

JESUS WAS CRUCIFIED FOR OUR SINS

John 19:16b-42

Key Verse: 19:30

“When he had received the drink, Jesus said, ‘It is finished.’ With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.”

Today's passage is about Jesus' crucifixion, death and burial. For those who love Jesus, this story seems to be too sad to talk about or even to remember. But John, the disciple whom Jesus loved, describes the events fact by fact with surprising objectivity. He does so to reveal that the death of Jesus fulfilled God's will for world salvation, which was prophesied and fulfilled. The crucifixion of Jesus is the climax of God's redemptive history. The death of Jesus is the prelude of Jesus' glorious resurrection. The death of Jesus gives us new birth, eternal life and the kingdom of God as our inheritance. The synoptic gospels picture the crucifixion of Jesus so vividly that there is a danger of being distracted from the main point of the crucifixion of Jesus. According to John's gospel, Jesus was crucified and died for our sins in accordance with the prophecies of God. Jesus was crucified and died so that we may believe in him and have new birth, eternal life and the kingdom of God as our inheritance (Jn 20:31).

First, Jesus carries his cross to Golgotha (16b-18). As we studied in the last passage, finally, Pilate, the Roman governor, handed Jesus over to them to be crucified (16a). Then the soldiers took charge of Jesus (16b). Now Jesus is in the hands of merciless soldiers. The soldiers put the cross on Jesus and whipped him to carry it to the place of the Skull (which in Aramaic is called Golgotha) (17). There they crucified him, and with him two others--one on each side and Jesus in the middle (18). Jesus is the Son of God. Jesus came to this world to save men from their sins as the Lamb of God. John 1:29 says, "The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, 'Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!'" Evil men not only made Jesus a political criminal, they also wanted to put him to shame. So they crucified two robbers beside him, placing one on each side with Jesus in the middle. In the past, execution by crucifixion was known as the most terrible punishment. The Jews not only wanted to destroy Jesus in a most terrible way, but also they wanted to shame Jesus, the holy God. So they put robbers on each side of Jesus and Jesus in the middle. On the cross, Jesus took up all our shame. Many terrible sinners want to be honorable persons. So, when they have done something wrong, they hide their faces from exposure, even though they deserve to be shamed. We are all men of shame and guilt. But holy Jesus, who deserves all honor and glory, was shamed so terribly in our places. Thank you, Jesus!

Second, Pilate prepared a title of Jesus, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews" (19-24). In the past, the authorities prepared a title and fastened it to the cross for those who were sentenced to be crucified. Jesus' title was prepared by Pilate the Roman governor. It read: "JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS." Many of the Jews read this sign, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city and the sign was written in Aramaic, Latin and Greek (20). The Jews wanted to make Jesus a terrible political criminal who deserved crucifixion. But Pilate the Roman governor made Jesus, "JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS." Biblically speaking, "Jesus of Nazareth" means "good Jesus." "Jesus of Nazareth" means Shepherd Jesus to his suffering people. "Jesus of Nazareth" means Everlasting Father to all lost children. "Jesus of Nazareth" means Jesus is the friend to all those who are lonely and lost. "Jesus of Nazareth" means that he healed the sick and preached the good news of the kingdom of God. "The King of the Jews" means that he is the King of kings and the Lord of lords and the Son of God and the Messiah who saves men from their sins. Ironically, Jesus' title was written in Aramaic, Latin and Greek, the representative world languages of the time. So even though Jesus carried the cross to Golgotha, he was not a political criminal; he was the King of kings and the Lord of lords and the one who saves men from their sins--not only the Jews, but all men of the world.

When the chief priests saw the title, they were really surprised that Pilate made Jesus the King of the Jews. So they protested to Pilate, "Do not write 'The King of the Jews,' but that this man claimed to be king of the Jews" (21). What did Pilate answer? He answered, "What I have written, I have written" (22). Even Pilate, the Roman governor, knew that Jesus was the King of the Jews and the Savior of the world. When Pilate said, "What I have written, I have written," he expressed his realization that this title is the most appropriate.

The Son of God was on the cross and shedding his blood to save men from their sins. What did men do at that time? John only describes several soldiers in order to display fallen man's mentality. When the soldiers crucified Jesus, they were not sympathetic at all. They were only greedy to take Jesus' clothes, dividing them into four shares, one for each of them, with the undergarment remaining. This garment was seamless, woven in one piece from top to

bottom (23b). They really liked it. At first, they wanted to divide it into four parts. Then they decided not to tear it but to cast lots so that one of them could have it all. Here we learn two things. First, fallen man's heartlessness. They didn't care about the tortured and suffering Messiah on the cross; they only cared that the piece of cloth not be cut into four pieces, so that one could have it all. Second, this is part of the fulfillment of God's prophecy. Psalm 22:18 says, "They divide my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing." These cruel soldiers crucified Jesus and took his clothes and made Jesus bare-bodied. The last part of verse 24 says, "So this is what the soldiers did."

Third, beneath the cross of Jesus (25-27). Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. These women are a group of Marys after Jesus' mother's name. According to Luke, these women served Jesus and his disciples at their own expense (Lk 8:2,3). They came beneath the cross and cried endlessly, not knowing why such a good Jesus had to be crucified. They had hoped the world would respect Jesus, because Jesus had done so many good things. Contrary to their expectation, the evil men of the world crucified Jesus on the cross. Probably, they too wanted to be crucified in the place of Jesus. Women are physically weak. But they are strong, because they are faithful. Women are strong because they have tears in their souls. Also, women are strong because they are mothers of all mankind. These women had mothered twelve unruly disciples and they also had served Jesus with all their hearts.

What did Jesus say to these women? He said to his mother, "Dear woman, here is your son." Humanly speaking, Jesus was sorry to show his crucified body to his mother. His crucifixion must have made Mary the mother of Jesus suffer more pain than Jesus himself. But when Jesus said, "Dear woman, here is your son," he meant, "Your son is crucified to save men from their sins according to God's will." At the moment, the mother of Jesus felt that a sword was piercing her heart, as was predicted by Simeon (Lk 2:35b). Jesus said to a disciple, "Here is your mother." Obviously this was John. Jesus entrusted John to care for his mother. From that time on, John took her into his home.

Fourth, the death of Jesus (28-29). There are three important events in a man's life: birth, marriage and death. Among them, death is the most important because death summarizes one's entire life--what he did and how he died. When we read this part, we see that Jesus died as a perfect man. Jesus also died as the perfect God. Look at verse 28. "Later, knowing that all was now completed, and so that the Scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said, 'I am thirsty.'" Thus far, Jesus has only suffered. He was arrested, tried again and again and struck in the face again and again, and mocked and insulted again and again. In addition, he was nailed to the cross and his cross was lifted up to the sky. Yet until now, Jesus did not say anything sentimental. Jesus didn't show any sign of sorrow or pain. When he knew that God's will was now completed so that the Scripture would be fulfilled, then Jesus said, "I am thirsty." Jesus was indeed great. He had a human body. He had feelings. But Jesus endured all the sufferings and hardships without complaint. But when God's will was fulfilled, in his humanness, he said, "I am thirsty."

Jesus was already thirsty. But he did not feel that he was thirsty until God's will was fulfilled on the cross. In this short sentence, "I am thirsty," we learn how Jesus obeyed God's will unto death, death on the cross. Some heard Jesus say, "I am thirsty." A jar of wine vinegar was there. So they soaked a sponge in it, put the sponge on a stalk of the hyssop plant and lifted it to Jesus' lips. Jesus received the drop.

Fifth, "It is finished" (30). In history, no one has ever said "It is finished" at the time of death; most people were overwhelmed by regrets and sorrow and fear of death. Only Jesus said, "It is finished." It is because Jesus is the Creator God. At the time of death, Buddha said, "Spring comes again and again. Greens sprout and flourish again and again. But when a man dies he comes back never again." Tolstoy was born in Russia. He made so many people cry ever since he wrote his novels, especially "Resurrection" and "Anna Karenina." He is a genius forever in literature. But on his deathbed, he could not overcome his agony and fear of death, and he cried endlessly until he breathed his last. His death was a tragedy itself.

Let's think about Jesus' saying, "It is finished." God made the world and man. God made man the steward of the world to take care of his world (Ge 1:28; 2:15). Therefore, we can say "man is mission." Each person has a mission from God. Someone has a mission to love his wife. Someone has a mission to respect her husband. Someone has a mission to finish his university study in at least 10 years. Someone has a mission to pray for his mission field country. But those who do not love God do not know what God's mission for them is. We know what Jesus' mission from God was. It was to renounce the glory and power and honor of his kingdom and come to this world and become as nothing in order to save men from their sins. Jesus' mission was to shepherd God's flock at the beginning

of his earthly Messianic ministry and later to raise twelve disciples. Jesus obeyed God's mission for him. In order to carry out his mission he had to die on the cross. But Jesus carried out his mission by giving his life. When Jesus knew that his mission was fulfilled, he said, "It is finished."

Only God can say, "It is finished." No one in history can say, "It is finished." When one has to die, there are so many unfinished tasks, and he is full of remorse and regret about his transgressions and iniquities. Nobody knows what to say. But Jesus said, "It is finished."

Jesus is indeed the Alpha and the Omega (Rev 1:8). Jesus is the beginning and the end. There is a beginning and an ending only in Jesus. Jesus is the Creator God and Shepherd and Judge for the living and the dead (Jn 1:1; Mt 25:31). As in the beginning he created the heavens and the earth, at the end of the age he will come again to collect his beloved ones from the four corners of the world (Mk 13:27). Praise Jesus who said, "It is finished." We must be the children of the one who said, "It is finished." We should not be the children of the one who says, "We can do it tomorrow." Jesus said, "It is finished." With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit. It was not easy for Jesus to carry the burden of the sin of the world. Jesus carried it when he gave his life. "Gave up his spirit" means he died. Our true life is spirit, not our stomach.

Sixth, the Jews' desire to enjoy the weekend (31-34). Verse 31 indicates that the week Jesus died was a long weekend. Because the Jews did not want the bodies left on the crosses during the Sabbath, they asked Pilate to have the legs broken so that Jesus might die earlier, and so that they might have the bodies taken down (31b). The soldiers therefore came and broke the legs of the first man who had been crucified with Jesus, and then those of the other (32). But when they came to Jesus, they found that he was already dead. They did not break his legs because Jesus was already dead. Instead, a mischievous soldier pierced Jesus in the side with his spear, and a sudden flow of blood and water gushed out from Jesus' side (34). Jesus had already suffered so much that he died on the cross sooner. Now, because of one soldier's piercing, he shed a sudden flow of blood and water. Humanly speaking, this event seems not so significant. But Jesus shed his blood for our sins, to cleanse our sin-stained blood.

Seventh, John, the eyewitness (35-37). Look at verse 35. "The man who saw it has given testimony, and his testimony is true. He knows that he tells the truth, and he testifies so that you also may believe." Here, "the man" refers to John. John was the eyewitness of Jesus' crucifixion and death, and John is the one who heard Jesus' final words. So he claims that his testimony is true, and he knows that he tells the truth and he testifies so that many may believe (35; 20:31). John's description of Jesus' death on the cross is very factual, and his descriptions are in accordance with prophecies. Look at verses 36-37. "These things happened so that the scripture would be fulfilled: 'Not one of his bones will be broken,' and, as another scripture says, 'They will look on the one they have pierced.'"

Jesus' death on the cross was prophesied and fulfilled and there were many witnesses. Among them, John is one. Therefore we must believe that Jesus died for our sins. We must believe that Jesus died to obey God's will for world salvation. We must believe that Jesus' death on the cross is an event that took place, once and for all in history, to save men from their sins.

Eighth, Jesus was buried by prominent Sanhedrin members (38-42). Jesus was buried by Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus. Both of them were Sanhedrin members. They were secret disciples of Jesus. But at the death of Jesus, something unusual happened. When Jesus was alive, they were fearful. But when Jesus died, they saw God in Jesus. So Joseph fearlessly went to Pilate, the Roman governor, and asked for Jesus' body (38). And he got permission. Nicodemus, the man who earlier had visited Jesus at night, saw the heavenly sunshine when he surveyed Jesus on the cross. So he brought seventy-five pounds of a mixture of myrrh and aloes (39). Other Sanhedrin members were busy to enjoy the weekend. But Joseph and Nicodemus were busy to take care of Jesus' burial. The death of Jesus brought light to the hearts of Joseph and Nicodemus. The two men of standing were powerful witnesses of the death of Jesus.

According to Isaiah, God decided to punish Jesus for men's sins, so he was buried with the wicked (Isa 53:9). Jesus was the Son of Almighty God. But Jesus was buried among the wicked. In this way, Jesus was buried to take all our punishment. The death of Jesus was the death of the Son of God. Finally we can see God in the death of Jesus. Jesus is the Son of God. But he died for our sins in obedience to God's will for world salvation. Jesus died for our sins so that we may believe in him and have eternal salvation and the kingdom of God as our inheritance.