

The Wonder of the Cross

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John 19:25-30
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There's something about our hunger for wonder. It's hardwired in us. Do you ever wonder why so many people flock to the Grand Canyon, to Yosemite, to any of the beaches in Florida, California, and Hawaii, Niagara Falls, the Rocky Mountains and so on? That's just in our country, that's not around the world. Then there's the more subtle, amazing aspects of wonder. The birth of a baby wedding vows a sweet melody from a song. There's something about that.

My wife and I, we went on our 25th anniversary. We were new here in Arizona a couple of years ago, and we went up to Sedona, and we went over that little mountain that you go into the valley, and we literally gasped out loud. What is that? Well, I believe that we are hardwired for worship; to marvel and to wonder. And ultimately that's meant to draw us to praise God for who he is and what he's done. He has revealed himself through the wonders of this world and the wonders of creation, but we know him because he has revealed himself to us through his word.

I want to take you, today, to the greatest place of wonder. It's an unexpected place, because it looks anything but a wonderful situation, and yet the most wonderful thing happened there. It's the cross. It's where Jesus died. It's the central place of wonder in all of history. It's a different wonder, it is the wonder-filled moment in time where God saved sinners.

On the surface it looked like anything but wonder. It looked like tragedy, it looked like defeat, it looked like doom, it was dark and despairing. But, in reality it was the absolute opposite of that. God paid the ultimate penalty for our sins. He paid the price of our unholiness with the ultimate gift, his Son.

It's what we've been singing about tonight. It's what we'll sing after tonight. It's what we're going to hear from in John Chapter 19. Our main point as we look at this passage tonight is this: that Jesus' sacrifice on the cross reveals the greatest of wonders that God would save sinners.

Maybe you're so familiar with the cross. You know what's coming. You've heard this story. Maybe you've heard it a thousand times, maybe this is the first time that you've heard it, maybe you've heard it and have had nothing but indifference to it. I want you to be ready tonight, especially if you're so familiar with it, that you might forget to be refreshed and remember just how amazing and how wonderful the cross is to us.

John records three sayings of Jesus here in John 19, and that's what we're going to look at. These three reveal the wonder of the cross. And we know, ultimately, why John wrote this gospel and actually the reality that we have four gospels, each one you could point to that says this. John

says it. He's the only one who says it, but it's good for each one of the four gospels, especially this one, and why this part of the story is told the way he tells it.

In John Chapter 20, at the end of the book, toward the end of the book verses 30 and 31, John says this, he says, "Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book, but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name." Would you join with me as standing as we, out of respect, I'm going to read the passage tonight that we're going to look at? And so we do this out of respect for God's word. Starting in verse 25, it says this:

"But standing by the cross of Jesus where his mother and his mother's sister Mary, the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to the mother, 'Woman, behold your son.' Then he said to the disciple, 'Behold your mother.' And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home. After this, Jesus, knowing all that was now finished, said to fulfill the scriptures, 'I thirst.' A jar full of sour wine stood there, so they put a sponge full of sour wine on a hyssop branch and held it to his mouth. When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, 'It is finished.' And he bowed his head and he gave up his spirit."

You may be seated, and may God bless his word to our hearts today. Well leading up to these three sayings, some of your familiar with the story and know what takes place. Jesus goes through a kangaroo court between Herod and Pilate. Pilate has him flogged. They put a crown of thorns on Jesus' head. Pilate found no fault in Jesus, and yet he caved to the pressure of the crowd and had him crucified. So then Jesus was then deemed to carry his own cross outside of Jerusalem to a hill called Golgotha, which is also referred to as Calvary, he's hung between two common thieves, one of whom which comes to faith in him while on the cross. Pilate's inscription he put on there, in three different languages, "King of the Jews" and in a sense to mock the Jews who forced him and forced his hand, and they bristled at the snark of such a comment.

So here we are, Friday. It seems like a degrading despicable anything but wonderful event, but the most wonderful things take place here. We're going to look at three wonders, in the time that we have together, of Jesus that are revealed by his sacrifice on the cross, that are revealed by the words that he says, they tell us and help us understand what exactly is happening, and because of it, we stand amazed at the cross, and we're going to have these three in-exhaustive wonders to help us understand just how wonderful the cross is.

The first wonder is this: ***The Selflessness of Jesus' Sacrifice. The Selflessness of Jesus' Sacrifice.*** We'll back up just a little bit to verse 23. We see this little interchange happen with the Roman guards that are there in verse 23. It says, "When the soldiers had crucified them, they took his garments and divided them into four parts, one part for each soldier, also his tunic."

Well, what we understand here from history is that for a typical Jewish male, they have five pieces to what they would wear: sandals, one, a head covering, a belt, an inner tunic, and an

outer robe. And the most prized one of that... So that's five, four soldiers, so who's going to get that fifth piece? The most prized was that inner tunic, but the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom, probably very valuable. And here they gambled for that last piece as he's hanging on the cross, now naked.

Verse 24 says this, "So they said to one another, let us not tear it but cast lots for it to see whose it shall be. And this was to fulfill the scripture which says, 'They divided my garments among them and for my clothing they cast lots.'" That was predicted back in Psalm 22:18 that this would happen to the Messiah. So here they are. They had no idea that they were fulfilling scripture in this moment. All these little prophetic details that are happening as we read this add up, altogether, to point to one Messiah, one possible person in the history of the world, and his name is Jesus Christ.

So it says there, "The soldiers did these things." That's a bit of derision there. So they did this. In other words, can you believe what these soldiers did? And then in contrast in verse 25 going from there, "But, standing by the cross of Jesus where his mother and his mother's sister, Mary, the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene." It's as if John takes the camera and you see this despicable situation going on where they are gambling for Jesus' last possessions on earth, and then it pans over to four women, weeping and grieving for the one before them, three of whom which, most likely, or at least two of whom, which are relatives of Jesus: his mother, Mary, his aunt, which would be Salome. And then we have another Mary, Mary, and another Mary. We have three Mary's at this time. These soldiers did these things, and yet you see the contrast here of these women. It would've been a stark contrast. In fact, the language here gives us this contrast. But look at this, this is horrible, this is heartbreaking.

And there's Mary right at the center of this. If you remember from the Christmas story, Mary and Joseph went to the temple to have Jesus consecrated as part of their ritual, and there was this, most likely older, gentleman who came, who had been prophesied to that he was going to be the one, or he would see the Messiah come into the temple before his death, before Simeon's death. And so he came up to Joseph and Mary at this really unique part of their ministry there and he says, "he's going to be the cause of the rising and falling of many." And then he looks at Mary and says, "And for a piercing of your soul." This is that moment.

This is that moment where Mary is gazing upon this special and unique relationship in that she was picked, of all the women of the world, to give birth to the Messiah. What an incredible privilege but met with an incredible tragic sorrow. A.W. Pink in his book on the Seven Saints says this. He says, "The crowds are mocking. The thief is taunting. Priests are jeering. Soldiers are callous and different. The Savior is bleeding and his mother is witnessing all of this." That's what's taking place here and yet, and yet, what happens next is cause for wonder.

Jesus while on the cross in incredible physical agony, demonstrated amazing compassion. He looks down, they're nearby and he says, "Woman, behold your son." He said to his mother, and it says, "The disciple, whom Jesus loved, was standing there." That's John's self-designation for himself. Was he more special than some of the other disciples? I don't really think so, but I think

when it came to that personal relationship with Jesus, he made them feel each and every one like, "I'm the one Jesus loves."

But there is something unique here because John's the only one, the other 11 are out. They fled, but here's John. And so he looks down with incredible compassion and gives his mother to John and John to his mother. Joseph, his earthly father, was most likely dead. We don't see him in Jesus' later life. So as the firstborn, he was responsible for her. His earthly time was coming to a close. His brothers did not believe yet, and he simply, it seems to be, providing care for his aging mother in the light of this tragedy.

However, what's said here seems to give the idea that something bigger was at stake because his brothers actually, eventually believed, and he would've known that. We see them in Acts Chapter 1 in the upper room among the 150 that were there that were waiting and that Jesus resurrected, or they were waiting. This was after Jesus had died and he had blessed them, and then he ascended to the Father, and they were there. James, his half-brother and Jude, his half-brother, both wrote books of the Bible. They became powerful in that early church. So something else was going on. Turn to Matthew Chapter 12.

We get a hint of this early on in Jesus' earthly ministry that things were changing and things had changed between Him and His family. Something bigger was going on. In Matthew Chapter 12 verses 46 through 50, we see this situation where Jesus gives a hint at this, and we see it a little more in its fullness here on the cross. It says, "While he was still speaking to the people, behold his mother and his brother stood outside asking to speak to him, but he replied to the man who told him, 'Who is my mother and who are my brothers?' And stretching out his hand towards his disciples, he said, 'here are my mother and disciples. Here are my mother and my brothers, for whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother, and sister, and mother, and what do we know is the will of the Father, the work of the Father, to believe in Jesus.

John 6:29. So you're seeing this transpire even further in what's taking place here. He's redefining who his family is. So as Jesus was securing the work of redemption, a new relationship was developing. Mary was receiving an upgrade. That maybe seems radical. What could be more important than being the one who birthed the Messiah? I like how Pastor Ken Hughes says, he says, "There's a special, earthly relationship as mother and son that was yielded to a higher, holier relationship as Jesus became her Savior." That's what's taking place here, and for John as well.

You see here, Jesus refers to her as "woman" not "Mother." Now, if you've read through the Gospel of John, you know in Chapter 2, they were at a wedding together and there was a bad situation that happened, they ran out of wine. And Mary approached Jesus and said, "Uh-oh, they've run out of wine." Now what does that have to do with him? And he asked the same question, "What does that have to do with me?"

Well, for them, culturally, this would've been a huge shame to have run out of wine at their own wedding. So Jesus addressed her, then, these are the bookends, he called her mother, meaning he

was about to do a miracle that would set in motion his earthly ministry, and their relationship would change forever, and here you see the same thing taking place. "Mother your son, son your mother." The final step, the final change in this relationship. He's completing his mission, that mission that he began there at the wedding. It is now coming to a close.

You see, their temporary, historical relationship was giving way to a better, eternal one. Listen what the author of Hebrews says that he says that this way in Hebrews 2:10, he says, "For it was fitting that he, Jesus, for whom and by whom all things exist, and bringing many sons to glory, should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering." He's suffering up there, but what he's doing is bringing many sons to glory, including daughters, including his mother, and the disciple that he loved. Mary goes from earthly mother to the adopted child of God. Wow.

Here, at the cross, this amazing wonder, this selfless sacrifice, it echoes other things that Jesus said. He was giving an example of all of these. Luke 6:29, He says, "If someone takes your garment, do not withhold the tunic." In Mark Chapter 10, he rebuked Peter, "We've given up everything to follow you." And he says, "You've received a hundred-fold in family and in eternal life."

Mary is losing her son, but gaining a Savior, and able to call God her Father, and have eternal life. Luke 14:26, Jesus famously said that "Unless you hate father and mother, you cannot be my disciple. You must love me more." And so the comparison there isn't ill will. Jesus has no ill will, but he loves his father in heaven, doing his will, than his mother. All of these, he's modeling in this sacrifice, showing selfless care for others at his personal worst moment. Why? John told us why at the beginning of this gospel, John 1:12, "But to all who did receive him..." Says his own people did not receive him. They're the ones who wanted him on this cross. And yet, "But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God."

This is wonder. Here he is being stripped naked, prepped for death, echoing the words of Job, "Naked I come into this world, naked I leave." And in wonder, as Jesus selfishly demonstrated his care to Mary and John, while securing them a place in God's eternal family. "To all who did receive him, who believed in his name."

Have you received him today? If you have received him and received him according to his name, all that his name represents, you are in his family. Be encouraged today. This is a wonder that we see here happening at the cross. That's wonder number one, this selfless sacrifice of his. ***Wonder #2) The Suffering in Jesus' Sacrifice.***

Some try to sugarcoat his suffering. Some of the paintings that you see of Jesus in history, they look pretty cozy, pretty cushy, or at least not to the level of what Jesus was enduring, but he was truly human. This was not a cakewalk for any human, much less the God man who was truly human. Jesus' actual physical pain, though, converged with a spiritual pain. And it's communicated to us when he says, "I thirst." I'm thirsty.

You see, a suffering Messiah was shocking to his followers. That's why they scattered. They didn't realize what was happening. That's why others didn't even believe in him or follow him.

"No, our Messiah is going to free us from Rome." No, the Messiah is going to free you for someone bigger and worse: yourself, sin, death, and hell. That's bigger than Rome. And this is what he came to do, and in order to do it, he had to suffer. There was no mystery about it. It's there in the scriptures.

But Jesus knew. This was not a surprise to him. It says in verse 28 in fact says, "After this, Jesus knowing that all was now finished..." Jesus knew this was the theme that you can see in the Gospel of John. Chapter 13, verse 3, Chapter 13, verse 11, Chapter 18, verse 4. He wasn't caught off guard by Judas. He wasn't caught off guard by his mission. He knew exactly what he came to do, and it involved suffering. Jesus' life and purpose were not a surprise to him, and here on the cross, he knows all was now finished. Jesus had accomplished all that the Father had sent him to do. He had fulfilled the prophecies that showed that this was not a mystery.

Turn to Isaiah, Chapter 53. The simple little chapters is ripe with this understanding of a suffering Messiah. It's surprising that they were surprised, because here it is in Isaiah 53, starting in verse 3. Let's look at little parts of this. He says, "He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, and as one from whom men hide their faces. He was despised and we esteemed him not."

You understand that most likely Jesus at this point was not recognizable on the cross, by the beatings, by the horrible things that he had gone through. "Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that has led to the slaughter, and like a sheep before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth."

Jump down to verse 10, "Yet it was the will of the Lord to crush him; he has put him to grief; when his soul makes an offering for guilt, he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days; the will of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many and makes intercession for the transgressors."

Go back to John 19. This is Jesus. This is what he's doing here, and we get word of this several centuries before it actually happened. All of these prophecies, one by themselves could be anybody, but 300 fulfilled in Jesus, according to the Old Testament, there could only be one. If it was a prophecy fulfilled by Jesus, the odds of that happening with one person are astronomical, much less 300. The Old Testament points, and they should have gotten it, but they didn't, and here he is, "I thirst." He's the one, suffering Messiah. Is Jesus anticipating when he says there in that verse, knowing all that now was finished, said "I thirst." Is it what's all that's happened or

what's about to happen? And the answer is yes. The language there implies both the crucified Jesus, as one author says, "Is the completion of scripture. It is the fulfillment of everything that was promised in scripture and the foundation of everything still to come." There's something deeper going on.

He says in John 18:11 to Peter, when the guards came to take him away and Peter pulls out his sword and Jesus calms him down and he says to him, he says, "Are you able to drink the cup that I am to drink?" What's he talking about there? That word "cup" in their culture, and throughout the Old Testament, was a symbolic understanding of a determined destiny. This was real. He was thirsty, yet something bigger was taking place. There was a representative thirst that was going on. It was really spiritual in reality.

You see, the cross is the source of living water, because that's what Jesus said to the woman at the well in John Chapter 4, and he says it in John Chapter 6, living water will spring from you. But he had to sacrifice himself in order to allow that, he had to take on our thirst to do that. So the thirst quencher is now thirsty because he had to drink the cup that was destined for him, the cup of suffering.

It's amazing that this is taking place right here. In fact, in front of Salome. If you remember this story in Matthew Chapter 20, she asked of Jesus, hey, can your cousins, James, and John, could they sit as your right and your left in your coming kingdom?" That was quite an ask, pulling the family card on that one. And what did Jesus said, 'Can you...?' And he pointed, asked those two men, 'Can you drink my cup? Can you take my cup?' And they foolishly said, 'Oh, sure.' They don't know what's going on, really. No. Only Jesus can take this cup. Oh, they took the cup of suffering later and their ministry and Jesus prophesied that, but they didn't understand what he was going to need to do in order to sit on that throne.

And so now we have this declaration of thirst and it says in verse 29, "A jar full of sour wine stood there. So they put a sponge full of the sour wine on a hyssop branch and held it to his mouth." He was most likely talking to the father, and yet the guards overheard it, and so it would've been normal and a regular type of thing to have this wine vinegar around. So were they offering out of sympathy or were they simply wanting to prolong the suffering? You see, many people came for a show.

But what's interesting here is hyssop. They mentioned the type of wood that was used to put that sponge up to Jesus' mouth. It wasn't normal for them to use hyssop, but God had a plan. Hyssop was famously associated as the tool used to sprinkle the blood on the doorposts at Passover, Exodus 12:22. What did they celebrate the night before when they had the Lord's Supper? Passover. That was just a shadow of something greater to come, and here it was happening. The thirsty one is the thirst quencher, because he's taken on the angel of death so that we don't have to. You see Jesus really suffered, but his physical thirst gave him the ability to quench ours, so that we could receive him as the water of life.

Do you stand and wonder at this amazing Savior? It looks like he's just thirsty if you glance at it, but there's so much more taking place and amazing wonder that yes, the Savior really did suffer, and yes, he really did finish what the father had sent him to do. And if that's not clear, what's coming next is, and here's the final wonder. **Wonder #3), The Sufficiency of Jesus' Sacrifice.** *The Sufficiency of Jesus' Sacrifice.* Says this, "When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, 'It is finished.' And he bowed his head and he gave up his spirit."

It is finished having completed what the cup of suffering entailed, right after drinking, Jesus cried out. It says in Matthew 27, Matthew doesn't tell us. Luke doesn't tell us. Mark doesn't tell us. John, tell us what he cried. It was the cry of triumph. "It is finished." But what is finished? That word "tetelestai" means "paid in full." Redemption was purchased. Paul tells us in Romans Chapter 6, "For the wages of sin is death." Jesus was paying for the wages of our sin.

A holy God demanded sacrifice, and so you have goats and calves throughout the Old Testament as the people saw this shadow that of something was to come, and here he is, the Lamb of God who is slain. That phrase there, in its original language, was a statement that describes a past action with continuing present-tense force. And here we are 2000 years later, understanding, and believing, and experiencing the blessings that Jesus finished what needed to be finished on the cross. What looked like victory for Jesus' enemies was in fact Jesus' ultimate victory. This was a twist that the powers of darkness could not have predicted or foreseen.

Jesus won. Jesus finished His work. The Father's will was completely obeyed. Prophecies were fulfilled, redemption was complete, sin was atoned for, wrath satisfied, Satan, sin, and death were defeated. What did Christ do on the cross? It was sufficient to save us. It's a finished work. Listen to what one author says about this. "This is what Jesus took when he took the cross. He took your jealousy. He took your envy. He took your greed. He took your dissatisfaction, your impatience, your grumbling, lying, and deceiving. He took your lust. He took your pride of life. He took your idolatrous exchanges where you worship God's gift instead of him. He took your every faithless act. He took every wayward thought, and every careless word. He took your cheating, your adultery, and your perversity. He took your violence, your rudeness, and your unkindness. He took your selfishness, self-centeredness, and self-absorption. He took your gluttony, your foolishness, your wickedness, every time you did not love, did not encourage, and did not speak up."

He took those sins and if I missed any, he took those, too. And he paid them in full. Finished. Do not think too small of your Savior, and do not think too big of your sins. It is finished. "He bowed his head and he gave up his spirit." He was in total control. No one took his life. He said in John 10:18, "No one takes my life. I give it." And here he gave it. You know he said in Luke Chapter 9, He said, "The Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head." Why? Because he was on a mission. His mission was now complete and he rested his head.

All had been leading up to this, the Old Testament prophecies of what Messiah would do, these prophecies here, preaching the good news to the poor, dying among thieves, drinking vinegar, lots cast for his clothing, healing, piercing all of this, coming to this place to save us. This is the

most wonderful, wonder-inducing moment in the history of the world. Do you believe it? Yes. Good.

You see, it's like all of this dialed in like a combination lock, and you hear that click, the lock is released, sinners are freed, and the gates of heaven are opened wide. This passage shows the process of a dying. Jesus first gives up his clothes, then he gives up the closest human relationships, and finally he gives up life itself. And what's the result? Wonder. Wonder. What's the result and why?

John 20:31, "That you believe and that you have life in his name." That's the greatest wonder. Did you come in and did you think that this message was for somebody else? Sometimes we do that. "This must be for somebody across the room. This must be for someone in that aisle over there. It's definitely for that guy."

This message is for you. Do you believe it? If you've come in today feeling alone, stand in wonder at a Savior whose selfless sacrifices places you in the family of God, if you believe. If you're ragged from the hurt and pain of life, thirsty to the core, stand in wonder at a Savior who really suffered and sympathizes with your weakness, and provides the thirst-quenching power of new life, if you believe. If you recognize what extreme damage sin has caused between you and a holy God, between you and others, and the fact that you cannot save yourself, stand in wonder as you come to the place where it is finished.

The payment for the penalty of those sins are paid in full if you believe. If you receive this gift by grace through faith in Christ, you see the wonder of the cross saves you from the error of hell, the destruction of sin, and the futility and emptiness of self-worship. The cross is a place of wonder. Wonder is not confusion, but the wide-eyed joy of the amazing truth that God saves sinners. The wonder of this cross is a gift from the God of wonders. Ultimately, wonder is meant to lead to worship. Stand in awe of the God that saves, and let this wonder lead you to worship.

Jesus said, "Anyone who comes to me, I will never cast out." John 6:37. "So, then, come. Come, sinner. Find payment and release from sin." Christian, that invitation still exists for you. Come, come again, be refreshed. Stand in awe of why we call what looked like a horrible day, Good Friday. Let's pray.

Jesus, you're a great Savior. Thank you for saving us. I pray for anyone here tonight that has yet to come to you, let them come. We pray this in your name, Amen.