

Good Friday Sermon  
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I'm never surprised when I'm witnessing Jesus, that I'm often asked the question: "Why did Jesus have to die?" "Why did Jesus have to die by Crucifixion?" The most hideous kind of Execution? Where history tells us that the nails were five to seven inches long and were driven through the feet and hands. Men crucified with their backs to the cross, facing the spectators, women the other way. A small seat was used at times preventing the body from sagging, so that death would not come too quickly, the person able to hold themselves up until exhausted. Death would finally occur by Suffocation. The bleeding and exhausted person no longer capable of lifting themselves to get air. Victims were left naked and exposed to the sun and insects.

Not only an execution, it was a gruesome and public humiliation. There's no other terrible death imaginable than death by crucifixion. Cicero, the Roman philosopher, describing crucifixion as, "the most cruel and hideous of all tortures, the most disgusting punishment." Stating that, "crucifixion is so guilty an action that there are no words to adequately describe it." A form of execution that was so cruel that the Romans did away with it in 337 AD.

Every time I read or hear, The Passion of Christ, the account of His arrest, trail and suffering, what I find so extraordinary is that our Bible doesn't concentrate on the physical agony of Jesus; and, it doesn't dwell on His emotional pain at being rejected by the world, deserted by his friends. What it concentrates on is the fact that Jesus was cut off from his Father, and that He willingly did it for us. Even as Jesus is carried off, nailed to the cross, while His enemies berate Him and while they divide His clothes, Jesus continues to love His followers.

Jesus taking our sin upon Himself, accepting the punishment we deserve. Jesus hanging there, nailed to the cross. The perfect relationship He enjoyed with His Father in Heaven shattered for you and for me. And what all humanity must recognize is that it's His death, His work on that Cross is what we all need. Because of our sin, without His death, without His atoning work for us, that's the death we all deserve.

Recent estimates of the total number of people who have ever lived from Adam until now is somewhere close to 100 Billion. There are over 7 Billion people living today, and every one of us shares one vital thing in common. The one thing we share is our need for Jesus. Our purpose in life here, our eternal destiny afterwards, our total existence, depends completely on one thing. It depends on our personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

It's more important than the threat of COVID 19. Even in this time of pandemic where so many lives are impacted; where we are so grateful for those serving on the front lines; our health care providers, our first responders; and, where we give our deepest sympathies to those whose health and economic well-being have been impacted by this crisis our personal relationship with Jesus remains Most significant.

You see, it's impossible to over-emphasize the importance of Jesus, the importance of His life, the importance of His death. Even as life for us has changed over these past weeks and continues to disrupt the most common of our daily routines, we know in our hearts to stay focused on Jesus. So, on this Good Friday, the day we remember **that** day, that day when Jesus willingly suffered and died for you and for me, I want us to refocus and look into three key points of **Why** Jesus Died for us.

The first being the Seriousness of Sin. It's a bigger problem than most of us realize. It separates us from God. It's the inclination of our hearts, a bondage, an enslavement to our selfish nature, stemming from that Original Sin in the Garden of Eden. Sin continues throughout history, and it continues to be a present corrupting power in all of us. Sin puts all of us in a condition of bondage and guilt before God.

Billy Graham understood the seriousness of sin, and he understood our human nature to overlook it. Graham reminds us of this when he said, "Superficial views of God and His holiness will produce superficial views of sin and atonement. God hates sin. It is His uncompromising foe. Sin is vile and detestable in the sight of God. The sinner and God are at opposite poles of the moral universe." Billy Graham not only reminds us, he's warning us to take sin seriously. That without a Savior, we live within the midst of sin's pervasive and devastating consequence of separation from God and leading us to eternal death.

Death, it comes for all of us, and so often we don't even want to talk about it; but, the Apostle Paul does. Paul tells us in Romans, chapter 6, that there's a cure for Death. In that chapter's most recited verse, "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord," we find Paul directing us to the cure.

Paul directing us to our second key point. The cure found in the sacrifice, the perfect sacrifice of Jesus. Because of the seriousness of sin, we need a sacrifice. The Old Testament sacrificial system had a purpose. It not only demonstrated the seriousness of sin, it pointed to the ultimate sacrifice that would for once and for all time resolve the problem of sin. The ultimate sacrifice that would for once and for all time bring us into the right relationship with God. It's our need for atonement - that act of making amends for a wrong that was done, and of restoring our broken relationship with God. Jesus, the perfect sacrifice to atone for our sins.

I want to share with you what happened to me last week. I was leaving Stuhr's Funeral home downtown, and there was a young couple outside sitting down. The young woman in tears about the loss of friend. She was concerned for her own life, living in fear of the virus, telling me about her fears of shopping, fear of just leaving her home. The more she spoke, the more she opened-up to how messed up her life has been. She said, "I can't undo what I've done. I'm trapped and I feel helpless, and I'm ready to give up." After we talked for a while, she came to **that** place and asked **the** question, "Do you think God could ever forgive me?"

What a great question for her to ask. What an opportunity for me to witness Jesus to her. You know, we don't have to live in fear. We don't have to live in fear of our sins. That no matter what we've done, or where we've been, there's no depth of sin that Jesus cannot redeem. The Cross of Jesus - It's God's plan for redeeming our fallen humanity and the world. God has provided in Jesus the perfect sacrifice. The perfect sacrifice that for all time takes care of the problem of sin.

John the Baptist says this in John's Gospel, chapter 1, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" Jesus, the Son of God, conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit, born of a virgin, God made flesh, the One who knew no sin, took on our sin to die for you and for me. Paul says it this way in 2 Corinthians, chapter 5, "for our sake God made Jesus to be sin who knew no sin, so that in Jesus we might become the righteousness of God."

So, it's the sin, the seriousness of sin, our first point; and, sin requires a sacrifice. The Perfect Sacrifice found only in Jesus, our second Point, which brings us to our third point of Substitution. Our third point is really a question for each of us? It's the question of, "Will you accept Christ as Your Substitute?" Will you accept the atoning work of Christ on the Cross? Will you accept His righteousness as your own? Will you accept Jesus as Lord over your life and Savior from your sins?

My friends, there's no greater question to answer. No greater decision to make. You and I and that young woman at Stuhr's Funeral Home – all of us can make a new, and clean start. Jesus, His Cross, is the answer. We can be set free from the bad stuff, the habits, the addictions. Jesus paid the penalty, a penalty that you and I could never pay ourselves, so, that we could be free. So, that we could be forgiven. And he offers it to everyone.

And know this, Jesus longs for you come to experience and know deep in your heart the truth of what our Bible says when we read in Galatians, chapter 2: "The Son of God loved me and gave himself for me." It really is as personal as that. That's **what** Jesus did on the cross. That's **why** Jesus died for the world. The choice to make is to believe and to accept the free gift that He offers.

You see, it's impossible to over-emphasize the importance of Jesus, the importance of His life, the importance of His death. For our purpose in life here, our Eternal Destiny afterwards, our total existence depends completely on one thing. It's more important than the impact of COVID 19. It's more significant than the coronavirus, and it's the one thing we all share in common.

It's our need for Jesus.