture, people wear crosses, like a little cross chain. Mr. T wore a cross chain. People, pop stars who barely wear any clothes and sing about illicit sex and doing illicit drugs, they wear crosses. Some of you may be wearing a cross right now. Gurus, spiritual people who have no real association with Christianity, no real desire to be associated with traditional orthodox Christianity, they wear a cross because it's come to symbolize peace and tolerance and love and good vibes and all that stuff. And I can promise you that if a first century person was transported into our day and age and saw the way people wear crosses today and saw the associations that a cross has in our culture compared with what they associated the cross with back then, they would be absolutely shocked, maybe even horrified.

Because for them the cross was not cool, the cross was not encouraging, it wasn't strengthening, it wasn't a source of comfort or identification with Jesus or salvation. It was an instrument of torture. It was a symbol of shame, humiliation, wickedness, sin. Because the Romans used a cross to crucify people— only the worst of people, only the most horrendous of offenses. And I think it's important for us today, especially as we think about Palm Sunday, that we not empty the cross of its original meaning. Some say, look to the cross and you'll see the love of God.

You'll see how he loves you this much. Jesus has his arms out this wide, and certainly the cross does communicate the love of God. But it also communicates something about our sin and why Jesus went to the cross. And it can tell us a lot about ourselves, not just a lot about the Lord Jesus. And so that's what I want us to do this morning. There's an old hymn. It goes by the title "Were You There." Any of you remember this song? Were you there when they crucified my Lord? Were you there when they crucified my Lord?

You know what it says next? Oh, sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble. Were you there when they crucified my Lord? That's what we're going to do this morning. And we're actually going to go there through the eyes of someone who was there. Matthew's gospel talks about the cross. Matthew wasn't there. Mark's gospel talks about the cross. Mark wasn't there. He got his information from eyewitnesses who were there. Luke, great gospel, love the gospel of Luke. Luke wasn't there. He went and interviewed people who were there. Guess who was there?

John. John, the disciple of Jesus, was standing right there with Mary, watching Jesus be tortured and executed. And I want us to look at his eyewitness account. And what I want to show you, as you look at the cross through the eyes of an eyewitness, you're going to see so many people who are utterly blind to the truth about Jesus. Pilate, the governor of Rome,[1]

could not see the truth, even though it was right in front of him. The soldiers were blinded, they couldn't see it. The onlookers who would walk by, they couldn't see the truth about Jesus.

So many people saw, but they didn't have eyes to see. And with God's help this morning, through the Holy Spirit, I hope that we can have eyes to see the truth about Jesus, even the truth about the cross. And so let's ask the Lord for his help. Father, we thank you for an opportunity on a day like today to go, through the eyes of John, to in some ways look at a very horrific event. There's nothing funny about it, nothing cool, nothing like that. But it is a symbol that informs our faith, and it's a symbol that changed everything, a historical reality that changed the game.

And so would you give us eyes to see what so many others could not see? And so we can respond to you the way we should, because you are worthy of everything that we have to give. Amen. John chapter 19, starting in verse 16, the first eight words are full of tragic irony. It says in John chapter 19, verse 16, "Then he handed him over to be crucified. Then they took Jesus away." How many words is that? One, two, three, four, five, six, eight words full of tragic irony. The he there is Pilate.

Pilate was the governor of Rome, the prefect, and essentially the religious leaders of the day had put Jesus on a mock trial. They accused him of blasphemy, claiming to be God, but they didn't have the authority to put him to death. That had to be through the Roman government. So they take Jesus to Pilate to have Pilate do what only the Roman authorities could do, which was to have him condemned to die. He comes to Pilate. Pilate says, I don't see anything wrong with this guy. Ship him off to Herod.

Herod goes and talks to him. He says, I don't want to be the one that condemns him to death. I'm sending him back to Pilate. Then Pilate sees him again. And even doubts in his own heart whether or not Jesus is guilty of what they say he's guilty of, even has a debate with Jesus whether or not he should be where he's standing right now. But even though all those things are true, he still hands Jesus over to die. He condemns him to die. I think there's a lesson in the blindness of Pilate that's helpful for us today as we think about what it means to have eyes to see.

You can read Matthew's gospel, Matthew chapter 27, verse 19. Pilate's wife comes up to him and says, Pilate, I don't want you to have anything to do with this man. This guy has been torturing me in my dreams. How many of you ladies have men torture you in your dream? No, I'm kidding. I say that jokingly, but a lot of women have intuition. What do they call that? Mother's intuition. Like my mom could know when I was out partying even though I didn't tell her. I don't know how she knew.

Mother's intuition. Every happily married man knows the ticket to a happy life is to listen to your wife's intuition. But Pilate doesn't listen. He seems like a pretty savvy politician. He's pretty reasonable. Otherwise, he knows Jesus isn't guilty. He even has his wife putting pressure on him. Don't do what I know you're wanting to do. Don't do what they're saying to do, but Pilate doesn't listen. He has an argument with Jesus in Luke chapter 23, verse 14. I'm going to throw this up on the screen for you, but after examining Jesus, he says, "I have found no grounds to charge this man with those things you accuse him of."

So the man in authority to condemn Jesus says he's not condemned worthy. And then there's this tragic passage in Mark's Gospel, Mark chapter 15, verse 15: "Wanting to satisfy the crowd, Pilate released Barabbas to them; and after having Jesus flogged, he handed him over to be crucified." Pilate knew Jesus wasn't guilty, so he tries to argue with the crowd. Let's play a game. You have a very guilty person, I could release the very guilty person, or you have a person who's not very guilty, but you seem you want to kill him.

How about I release the non-guilty person and hang the guilty person in his place? And they still say, no, we want Barabbas. We want Barabbas. We want Barabbas. And so Pilate, against all odds, wanting to satisfy the crowd, hands Jesus over to be crucified. Now, what does that tell us about today? Do you have eyes to see? Can you see the truth? Pilate had the truth standing right in front of him. He couldn't see it, and the reason he couldn't see it is because of the pressure of public opinion. And I think that's instructive for us today because there's a lot of people in our culture who maybe can identify with Jesus hanging on the cross.

They think to themselves, amazing love, amazing sacrifice. There's this drawing towards Jesus because of what he's done and what that means on the cross, and yet they still say, I don't know if I'm going to do that. I don't know if I'm ready. I don't know if I want to be associated with those people because of what others might think of me. I don't want to get baptized because of what people might think about me. I don't want to hang around those Christian people because they're all crazy and you know what everybody else thinks about them people.

The fear of public opinion can blind you to the truth. You've got to be careful about it. It can blind you to the truth about Jesus that you desperately need to see, but you're not able to see it because of what others may think. Pilate couldn't see it. It's a tragic irony. Because he couldn't see it, he hands Jesus over to be flogged. That's what Mark said in Mark chapter 15, verse 15. If you keep reading, in Mark chapter 15, verse 17, I'll throw it up on the screen here. This is not in John's gospel, so I want to fill in some of the gaps.

It says that the soldiers "dressed him in a purple robe, twisted together a crown of thorns, and put it on him. And they began to salute him, 'Hail, king of the Jews!' They were hitting him on the head with a stick and spitting on him. Getting down on their knees, they were paying him homage"— bowing down to him like that, mocking him. In other gospel

accounts, Jesus is basically beaten within an inch of his life. He's there in the courtyard of Pilate. The soldiers couldn't see. The soldiers did not have eyes to see.

They were blinded. What were they blinded by? They were blinded by their allegiance to political power. They were Pilate's henchmen. And think about it. In that culture, when I say be blinded by political power, don't think of politics as left and right, Trump or Obama or Biden. Politics is just how we do things as a culture. It's our agreed-upon pathway for doing stuff in a culture. That's our politics. And you can be blinded by your allegiance to political power in that you allow the culture to define what's normal and not normal what's acceptable and not acceptable, what's true and what's not true.

For these soldiers, they would have thought to themselves, Well, Jesus obviously isn't a king. He's obviously not very powerful. He's obviously not who he claims to be. Otherwise he wouldn't be here. Otherwise we wouldn't be beating him within an inch of his life because in that culture might makes right. The person with the largest stick gets to make the rules. That person was Pilate. That person was Caesar. This is a sham. This is a phony. This is a wannabe. This is a nobody. They couldn't see. They couldn't see. He's the king of kings.

He's the Lord of Lords. He's the creator of the universe. And they're spitting in his face and putting a crown of thorns on his head and covered him with a robe, mocking the truth that was right in front of them because of their allegiance to political power. People make the same mistake today. Some people literally make the same mistake because of their allegiance to a political platform or a politician. Some people it's less obtuse, it's more implicit, it's cultural authority, forcing them to think a certain way and therefore reject the truth about Jesus.

So Pilate couldn't see it because of his fear of public opinion. The soldiers couldn't see it because of their allegiance to political power. So he condemns Jesus to die. He hands him over to be crucified. Let's pick it back up in John chapter 19, verse 17. It says, "Carrying the cross by himself, he went out to what is called Place of the Skull, which in Aramaic is called Golgotha." Other gospels say Jesus didn't carry the cross by himself, but that he had help. I don't know that's necessarily a contradiction. He carried the cross by himself for a certain way or up to a certain point.

And then at that point he was so— this just tells you how physically fatigued he was. He couldn't carry the cross any longer, so they have Simon of Cyrene come in and pick up the cross, maybe his two sons with him, and he carries the cross for Jesus all the way to Golgotha. The road down which Jesus would have walked was called the Via Dolorosa. Anybody ever heard that word? There's a pretty song about it. It's a grotesque walk, but it's a very pretty song. Other gospel accounts say that there were large numbers of people following Jesus down this winding road.

They say in those other gospels that the women and children were weeping and wailing. Jesus actually says to them, why are you crying now? Why are you crying for me? You think this is bad? Just wait. It's going to get a lot worse. Two criminals were behind him, probably terrorists, insurrectionists, the worst of the worst. The reason that they would make these condemned people walk down this road was on one hand, to shame them, to condemn them and humiliate them. On the other hand, it was to inspire fear in the heart of any single other person who might think to themselves, well, I can take on the system.

Maybe I can overthrow Rome. Maybe I can be a revolutionary. This is what happens to revolutionaries. Jesus was led to the place called the place of the skull. In Aramaic it's called Golgotha, and there they crucified him. Jesus stood there condemned. Golgotha was placed right outside the city gates. To be outside the city gates was a place of scorn. It was a place of condemnation. You're not good enough to be in the city gates. You're not good enough to be with us. You're not of us. You're not with us. You're an outsider.

You're an outcast. And that's the message they were trying to send about Jesus. The crazy thing though is that they couldn't see. They didn't have eyes to see that it wasn't his humiliation, it was our humiliation. It wasn't his condemnation, it was our condemnation. It wasn't that he wasn't good enough to be with us, it was that we aren't good enough to be with him. We're not good enough to be in the presence of God. So everything about the place, the location of it, the road to get there, it was strategically designed to bring maximum humiliation, maximum shame, but they couldn't see the truth that it was actually their humiliation, their shame, your shame, my shame.

They didn't see it. Pilate couldn't see it. The soldiers couldn't see it. The two people on his left and right, they couldn't see it. At least not one of them could. Verse 18 says, "There they crucified him and two others with him, one on either side, with Jesus in the middle." Death by crucifixion originated with the Persians, it was developed by the Phoenicians, and then the Carthaginians got it after that. But it wasn't until the Romans got it that crucifixion really became an art form, an art form of execution. Crucifixion, if you're taking notes, was an excruciatingly painful experience.

In fact, the very word excruciating literally means from the cross. *Ek* is the Greek word for "from." You see the word crew, C-R-U, that's the Latin for cross. I think *ek* is also Latin for "from."[2] So literally it means from the cross. They came up with a word to try to describe the uniquely horrendous pain and suffering that a person would experience when they were hanging there on a cross. In your notes I say it was a slow, humiliating death full of intense pain and suffering. The goal of crucifixion was twofold.

On the one hand, you wanted to inflict as much physical pain and suffering as possible, while on the other hand, you wanted to extend the person's life as long as possible. And so they only went so far. They only did so much because they wanted the person to stay alive to feel

the pain. That's crucifixion. There would have been about four soldiers. They would have brought Jesus to Golgotha, they would have laid him down flat on the ground, arms stretched out across that vertical or horizontal beam. They would have started by putting nails, not in his hands like this, but through his wrist, where your forearm bone is.

There's a little hole in there. That way it could support the body weight of the person being hanged. They do it on this side, they do it on this side. Then the four soldiers would take the ropes, they would pull the— I'm sorry, they would, after having fixed his arms to the cross, they would have attached the horizontal piece to the vertical piece. And once they had that all attached, they would have raised the cross up. It would have taken about four soldiers to do so. And then his feet dangling, they would have taken his feet and crossed him and put nails through his feet so that he could use that to push his body weight up because the only way when you're hanging like this on a cross.

And you're sagging, your lungs are not physically able to breathe. And so what a person who is hanging there would have to do is pull themselves up like this so they could extend their lungs and get a breath and then they'd have to hang back down. But that's the only way people could breathe. It was intense pain and agony just to get a breath in your lungs. And that's where Jesus hung. His body fatigued because of the beatings he had received, his muscles probably cramping because of the dehydration and the loss of blood.

With each attempt to pull himself up, his lungs filling with air, with every time he did that, his strength would decrease. I don't know if you've ever worked out really hard, but you can get to a point in your workout where your muscles are so fatigued you can't even feel them anymore. I'm sure that's what he would have been experiencing, his pectoral muscles, the muscles around his ribcage being torn to shreds. Every time he picked himself up against that wooden cross, the lacerations that were already all across his back would have gotten deeper and deeper and deeper.

Eventually he would have gotten to a place where he's not able to pick himself up to get air in his lungs, carbon dioxide would have ended up poisoning his lungs and his bloodstream with each time he picks himself up, because of the trauma that his body had already experienced. Many medical people think that the pericardial sac around his heart would have begun to be filled with fluid. The more fluid that built up around the heart, the more pressure it would have put on his heart, creating more and more pressure with each breath that he breathed.

Some people literally think he died from a broken heart because of the pressure of that pericardial sac. If he didn't die from a broken heart, he died from asphyxiation, of literally strangling to death because he couldn't get enough oxygen into his lungs. That's the physical suffering of someone who was crucified. And if you can listen to that physical suffering and not be at least a little bit moved in your spirit, then you've got a pretty cold heart. And yet

that's exactly what people felt. The soldiers were blind, Pilate was blind, and every onlooker who went into Jerusalem, why are they going to Jerusalem?

Because it's Passover. Every one of them would have looked at those three criminals and thought to themselves, shame. Shame, shame. They couldn't see. And they couldn't see because of the scandal of the cross. Look at it. John chapter 19, verse 19. "Pilate also had a sign made and put on the cross. It said: Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews. Many of the Jews read this sign, because the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city, and it was written in Aramaic, Latin, and Greek." So this is kind of a turning point in the text.

You see the blindness of the onlookers on the one hand, because they're coming into Jerusalem for Passover. Passover is a big deal for every Jew, one of the biggest holidays. They come in, they see the sign, the king of the Jews. They think to themselves, Ain't my king. My king wouldn't be hanging like that. Every onlooker who went by couldn't see the truth. Why? The cross was scandalous. He wouldn't be hanging if he was who he said he was. He wouldn't be here if he was as powerful as he said he was.

He would not be clothed in weakness and condemnation. They couldn't see because of the scandal of the cross. But even though they couldn't see, God was using their blindness to make a point, to make a statement. And you see it with this little sign that's hanging above his head. The king of the Jews. It's actually written in three different languages, Aramaic or Hebrew, Latin, and Greek. The Aramaic was the language of the Jews, so every Hebrew person would have read it and thought, I know what that means: he's the king of the Jews.

Every politician, every person of sway and significance, Latin was the language of the political elite, the political establishment. And then of course Greek was the lingua franca. It was the common language of the day. Every single person would have seen the sign, king of the Jews, and that was literally the truth. He was the king. Not just of the Jews, but the king of the world. He's the king of kings. But they couldn't see. But even though they couldn't see, God was still using their blindness to create a gospel witness.

That's the amazing thing about it. You see the hand of the sovereignty of God throughout this, throughout all of this. Pilate was blinded by his allegiance or his fear of public opinion, but even though he was blind to the truth, God used his blindness to create a gospel witness that everybody could see. And not only did God use Pilate's blindness, he used the soldiers' blindness as well. Let's see Pilate's blindness in chapter 19, verse 21. It says that "the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate, 'Don't write, "The king of the Jews," but that he said, "I am the king of the Jews."'" In other words, we don't want people to identify him with the actual Messiah.

We want people to think that he was a fake and a phony and a fraud. But Pilate basically says to them, "What I have written, I have written." In other words, you're not going to get your

way. This is God using Pilate's obstinate heart, his blindness to make the statement. He's not a failed Messiah. He's not a wannabe. He's not a phony or a fraud. He's the real deal. He's the king of the Jews. You just don't like what you see. So God used Pilate's blindness to create a gospel witness.

That's the first thing. Then he uses the soldiers' blindness to fulfill Old Testament prophecy. Let's read that. John chapter 19, verse 23. "When the soldiers crucified Jesus, they took his clothes and divided them into four parts, a part for each soldier." So one person would have got the belt, one person would have got the shoes, one person would have got the overcoat, so on and so forth. Then they took Jesus' underwear, or his tunic, "which was seamless, woven in one piece from the top. So they said to one another, 'Let's not tear it, but cast lots for it, to see who gets it.' This happened that the Scripture might be fulfilled that says: They divided my clothes among themselves, and they cast lots for my clothing.

This is what the soldiers did." So Pilate couldn't see it, but God used his blindness to create a gospel witness. The soldiers couldn't see it because of their allegiance to political power, but God used their blindness to fulfill Old Testament prophecy. So do you see how the sovereignty of God is still on display even in the darkest night? And it's not just true of the cross, it's true of your darkest night, it's true of my darkest night. It's true of your suffering where you're wondering, God, what are you doing? And why is this happening?

And how can you bring anything good out of this? What Jesus chose to focus on was not those unanswered questions, but that even when I cannot see, God is working. Even when I don't see the good, he's working things together for the good. Because he loves me and he's committed and he's faithful. That's what Jesus chose to focus on. They were blind, they couldn't see it, but Jesus could. What do you see? Do you have eyes to see the sovereignty of God, even in the darkest night? The reason I think that Jesus was focused on God's sovereignty and God fulfilling, even in this pain and suffering, God fulfilling his plan is because of what he says in chapter 19, verse 28.

It says that after this, when Jesus knew that everything was not finished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, he said, I'm thirsty. Mike, can you throw that up on the screen? "After this, when Jesus knew that everything was now finished that the Scripture might be fulfilled, he said, 'I'm thirsty.'" Jesus was focused on the will of God being fulfilled in Scripture. He knew this was happening. I think when he saw the soldiers bartering for his clothing, his mind immediately went back to Psalm 22. I know that for a fact because he's going to quote Psalm 22 a little bit later.

Jesus is focused on the joy of fulfilling his father's plan. In fact, in Hebrews chapter 12 it says it was "for the joy that lay before him" that Jesus "endured the cross, despising the shame." He wasn't focused on his pain and suffering. He wasn't focused on what God didn't do. He wasn't focused on him not getting his way. He was focused on, Even in my pain and

suffering, God is working things together for good. And so that's what I'm going to draw my attention to. And that's what it means to have eyes to see.

It means even when you cannot see, you have eyes of faith that trust the Lord because he's faithful to his promises. So from 9 in the morning to 12 o'clock noon, Jesus hung there in excruciating pain and agony, the entire time fulfilling his father's will. It was during those first three hours that Jesus said to his executioners, Father, forgive them, because they don't know what they're doing. He said to the thief, one of the thieves on his side, Today you'll be with me in paradise. And then we don't see it, we're not going to read it in our text, but before Jesus expresses his thirst, in verses 25 to 27, he entrusts Mary to John, his disciple.

It says, Mary, or Mother, behold your son, and Son, behold your mother. What I want us to close on is what happened from 12 o'clock noon to three o'clock in the afternoon. So Jesus suffers, hangs there in incredible misery from 9 in the morning till 12 o'clock in the afternoon. But as soon as the clock strikes 12, when the sun should have been at its highest point, God wipes the sun off the face of the planet— with clouds. He doesn't actually remove the sun. But the clouds cover the earth and it gets pitch black.

And from 12 o'clock noon to three o'clock in the afternoon, there was no sun. And the reason God was snuffing out the sun was because during those three hours God was snuffing out our sin through Jesus bearing in his own body the sins that separate us from our Creator. The enmity, that sense that all of us feel of I can't measure up, I'm not good enough. I shouldn't have done what I've done. You carry guilt, you carry shame, you carry condemnation. All of that, even though Jesus wasn't guilty of it, Jesus received that into his own body, I believe, from twelve o'clock noon to three o'clock in the afternoon.

And God was snuffing out the sun because in that time period he was snuffing out our sin through Jesus, becoming condemned for us. And he actually cries out— his fourth statement from the cross is, my God, my God, why have you abandoned me? Why have you forsaken me? He said that because he was experiencing being forsaken by God. He was experiencing the face of his father, the face of communion that he had enjoyed his entire life. Nobody obeyed the Father like Jesus did. Nobody loved the Father like Jesus did. But even though he had a life full of love and communion and oneness, in that moment, the Father was turning his face away because Jesus was wearing our sin.

He was bearing our condemnation. He felt the alienation that we feel because of our sin and rebellion against our Creator. And he did it willingly. So he cries out, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me? He was forsaken by God, but he wasn't forgotten. How do I know he didn't feel forgotten? Because this passage we just read is Psalm 22. Jesus was meditating on Psalm 22. He saw the soldiers bartering for his clothes. That's Psalm 22, verse 18. He feels abandoned by God. He's quoting Psalm 22, which— at the end of Psalm 22, the person who was forsaken by God becomes vindicated by God.

The person who felt the Father's absence is all of a sudden experiencing the Father's faithfulness. And Jesus knew, I believe, even in his dying moments, though this may be the removal of my Father's presence, this does not mean the removal of my Father's love. A cry of distress, no doubt, but it was not a cry of distrust. Jesus to the very end was fulfilling his father's plan with absolute confidence that the Father would do what he promised to do. He had eyes to see. Do you have eyes to see? Well, if you were standing there, if you were there and you saw Jesus crying out, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me, would you have thought to yourself, he's accomplishing my salvation?

He and the Father are in agreement to reverse the curse, or would you have thought to yourself, what weakness, how sad. Jesus had eyes to see. What about you? After he cries out those final statements, John chapter 19, verse 29 says, after he expressed his thirst, "A jar full of sour wine was sitting there; so they fixed a sponge full of sour wine on a hyssop branch and held it up to his mouth." That was a fulfillment of Psalm chapter 69, verse 21. And then, having completed everything, "When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, 'It is finished.'" *Tetelestai*.

"Then bowing his head, he gave up his spirit." In Luke's gospel, Luke chapter 23, verse 46, the literal final words of Jesus were, "Father, into your hands"— I commit, or "I entrust my spirit." And then Jesus breathed his last and he died. He died even though a lot of people didn't have eyes to see. But if you had eyes to see, here's what you would have seen next. Having seen Jesus be absolutely faithful to do all that his father said to do. After he breathes his last, you see the faithfulness of God the Father to do what he promised to do, which is to vindicate Jesus' death on the cross.

And you can read it in all the gospels. There's a big earthquake. If you've ever watched *The Passion of the Christ*, it shakes the whole earth. It even says in Matthew 27 that some dead bodies come up out of the grave like kind of proto-resurrections. During that earthquake the temple is shaken, and the veil in the temple is torn from top to bottom. That veil symbolized the separation between sinful humanity and a holy God. Only one man was able to go through the veil, and that only once a year. That was the high priest.

When Jesus dies on the cross, that veil is torn from top to bottom, essentially saying that there is no longer any enmity between God and man. There is no priestly mediator. There is no man who will mediate between God and man. Now there is one mediator between God and man, and that's the Lord Jesus Christ. He's reconciled us. He's paid the penalty. We don't have to sacrifice the blood of bulls and goats in that once a year. No, there's one sacrifice once and for all through the death of Jesus Christ.

And so all of this temple stuff, all of this Old Testament, old covenant stuff, all of that has been done away with because it's now been fulfilled. Jesus has ushered in something new. Now to be reconciled to God, you don't have to try to live up to some standard or carry some

kind of weight or meet some kind of threshold. Jesus did all that for you because he knew you couldn't do it for yourself and he's accomplished all of it through his death on the cross. So now all you have to do is repent and believe.

All you have to do is recognize he was dying for me. It was my shame, it was my condemnation, it was my guilt that he wore, not his own. And so I repent of the sin that separates me from God, and I'm putting my faith in Jesus. Just like we sang about. The death of Jesus changed the game. Everything is different because Jesus died on the cross. That's why it's the symbol of our faith, because it says it is finished. The Christian religion is not like other religions. It's not about do, do, do, live up to some ethical moral code.

The central teaching of Christianity is not the Sermon on the Mount or Jesus' wisdom contained in his parables. The central teaching of Christianity is that God is holy and we're sinful, and we're in a bad place because of our sin. But thanks be to God that Jesus Christ paid for it, so that we can receive him by faith and be saved. When the Roman centurion sees this earthquake, he sees all that take place, Mark chapter 15, verse 39. "When the centurion, who was standing opposite him, saw the way he breathed his last, he said, 'Truly this man was the Son of God!'" That was his confession.

What is your confession? What will your confession be? Do you have eyes to see? Do you see what they saw? Do you see what Jesus saw? Or are you like Pilate? And the pressure of public opinion causes you to say, no, no, thanks, not me, not today. Are you so influenced and discipled by the culture that you think to yourself, if that's the symbol of your faith, I don't want to be about that. I'm all about pulling myself up by my bootstraps. I'm all about making my own way, being my own man, being my own woman.

I'm all about independence, self-sufficiency. Or when you look to the cross, do you see the truth? That you'll never be strong enough, you'll never be reliant enough. That's why Jesus was sent into the world because your heavenly father loves you and even though you've sinned against him and rebelled against him, he's made provision for you to be forgiven of that sin and to be cleansed from that unrighteousness and to receive eternal life. Not because of what you do, but because of what Jesus Christ has done. And if you've never responded to that truth, if you've never seen the truth about Christ and responded in repentance and faith, then this morning the Lord may be calling you to do that.

And so if you're not a Christian, there's no magic words, there's no magic wand. It's just a recognition in your heart to say, God, I recognize you're holy. I recognize I've sinned against you. I can't save myself, and so I believe that Jesus has paid the price for me. I believe it wasn't just that he died for the sins of the world, but he died for my sin, particularly that shame and guilt I've been carrying since 1967 or 1997 or wherever it was in your life that I let condemn me and bring me down and bring me shame, and I'm setting that down at the foot of the cross and I'm going to experience the freedom that's in Jesus' name.

And if you've not made that decision, if you've not done that, then today's the day. Today's the day of salvation. You can leave it at the cross. Some of you may be Christians and this morning I want you to be reminded that when you look at the cross, it's not just a symbol of our salvation, it's also a symbol of our condemnation. It's our sin they're putting there. It's our rebellion, our mess. And there's a tendency for Christian people, the longer you've been a Christian, to kind of water down your sin so that you can live with it.

That's just the way I am. And I obey God everywhere else except this one area. And so it's not that bad. It is that bad. It put Jesus on the cross. Why would you want to live in that sin? Why not leave it there? Because atonement was made. It's not just that you're forgiven. You don't have to live under that slavery anymore. You don't have to live under the power of that sin that has you by the grip that you feel like you can't get rid of. And so today as you look to the cross, maybe be reminded of the power of God to free you from the sin in your life that you, for whatever reason, refuse to let go of.

Maybe for you it's not a sinful behavior. Maybe it's guilt and condemnation from something that God paid for back on the cross, and you refuse to live in the freedom of it. And this morning you say, God, help me to live as someone who's been liberated by the blood of the Lamb. I don't know how you need to respond, but I've been praying and am praying that we'll have eyes to see. And so as Taylor leads us through this, I think he's just going to play softly, but the altar's open.

And I want to encourage you to respond to the cross in preparation for the celebration of Jesus' resurrection, to not empty the cross of its meaning, but to see it and to allow it to have its effect on your life. Father, we thank you for this time together. We thank you for the cross. Thank you for John and his insight into what it means for our life. We say what the centurion said, surely this is the Son of God. And even if our culture doesn't see it, and even if our moms or dads or brothers or sisters, even if they can't see it, we can see it.

Because your Holy Spirit has opened our eyes. So thank you for that gift. And help us to be good stewards of the faith that you're creating in our heart even now, that we would not harden our heart, we wouldn't walk out of this place and just go about our daily lives like nothing happened but that in returning to Calvary we would experience the full freedom of forgiveness and grace. We would experience the joy of having mercy, not condemnation. Thanksgiving, gratitude, because we can now be accepted and not cast out. Thank you that Jesus became the curse for us so that we could be sons and daughters of the Most High God.

So will you seal that truth home in a way that only you can? And we pray it in Jesus' name. Amen.

1. Transcript note: spoken as "the governor of Rome" (twice); Pontius Pilate was the Roman governor (prefect) of the province of Judea, serving under Emperor Tiberius, not a governor of Rome itself. Wording left as spoken. Source: Wikipedia, "Pontius Pilate." ↩
2. Transcript note: spoken as "*ek* is also Latin for from"; *ek* is Greek for "from," but the Latin prefix in "excruciating" is *ex-* ("out of"). The word comes from Latin *excruciare* ("to torment greatly, torture"), from *ex-* plus *cruciare*, from the base of *crux* ("cross"). Wording left as spoken. Source: Wiktionary, "excruciate" and "excrucio." ↩