

John 19:6 Crucify Him

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[0 : 0 0] I'd like us to turn back this morning to the passage that we read and in particular we're going to focus on the words of John chapter 19 verse 6 and especially the second half of this verse where we read that the chief priests and the officers saw him, that's Jesus, they saw Jesus and they cried out, crucify him, crucify him. Pilate said to them, take him yourselves and crucify him for I find no guilt in him. When we read through the last few chapters of any of the Gospels, whether it's Matthew, Mark, Luke or John, the focus is very very much on the events of Jesus' trial and crucifixion and we are given an insight into all the events that took place, you've read any of the Gospels, John is no different, we are told the historical events of what happened and in many ways that's very simple, the writers are simply reporting what took place and they're giving us the details of all that led up to Jesus' death. But one of the amazing things that we see when we look at these events that led up to the crucifixion is that these events themselves very often reveal to us the key theological truths of the Gospel. The events that were supposed to mock and hurt and condemn Jesus actually themselves reinforce many of the key theological truths of our salvation. It's really really interesting when you look at it, maybe you have noticed it before, maybe you haven't. If you look at what happened, so many of these events are actually capturing the key truths of the Gospel. For example,

I'll give you a couple of examples, Jesus came as a king, that's a theological truth, when he came he announced his coming in terms of the kingdom of God, he said repent and believe the kingdom of God is at hand, Jesus is king and of course what happened at his crucifixion, they put a crown of thorns on his head and they clothed him in purple as we read here in John chapter 19. That was an attempt to mock Jesus but of course it was simply reinforcing a truth that he is in fact a king. Likewise later on in this chapter, we didn't read it in fact it's the very next verse after where we stopped, they placed the cross on Jesus, he had to carry his own cross, you can imagine it, the cross being with the cross being placed on Jesus' shoulder as he bore that burden and carried it. That was a historical event, that's what happened but that's a powerful reminder of the fact that as Jesus went to the cross our sin was placed on him, was imputed onto him, was transferred onto him, there he carried our sin as Isaiah says, the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all, the cross on his back is a really powerful symbol of that. And there's more, we read about Caiaphas, the high priest, Jesus had been at Caiaphas' house and we read that, we didn't actually read it in the passage but in John chapter 18 it says in verse 14, it was Caiaphas, the high priest, who had advised the Jews that it would be expedient that one man should die for the people. Now this is pointing us back to John 11 which was when Caiaphas and the other leaders were talking about Jesus, what are we going to do with Jesus? And Caiaphas came to the conclusion, do you not understand that it's better for you that one man should die for the people and not that the whole nation should perish?

Now Caiaphas meant that against Jesus, he was saying, kill that man before he causes uproar that will destroy the nation but of course he's expressing a wonderful theological truth that Christ does perish, does die in order for the nation to live. Another example is Barabbas who we read about, Barabbas is released, Christ is condemned, a substitution takes place and of course at the heart of the Gospel is a substitution which we'll come back to later on, we read about that, you have a custom that I release for you one man at the Passover, do you want me to release the king of the Jews? They said no, we want Barabbas, now Barabbas was a robber, the guilty man was freed, the innocent man was condemned, again a picture of the truths of the Gospel. And some of you will remember that a few months ago we looked at the remarkable verse in Mark chapter 15 verse 31 where the chief priest in the scribes mocked Jesus by saying he saved others, he cannot save himself. They were mocking him but they were telling the truth, Jesus could only save others by sacrificing himself. So it's really really interesting when you see that all these events are in many ways little pictures of what the Gospel is all about and we see exactly the same thing here in John chapter 19 verse 6 where we read of Pilate's judgment over Jesus. Now as we come to this let's just remind ourselves what happened, Jesus was arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane and he was bound up and taken to Annas, first of all, now Annas was the father-in-law of

Caiaphas who was the current high priest. So basically the Jews were arresting Jesus, taking him to their superior, to the one who would be able to pronounce judgment. But from Caiaphas's house Jesus was then sent to Pilate. Yes the Jews wanted the high priest to pronounce judgment but ultimately authority did not lie with him, it lay with the Roman governor, Pilate. He was the one who had the authority to administer a death sentence. We read that in the end of chapter 18 because the Jews said to Pilate it's not lawful for us to put anyone to death. So we can think of Jesus, arrested, questioned by Annas, questioned by Caiaphas, then brought before Pilate. And we read about how Pilate questions Jesus and as the interrogation goes on, Pilate repeatedly comes to the same conclusion, I find no guilt in this man. But as we read the crowd are not satisfied and again and again and again they cry out for Jesus' death and eventually Pilate hands him over to be crucified. And the whole situation is summed up in the words of our text where Pilate says take him yourselves and crucify him for I find no guilt in him. And I want to focus on the fact that these words of Pilate are actually summing up some of the most vital, vital truths of the Gospel.

If you ask yourself the question do I know what Christianity is all about? Do I know what is at the heart of the message of the Bible? Well if you're not sure, Pilate is actually giving us an answer. Pilate is reminding us of something vitally, vitally important.

[7 : 46] And if we explore what Pilate is saying it will remind us of some of the most important things that we will ever hear. Pilate says two things in this statement. The first is actually the last part of the statement. The first thing I want to focus on is where he says I find no guilt in him. Now that is summarising the fact that Pilate is unconvinced by the Jews accusations. They're bringing before it, they're saying we're bringing this man before you because he's evil. If he wasn't evil we wouldn't have brought him before you.

Pilate says I am not convinced. Your accusations do not hold water. I find no guilt in this man. But if we step back and if we look at the wider theological picture Pilate is actually declaring one of the most fundamental truths that there are concerning Jesus Christ. There is no guilt in him. Now that of course is very simple and in many ways very obvious and I'm sure you may well be thinking of course we know that Jesus is not guilty. Jesus is not a sinner. But we must think about this a little bit more and grasp the significance of it. When we think about the word guilt we are referring to the grounds that somebody has in regard to inflicting punishment. Somebody is accused of doing something and if it turns out to be true that that accusation is correct punishment can therefore justifiably be inflicted.

And in that whole process the key question is this, is the person guilty or not guilty? And we have the same principle applying today in our own legal system if somebody is accused by a court the question is are they guilty or are they not? And when it comes to the trial of Jesus before Pilate the verdict is absolutely clear. He is not guilty. And this is of immense immense theological significance because it is reminding us of who Jesus is.

Now when we are talking about the language of guilt, guilty or not guilty we are stepping into the whole world of law aren't we? We are into the legal realm and this is exactly where we have to turn our attention because we have to stand back and think about the law of God. In the Bible God reveals himself through the law. That's a really really important thing to understand and I've got a diagram here to help us see it. We have God who is all together different, all together separate, all together holy and the only way we can know God is if he reveals himself to us. And God does that in various ways. He does that through the creation of the world, we call that general revelation. He does that specially, specifically through his word and in particular God reveals himself through the law. Now we must understand that because we often think of ourselves that the law is just a list of requirements for us. Primarily the law is a revelation of God because by giving the law God is telling us what he likes and what he doesn't like. God is telling us what his standards are. God is telling us what he believes is right, what he believes is wrong and by definition that is what sets out the parameters of right and wrong. But God is constantly revealing himself through the law. That's why when you go back to the Old Testament and you read all the passages where God gives his law you see the same phrase coming up again and again and again and again. God always says I am the Lord. That is seen in many, many places.

It's seen in the previous of the Ten Commandments. It's seen in Leviticus 19.8. You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbour as yourself. I am the Lord. And that's reminding us that God gives us these laws because of who he is, because of his nature, because these are the things that he wants and that he desires. So always, always remember that the law reveals God to us. We get to know God through the law. God is who he is. God has certain standards. That's what we mean by the word righteous, a set of standards that God expects. And we have to stop there and ask ourselves one of the most important questions that we will ever, ever, ever ask.

[12 : 49] Do we meet these standards? Do we meet that standard that God has revealed? God has revealed himself through his law. God has shown us what he wants, what he likes, what is compatible with his character. And before that law, are we guilty or not guilty? That is the most important question that we can consider this morning. And yet, it's a question to which I'm sure we all know the answer. We are guilty. We might be able to keep one aspect of God's law. We might be able to keep several, but God's perfection is exactly that perfection.

And so the requirements of God's law require absolute conformity to every single detail and none of us, me more than any, can reach that standard. We are guilty before God. If we scrutinise our lives according to the Ten Commandments, we are guilty. And that can be so offensive to some people and maybe it is offensive to you. But if we honestly examine ourselves, then there is only one verdict. Paul sums it up when he says in Romans 3.10, no one is righteous. No, not one. And so that tells us that the law is doing something else.

It's doing two things. It's revealing God to us, but it is also revealing our own condition. The law tells us about God, what his standards are. The law tells us about ourselves. And simultaneously, the law is revealing God and it is separating us from God because we don't match up. And so the law does these two things. And that's why in the letter to the Romans, Paul describes the law on the one hand as holy and righteous and good because it is the revelation of God's standards. So from that point of view, it's great. But on the other hand, Paul says that that same law is a law of sin and death because when we compare ourselves to it, we see our sinfulness and we confirm the fact that we are dead in our trespasses. We are separated from God. We stand guilty before Him. And we must recognise that. Both we must recognise that it's two of ourselves and we must, must recognise how serious that is. How desperately serious that is. The law tells us that we are guilty. Now, if you go back to John chapter 19 and verse seven, you will see one of the most ironic statements that has ever been made by human beings. The Jews answered Pilate, we have a law and according to that law, he ought to die because he has made himself the Son of God. You can imagine the Jews standing around Jesus. They're holding up their law.

We have a law. According to that law, this man ought to die when the truth is according to that law, they ought to die. According to that law, they are the sinners. They are the ones who deserve death. It is utterly ironic that they make this statement. We have a law, but that law is telling us that we are sinners. And Pilate, in this simple statement that he makes, is reminding us of the amazing truth that Jesus Christ is different. We are all the same and that we are all, all, all included in that category of people that are sinners, but Jesus is different. If you scrutinize Jesus according to the commands of God, you will find that the conclusion is exactly what Pilate himself says, I find no guilt in him.

And this reminds us of the amazing doctrine of Christ's obedience. If you want to summarize Jesus's work in one word, you can use that word, obedience. Christ obeyed. And there are two ways that we can think about Christ's obedience, and it's important that we grasp that. Two ways in which Jesus was obedient. The first way we can describe as downward obedience, traditionally that's described as passive obedience. We can think of it as downward obedience and in the sense that Jesus did everything that was required of him.

[18 : 34] In terms of his mission, he came to die and he went all the way to death. As Philippians 2.8 says, he found, been found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Imagine Jesus in heaven, preparing to come to earth and the Father says to him, you have to go down to earth and then you have to go down to temptation. You have to go down to Gethsemane. You have to go down to the cross.

You have to go down to death itself. Jesus obeyed all the way. And so we have a downward obedience and we'll come back to that later on because our focus just now is on the other part of Christ's obedience, upward obedience. Because not only did Christ obey his Father in a downward sense in terms of going all the way to death, he also obeyed his Father in an upward sense in that he actively obeyed every single command that the law contains.

He was sinless. He kept the law perfectly. You measure Jesus against God's standard, you will come to the same conclusion as Pilate. I find no guilt in him. But it is vital that we remember that Jesus obeyed God's law as a human. It's very, very easy to think to ourselves, of course Jesus obeyed his Father. He's the Son of God. He can do that easily.

It's no problem for him. It's easy. It's so easy to think that. Of course he kept the law. Jesus is God. But you have to remember that Jesus did not keep God's law from the bubble of immunity up in heaven. Jesus kept God's law down at our level as a human. As one who shares every single aspect of human nature that we have. That's why Hebrews 4.15 says, we do not have a high priest who's unable to sympathize with their weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Human nature brings temptations. You cannot be a human without facing temptations. We have certain needs as human beings that inevitably bring temptation. We need to be sustained with food and with drink. Therefore, there's the constant temptation to overindulge, constant temptation to be selfish and to be greedy. We are emotional people as humans. Therefore, there's the constant, constant temptation for pride and for self-glorification because we want to be made to feel good about ourselves. We are loving as human beings. We need to have relationships with each other, but that means we are constantly facing the temptation for these relationships to descend into that which is immoral and inappropriate. And the devil is always, always, always poking you and me at our human nature to get us to sin. And you must, must, must remember that

Jesus was every bit as human as you are. That means he was tempted in every way that you are tempted. Now, when the Bible uses the word every, it means every. You think of a temptation to sin that you struggle with, Jesus faced that. There are no exceptions.

[22 : 13] Jesus faced that temptation and yet he never, ever sinned. There is no guilt in him. He was constantly being pushed, constantly being tested, constantly being tempted because he was a human, but never once did he give in. Now, that should make us all, all marvel at Jesus Christ, the fact that he obeyed where we never could. And so Pilate is reminding us of a fundamental truth about Jesus. There was no guilt in him. Christ upwardly obeyed God conforming to the standards of the law. But Pilate says something else as well. He says crucify him. He says there's no guilt in him, but he also says crucify him. If you go back to the narrative, you see that the primary call for Jesus's crucifixion comes from the Jews. They are the ones who say crucify him, crucify him. But we have to remember that this, these words from the Jews were a request. They did not have the authority to crucify Jesus. They were simply begging Pilate to do it. And Pilate, in a way, shows a bit of reluctance. He questions Jesus, he takes Jesus in and out. And if you read in Matthew's Gospel, we see that he actually literally washes his hands in front of everybody because he wants to distance himself from his pronouncement. But it is Pilate and Pilate alone who has the authority to crucify Jesus. And so even though he found no guilt in him,

Pilate passed the death sentence. And that's why in the words of verse 6 we have this astonishing contrast where Pilate says he's not guilty, crucify him. And the irony of that lies in the fact that crucifixion was the means of execution that was reserved for only the most serious levels of guilt. We are so familiar with a cross as the symbol of Christianity, we forget how desperately horrific it was as a means of execution. You would only be crucified if you were a non-Roman or a slave. It was reserved for murderers and rebels and only if you were foreign or if you were a slave. It was the most horrific form of death and it was for the most serious, serious levels of guilt. I've got a quotation here from a couple of quotations. One is from F. F. Bruce, who's a 20th century New Testament author.

He says, to die by crucifixion was to plumb the lowest depths of disgrace. It was a punishment reserved for those who were deemed most unfit to live, a punishment for those who were sub human. It was for the worst of the worst. And Cicero, the Roman philosopher who lived over 100 years before Christ says this, what then shall I say of crucifixion? It is impossible to find the word for such an abomination. Crucifixion was only for the highest levels of guilt. And that's why it is such a massive contradiction when Pilate says, I find him not guilty, crucify him. And yet once again, Pilate is expressing one of the most fundamental and glorious truths of the gospel because not only is Christ the spotless, perfect, guilt free son of God, he is also the spotless, perfect, guilt free lamb of God. And he has come as a sacrifice. He has come in place of us in order to die. If we go back to the law, the law is a law of sin and death to us because it pronounces us guilty and it renders us deserving of punishment. But the whole gospel centres on the fact that Jesus has come to take that punishment in our place. Which is exactly what Isaiah was prophesying when he said that 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 way 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, although he had done no violence and there was no deceit in his mouth yet it was the will of the Lord to crush him. What Isaiah prophesied, Pilate executed. Pilate found that there was no deceit in him, no violence in him, no guilt in him and yet he sent him to be pierced and crushed and killed. And it reminds us of the most fundamental truths that lie at the heart of the gospel because at the heart of the gospel is this glorious and wonderful exchange whereby our sin is placed on Christ and his righteousness is placed on us. We go back to our diagram regarding the law. Christ as a human obeys the law and he is the only human who can be accepted by God on the basis of God's righteous requirements. We on the other hand are left deserving punishment because we are guilty and the gospel works by exchanging this situation. The punishment that we deserve goes on to

Christ. The acceptance that Christ has is given to us because we are united to him by faith. It is beautifully simple. Christ in our place. That's why Paul says, for our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. This was God's plan all along. So as he has said, it was the will of the Lord to crush him. And what you and I have to reflect on is the fact that all of this is for you.

All of this was done for you. There are various people who cried out the words crucify him. We have the Jews and the crowd who gathered around Jesus in a frenzy and screamed out crucify him, crucify him. You have Pilate who observes the situation and with a desire to avoid things getting out of hand, pronounces the judgment, crucify him. But above all that, the order to put Jesus to death came from God himself. In order for you and me to be saved, God said, crucify him. And I want you to imagine that you are standing before Pilate. Imagine that you are standing before Pilate and you have all these scribes and chief priests and Jewish crowds around you and they are holding up their law and they are saying we have a law and by this law this person deserves to die. Imagine you are in that situation with all that accusation being thrown upon you and Pilate looks upon you with contempt and is about to send you to Golgotha to be put to death and at that moment God intervenes and he puts forward his very own son and he says crucify him instead.

[30 : 48] Because that is exactly what God has done. That is exactly what the message of the Gospel is. The one in whom there is no guilt is put forward to be crucified. And that seems almost impossible to believe. If you think about it, you think about Christ, the only human who has perfectly obeyed God, the precious eternal beloved son of God. How, how could God pronounce upon him the sentence, crucify him? It seems almost beyond explanation but there is one explanation but only one because God loves you and because God wants you saved, because God wants you restored to his family. There was no compromise from God in providing your salvation. That is what I was meaning when I said downward obedience. Christ went down, down, down, down so that you and I can be saved. And so Pilate, whether he realises it or not, is telling us what lies at the heart of the Gospel. Christ has no guilt in him at all but he was crucified in our place. And that reminds us of the immensity of God's love for sinners like you and like me. And it reminds us that there is hope for every single one of us. And if you are conscious of your sin, if you are aware that you are not what you wish you were before God and if you are terrified of the prospect of being condemned, remember Pilate's words and remember everything that these words remind us of.

The fact that in Christ we have a perfect Savior, in Christ we can all find salvation.