

Jesus Death Offered In The Garden

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[0 : 00] Thank you, Van, Jenya, I think it's just so helpful being led in the music to go along with what we're reading in Scripture this evening and it kind of just the tone is helpful in this kind of solemnity of what is going on.

What we're looking at this evening is almost the pinnacle of where the Bible is going. The whole Bible has been building up to this moment that we look at in Luke chapter 23.

And it's a part of the Bible that is well known and maybe even a story that just kind of washes over us because we've heard it so many times. But what Luke is doing in this Gospel is he is doing something in teaching us what the death of Jesus is all about.

He wants us to know specifically, almost like a systematic theology, that he wants us to know specific things of what is going on. And he does that in the whole of his Gospel. He does it specifically in what we read just now.

What we read just now was what is normally called Good Friday is where the good news comes from. It is called Good Friday. But let me ask the question, is it quite odd that we would call something that is this horrific Good Friday, this kind of excruciating death that is going on, this kind of horrible experience that seems to happen.

[1 : 17] If you've ever been to a funeral and you meet someone after it and you ask, how did it go? Or they ask you how it went? You feel bad when you said goods, but that's kind of what you kind of want to say. It was a good funeral, it was okay, it went fine.

That would be one thing to say, but if you were to watch an execution and say that it was a good execution, you'd be kind of thought of as like a psychopath or someone who is wildly that used to be avoided and not talked to at all.

But this, throughout all of history, we have called Good Friday. And so this evening I want to consider what it is that makes this Good Friday. What is it that makes this message? Good news for us.

Now do this because I want to look at Luke and Luke, I think he's doing a lot more than we ever take appreciation for. There's a lot more going on in the scenes that he paints for us. He wants us to know exactly what it is that Jesus is doing and what happens in the death of Jesus.

And he does it in three scenes. I'm going to consider it in three scenes this evening. Verse 32 down to verse 38 is the first scene. Verse 39 down to 43 is the second scene.

[2 : 19] And then verse 44 to 49 is the third scene. And I read the kind of the on ramp of that from verse 26 down to 31 just to kind of get a sense of what is going on.

Because I think the tone that we read this passage in is that there's a deep sadness in what is going on. You hear it says, daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves.

There's mourning and lamenting going on. And all of this is kind of filled with a kind of sense of sadness. But if you imagine a cinema, there are three scenes, a film, not a cinema, you can imagine a cinema, but if you imagine a film, there are three scenes that are going on in these verses.

And verse 32 down to 38 is the first scene. We see Jesus on the cross and the focus is not on Jesus, but actually on the people who are around him. And so the first point will be who? The second scene is verse 39 down to 43.

And the question that it is asking is what? And then the third scene, verse 44 down to 49 is how? Who did Jesus die for?

[3 : 21] What did he achieve when he died and how was it achieved? The three questions we're going to be considering this evening. So follow with me from verse 32 down to verse 38. I'll reread it just to kind of remind ourselves of what is going on.

Just sense the picture of what is going on, sense the tone of all that is happening. And see who it is that the camera focuses in on. Two others who were criminals were led away to be put to death with him.

And when they came to the place that is called the skull, there they crucified him and the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. And Jesus said, Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.

And they cast lots to divide his garments. And the people stood by watching. But the rulers scoffed at him saying, he saved others. Let him save himself if he is the Christ that has chosen one. The soldiers also mocked him coming up and offering him sir wine and saying, if you are the king of the Jews, save yourself and there's an inscription over his head that said he is the king of the Jews. [4 : 17] And this first point is who, who is it that Jesus is dying for? Because in the camera kind of focusing, it is not on Jesus himself.

The camera focuses on the people around him. There are two criminals we hear. There are people all around who are mocking. There are soldiers. And when we think of the crucifixion narrative, what we often think of is Isaiah 53 verses, right, where we think that he was afflicted and smitten. He was pierced for our transgressions. He was crushed for our iniquities. He was upon him, was our trust, his wounds were what healed us. The picture we have is of this bruised and battered Jesus, the crown of thorns kind of blood running down his head.

But as we looked at and considered this morning, what was missing from any of these verses is nails, is blood, is any of the gory details. Look what it says in verse 33, when they came to the place that is called the skull, the crucifixion.

Pretty matter of fact, not focusing on any of the details of what it looks like in his death. And so the question should be that this person look, he says he wants us to know for certainty.

[5 : 31] He is, he's known as Dr. Luke. He has his Mr. details. He has all these things, but he seems to missed out really big details of the gore and the blood and the nails. I think it's because he wants to teach us, not necessarily the gore, the blood and the nails, but he wants to teach us about the people who are around the cross, the people on the behalf of the people on behalf, the people on which Jesus is dying on behalf of.

That's what he wants us to see. He wants us to see the people who are all around. You see the two criminals in verse 32. You see those who cast lots at his feet. You see those who say he saved others.

Can't he save himself above his head? You see those who are mocking him, who are offering him sir wine, who put above his head king of the Jews.

Criminals, scoffers, vultures who are just picking up what is left at the bottom. Those who mock him. What we see as we look at Jesus on the cross is not Jesus himself at this point, but the people who are all around, the people who put him there, the people who mock him, the people who rejected him as their Lord.

And Luke's camera focus is on that because he wants to teach us something. He wants to teach us that Jesus when he died was among the sinners to save the sinners.

[6 : 54] He wants to teach us that he was there because those are the people he dies on behalf of. The verse from Isaiah that should come to our mind is not about him being smitten and struck on our behalf where his wounds heal us.

But later on in Isaiah 53 where he says that he was numbered among the transgressors, that he bore the sins of many and makes intercession for those who are around him.

We see that it's quite clear in these verses that that is where it is going, those who are gambling, those who literally put the nails through his hands. But we should see ourselves in there. We sung this just earlier, but hold the man upon the cross, my sin upon his shoulders.

This verse, this line always gets me. Ashamed, I hear my mocking voice call out among the scoffers. We may not have been the people who drove the nails through his hands.

But Jesus' death was on behalf of sinners and that is all of us here tonight. It may be that you could be one of the people who sees yourself with just that real shame and guilt.

[7 : 58] You could actually easily picture yourself as one of the people on the cross alongside him. That as you walk around you know there are things that people know about you. That there's a sense of shame and guilt as you live.

But it may be actually that you have it so hidden that nobody knows about it, but you know about this shame. There's a guilt that hangs around this internal thing that consumes you.

I think all of us walk around with this idea of this shame and this guilt. Because across this room I was at the airport yesterday and on the plane and I was getting ready to fly up and as I looked across the airport you could see everybody is deeply insecure.

I think it might be because everyone's a bit more edgy and edgy around kind of an airport and not sure what's going on. But everyone cares what they look like. Everyone has a deep insecurity that they're trying to hide.

If you think of it in a room you have the person who is the loudest in the room. They have this big bravado and they walk in. That person is as deeply insecure as the person who's hiding away in the corner and not wanting anyone to see them.

[9 : 04] Both are trying to hide their flaws, their shame and the guilt that they carry. All of us wrestle with this sense of shame and guilt. But that might not be where you see yourself or what you picture yourself but as we look through these verses and we consider these people all of us are people who have seen what Jesus has to offer.

And we might not be gambling at his feet but we take the good things that he has given us and we use them for our own. We take everything that he has meant for his glory, for his goodness.

We either overindulge or misuse the things that he has given us because we want to satisfy ourselves, our needs and not his. Or you may be someone this evening who has mocked openly the Lord Jesus who has said just like these people say round the cross, he saved others, let him save himself.

That might not be what we say but we might say that those Christians that we know, they're just using Christianity as a crutch. They're just using it to get by. If God is good how can he allow these things to happen?

They may be questions that you ask now or have asked in the past. Even if we don't outright mock the Lord Jesus, all of us can be accused of saying Lord God why are you not rescuing or saving me from this situation?

[10 : 24] Are you good at all? All of us could be guilty of asking those questions where we do not trust him, where we think that his saving is not possible.

And though this is the case, what the Bible teaches us despite all of what we are like is that the Bible teaches that this was good Friday, that this was good news that we needed to hear.

And the good news is not about our rejection across the board, the good news is about the response of the Lord Jesus. Because we see in these verses Jesus actually does speak, is not the focus is all around the people around him.

If you look at verse 34, he could have called the legion of angels to save him, he could have at any point just saved himself. He could have spoken to his father and be released from the cup of wrath that he was about to drink.

But he didn't. He spoke to his father and said this, Father forgive them for they do not know what they do. That as he stood on the cross hanging there with the people all around him mocking him, accusing him, literally the people who hung him to the cross, he freely offers grace for their inequities for their transgressions for the sinners that he is among.

[11 : 44] The good news for us is that Jesus was among sinners to save sinners. He came to this earth so that he might rescue us from our own position.

The good news for us is that Jesus he hung across he did not come down, but he offered forgiveness to all that is true, lasting and certain.

Despite whatever you have done, despite whatever you will do, he offers free and lasting forgiveness.

The eye in my fallen state, I still rebel. I still forget all that he has done for me. I question what it is that he is doing. His death fully and completely has forgiven me as he stood among the sinners. So that is the who of the good news. That is the first kind of camera scene that we see. Who is the good news for? The good news is that it's for sinners. It is for all of us.

[12 : 50] And then the next kind of scene, the next camera angle tells us what it is that Jesus does in his death. What it is that Jesus does in that famous scene is you see the two criminals verse 39 down to 43.

The who was for all sinners, the what is an interesting one. Let me read verse 39 down to 43. One of the criminals who were hanged, hanged, railed at him saying, are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us.

But the others rebuked him saying, do you not fear God since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed justly for we are receiving the true reward for our deeds. But this man has done nothing wrong.

He says, Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom. And Jesus says, truly I say to you, today you'll be with me in paradise.

Let me ask you a question as we consider the second point. If someone was to ask you, what is the good news saving you for? What is the good news saving you to? What is Jesus' death saving you for?

[13:50] Would you answer heaven? Would you answer relationship with God? Would you answer to be a better person? I bet none of us in this room would say paradise.

But that is what Jesus says. Jesus says in verse 43, truly I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise. What the thief from the cross next to Jesus is told is that he will be with him in paradise. What does that mean? Some of people who like myself, who come up to Lewis on a lovely beach and think, oh, this is paradise. It might be cold and you have to wear a hat, but it looks incredible. Or it might be that you just long for just a time to relax and you say, this is paradise. That's really kind of actually a helpful image to have, that idea of relaxing, of resting, of being in this wonderful, beautiful place.

Because the word paradise appears in the Bible not that many times, but it does a few times. The word actually means garden. The word paradise means garden.

[14:56] It is used three times in the New Testament. And I want to turn to one of them just so we can see what it looks like. If you have a Bible, turn to Revelation chapter 2 in verse 7.

What Jesus says is you will be with me in paradise. What he actually says is what you will be with me is in the garden, this place of perfect rest.

Revelation 2 verse 7 is a letter written to the church in Ephesus. And just listen to this, what the idea of garden means.

Verse 7, he who has an ear, an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers, I will grant to eat. What it is saying, the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God. What it is saying when it speaks of paradise is actually speaking of the garden and by garden it means the garden of Eden, where there is the tree of life, where there is paradise.

[15:52] To behold, we are thinking that when we die, what we do, what this thief did on the cross is go to that idyllic place where there are plants and flowers and animals roaming around and you can walk around naked.

That might be what you are thinking. They sound like lovely things. But what Jesus is showing actually is that the garden he speaks of is the restoration of the relationship that Armin Eve had with God himself.

When the Bible speaks of the garden, it is not speaking of the idyllic kind of land and plants and all these wonderful things, though they are like paradise. What it speaks of is a restoration of the relationship with God himself.

The offering given to this man on the cross was salvation, which is relationship with God himself and it is done through nothing else than trusting in Jesus as he hangs there on the cross, completely guilty of all that he has done.

He hangs there and he calls out to Jesus and says, save me. And he does. So what is the good news? What is what is Good Friday all about?

[17:07] Good Friday is the simplicity of what it takes to be saved. The good news is that all that you have longed for, that that rest of your soul, that freedom of known security in your life, the joy of being with God forever, that that one part of your life that just doesn't gel right, that there's an uncomfortable nature that you just have an itch that you cannot scratch.

All of that is restored. Relationship is made right with God because you will be in the garden and the question that it kind of poses for us is what will you do with this?

Because there are two options. Really clearly Luke lays out that there are two options on the cross. Two distinct people, one on the right and one on the other.

And it says, where are you in this situation tonight? Both thieves want to be saved from death. One says, are you not the Christ? Save yourself and save us.

And the other simply says, Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom. There's this infinite quality of difference between save me and save me.

[18 : 28] One wanted save from the pain that he was in in that moment. One wanted saved to God himself. One wanted saved from, for the now, one wanted saved for eternity.

There is not a thing that this criminal could have done as he hung there on the cross. And it begs us to ask the question, where are you this evening?

Because what's amazing about this, Jesus wants us to know with certainty that there's nothing we can do, there's nothing we deserve, that he went through the deep anguish of this evening that day for us.

For us, I think on the ground what it means is you do not have to make it along to a prayer meeting because he never did. You do not even have to be able to take communion on a Sunday morning because this thief never did.

There is nothing that you can do or should do to be saved other than trust in the Lord Jesus. There is nothing after it, and there are good things to do. But the simplicity of the gospel message is simply trusting in the man in the middle cross.

[19 : 34] That's what Luke wants us to know. I think that's what Jesus wants us to know. If you are a Christian here this evening, I think it's meant to give us a real comfort.

You may not feel like you once felt in your Christian walk that there is something that has just come up that has caused you to drift along those last number of weeks or years.

What this tells us is that we were no more saved at that first moment than we are now. You may not be where you once were, but Jesus knows us at our very, very worst, and he still died for us.

It may be that you're just not even sure anymore. Luke wants us to know with certainty the simplicity of what it takes to enter into this garden.

I was speaking of this with someone before, and he was saying that his mother used to then leave a little sign that she was out in the garden if she was out in the garden, and he'd come in and he'd see in the garden, and she'd be out working in the garden, and he was telling me that she died a number of years ago, and that the idea that she is in the garden now because she was a believer and a Christian just stuck with him.

[20 : 43] This powerful image that where she is because she is a believer where the thief is, is in paradise, in right relationship with God.

That is what the death of Jesus brings in that moment. So that's the second of the three scenes.

Let's move on to the third. The first is the who. The second is the what.

The third is the how. How is any of this possible? How is it that those who are sinners are able to enter into the garden? And verse 44 down to 49 tell us exactly how that is, and it tells us by telling us that the judgment of the innocent one is how we are saved.

The one who was innocent was judged on behalf of the sinners that runs through the... And if you know your Bibles, one of the themes that runs through this is a really interesting theme, and it's the theme of the Exodus.

The book of Exodus, the second book of the Bible runs right through these verses here. And there are two ways that it does this. If you think back to the Exodus story, it speaks of a people who were enslaved to this evil superpower, the Egyptians.

[21 : 50] They were destitute and helpless and God graciously rescues them. How does he do that? He does that by the plagues. I'm not going to ask you for to name one to ten, but the ninth one is what happens in these verses here.

The ninth plague that happens in the Exodus is darkness covers the land. Read along with me what it says, verse 44. It was now about the sixth hour, and there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour, while the sun's light failed.

There was darkness that covered the whole land from midday through to 3 p.m. from the sixth hour until the ninth. That's interesting, not because that is the ninth plague and that is what we should do, but because of what comes next.

It's the tenth plague. The tenth plague in the book of Exodus, the saving plague is the death of the firstborn son.

It's the death of the Passover lamb, the blood that is spilled on behalf of the people. What we see on the cross is exactly that. The innocent man rescues the destitute enslaved sinners that surround the cross.

[23 : 06] Our enslavement is broken by this man as he takes the punishment of God upon himself, where the innocent lamb is judged for us.

The question should be, what does that do? It's the second Exodus theme that runs through these verses. The Exodus where the people of God were rescued out of Egypt and they were rescued to the wilderness.

God made his place among the people of God and a place called the Tabernacle, which was a tent that later became the temple. In the Tabernacle, right in the middle of the camp of God's people was God himself.

He chose to make himself known there, but in a really specific place, right in the centre of the Tabernacle at the back of it, in the most holy place, was where he was, where God's holiness was, and the people sitting all around were there.

Have a look at what happens in the death of the Lord Jesus in verse 45. While the sunlights failed, the curtain from the temple was torn in two.

[24 : 09] That as Jesus breathed his last, the curtain that separated God from people was torn in two. Again, speaking of the same kind of Edenic garden vibe, relationship with God was possible because of the death of Jesus.

Completely fully, relationship is restored, offering paradise to anyone who trusts in him. Eden is possible, salvation is achieved, the Father's plan is enacted.

This is the good news. This is what makes this Good Friday, that we as sinners who might surround the cross are able to enter into paradise, into relationship with our God, simply by trusting in him because he died on our behalf as the innocent one as the Centurion says, taking the punishment that we deserve that offers us relationship with God himself, that is offered to all.

The offer is still there. I'm going to cross and offer forgiveness to those who had rejected him time and time again and the offer is still there.

Jesus I'm going to cross and tonight offers forgiveness for the sins that we know we commit, for the sins that are hidden from others. He offers forgiveness that has caused the sadness within ourselves and makes us write and restores our relationship with God or maker.

[25 : 50] The plan from the beginning of the Bible, where God was with his people is finally restored.

This message for anyone if you have never believed is open to you, the comfort then for us as Christians is knowing that Jesus knew how messed up we really were and he still died for us. Jesus shows us just the simplicity of what it takes to be saved and be brought back into relationship with him. There is no doctrine that you can learn that will save you any more than just by saying, Jesus, remember me.

The comfort for us is knowing that the future hope that awaits us is that we can say we are gone to the garden. In that place of rest for our souls, in that place that restores what was broken, saved from whatever it is that from the start of this world's creation, not from the start of this world's creation, from the fall that happened that has just plagued humanity of a restlessness within our soul can be restored because of what Jesus has done.

We can be known and known by our maker. I want to finish with some of the doctrines. The Heidelberg Catechism. The Heidelberg Catechism is a really helpful book that teaches some of the doctrines and the beliefs of the Christian church.

[27 : 25] The question that is asked in question 58 says this, how does the article concerning life everlasting comfort you? How is it that the question is, how does life everlasting, how does entering the garden, how does knowing all of this help us?

The answer is brilliant. It says this, even as I already now experience in my heart the beginning of the eternal joy. So after this life, I will have perfect blessedness such as no eye has seen and no ear has heard, no human heart has ever imagined a blessedness in which to praise God forever. This is what is achieved at the cross. The beginning of eternal joy that we now experience, that after this life that perfect blessedness that no one has ever seen or heard or even imagined is a blessedness in which we will be able to praise God forevermore.

We as sinners stand around the cross and those who trust in Jesus will enter into that garden of relationship with Him because of all that He did for us in making relationship possible. Those we know and love how we have gone before us are waiting in the garden. Let's pray.