

## SERMON – GOOD FRIDAY, APRIL 10, 2020

Good Friday **The Greatest Battle Ever Fought** Matthew 27:45-50

**From noon until three in the afternoon darkness came over all the land. About three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice, “*Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?*” (which means “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”).**

**When some of those standing there heard this, they said, “He’s calling Elijah.” Immediately one of them ran and got a sponge. He filled it with wine vinegar, put it on a staff, and offered it to Jesus to drink. The rest said, “Now leave him alone. Let’s see if Elijah comes to save him.”**

**And when Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, “It is finished,” and he bowed his head and gave up, he gave up his spirit.**

Suddenly, right at noon, when the sun is brightest, it turned dark. There was no sunlight at all, no moon or stars. Just darkness. And this was no eclipse, either. Historians tell us that as far away as Egypt, everyone was experiencing the same mysterious and frightening darkness.

It was as if God’s creation were protesting against the crucifixion of its creator. Crucifixion—an ugly way to put people to death. It could sometimes take a couple days to die, depending upon how badly the person had been whipped.

The executed criminal’s diaphragm worked slower and slower until he was asphyxiated as his breaths became shallower and shallower—then ceased.

Jesus had company on Calvary, two criminals were on his right and left when he came into His Kingdom, places which two foolish disciples had wanted to be.

Thousands of people had followed him, listening intently to him and singing his praises. Less than a week before, a crowd had called him Savior. A few hours before this moment, he had acknowledged that he was the King of the kingdom of truth. He was God’s special soldier. But now the warrior was dying.

This was the big one, the final battle. Jesus had come into this world and had worked every day of his life to prepare for this. Your future, my future, and the future of everyone who has ever lived was hanging on the outcome of this battle: which is truly, **The Greatest Battle Ever Fought**

The implications and the stakes are not just life and death, but eternal life and death. Jesus is the either/or figure of human history. Either you are given the faith to believe him, you’ll live. If not, well you go to hell.

Thus, the life of Jesus is the most significant single life in all of history. And what happened on the cross at his death changed the entire world and everyone who has ever lived. **PAUSE**

In this battle, Satan attacked Jesus relentlessly.

Yet, look how Jesus responds. First, he offered a prayer asking the Father to forgive all those who crucified and mocked him.

Then he answered the desperate prayer of the thief who believed in him with a tremendous gospel promise of heaven that very day.

Calmly and with a tender concern for his mother, he told John to care for her.

But finally, there was darkness. And we begin to realize that all his physical suffering was nothing compared to the spiritual suffering that is happening on the cross.

The darkness shows us how much God, who is Light, hates sin, that terrible thing that separates us from him. As one commentator said, the darkness is “**both God’s reaction to the judicial murder of his Son, and God’s dreadful judgment upon sin as suffered by his Son.**”<sup>1</sup>

We may be grateful, in a way, for the darkness. It certainly must have shut up the mockers. But it also covered up what no eyes should ever have to see as Jesus was on that cross, alone, against all the forces of hell.

Satan hates Jesus. He now saw the Son of Man and Son of God at his weakest—where he might be vulnerable. Satan will do everything to force Jesus to give up his life’s work of paying for your guilt and mine and for atoning for the whole world’s sins.<sup>2</sup>

The devil’s lying reaches a fever pitch. We can imagine him telling Jesus, “You won’t make any difference, Son of God. You are not big enough to cover the whole world’s guilt and sin, Jesus. The whole history of humanity is on my side, Christ. Why care about these people? They turned on you. Even Judas and Peter did it. Billions of souls will turn on you later.”

The internal pain and pressure ratchet higher and higher. So much darkness! What have we done that Jesus should suffer so?

The weight of the sins of billions upon billions of people are pressing down—all the massacres in the world, all the abortions, all the divorces, all the horrible things you and I have ever said, thought, and done.

And Jesus is fighting this powerful evil angel in this great darkness, alone, pure, holy, and faithful. Still loving us.

With so much in the balance, even a child can understand that this is why we needed Jesus is both God and man! Man to be our substitute; God to be the perfect, holy sacrifice to pay for all the sins of humanity.

But that’s not even the worst part: Now, the Father’s white-hot anger against sin is burning against him.

Think of the power he had—the Creator of the universe who crushed punished the world with a gigantic flood, who smashed Sodom and Gomorrah, who made Mt. Sinai tremble and smoke—that’s who is directing his full anger and fury against Jesus.

You can hear it in Jesus' voice as he unleashes an awful and loud cry came from those tortured lungs. **"About three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice, 'Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?' (which means 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?')"**

We know from scripture that our triune God is one eternal God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

That's what it's so incomprehensible: The fact that the Son is now forsaken. The Father, source of all true love in this world, turns his back on the Son whom he had so clearly declared at his baptism and on the transfiguration mountain, "My beloved."

The Father turns a deaf ear to His Son's cry so that the warrior Son could pay for this entire world's sins.

It must have torn at the Father's heart. His wrath is focused on the evil that Jesus bore because he hates the malignant tumor of sin that is causing the human race to rot and die.

At the beginning of this suffering, Jesus called him "Father." You can see the intimacy, the closeness.

Now it is "My God, my God" as he loudly asks that big why question. Notice how formal that is?

You can see that even in that eternal moment on the cross when the Son is forsaken so that we'd never be, even then our Lord's faith is still strong.

This is the moment of sheer horror for our warrior. It's the worst moment of his eternal life, as his lonely suffering reached its peak on that cross.

It is here that the battle is either going to be won or lost as Jesus suffers for us. The Old Testament prophet Isaiah explains what is happening: **"Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted."**

All this is because of us. Jesus remained perfect and holy in himself this entire time.

Yet our sin was charged to him and he was willingly paying for it. As Paul wrote to the saints at Corinth, **"God made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God."**

We are not always aware of how much we sin. But we are aware that something is broken inside us. Often, Satan deludes us into trading our righteousness for the one given us by God.

We think that we will just work harder to break that anger habit, that laziness habit, that lust habit, that greed habit, that overeating habit.

Well, here's a news flash: Our problem is bigger. We cannot work hard enough. We need a perfectly holy warrior who can purchase forgiveness for us all! This is God's grace, mercy and love written in sweat and blood!

Perhaps the darkness began to retreat. The mockers start in again, thinking Jesus' cry was begging Elijah to come back: **"When some of those standing there heard this, they said, 'He's calling Elijah.' Immediately one of them ran and got a sponge. He filled it with wine vinegar, put it on a staff, and offered it to Jesus to drink. The rest said, 'Now leave him alone. Let's see if Elijah comes to save him.'"** But the end is near. They wait. But not long. Things happen very quickly.

Jesus was thirsty. **"When he had received the drink, Jesus said, 'It is finished.'"** **"And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit."**

Mark tells us that the temple curtain was **"torn in two from top to bottom."** It's been said that was God's way of saying "Amen" to Jesus' words "It is finished."

That means that there is no more need for sacrificing. No more sheep, goats, or bulls need to be killed. There was no more need for priests or high priests.

Jesus' sacrifice had atoned for all the sins of all time and now the curtain was torn that separated us from a Holy, Holy, Holy God.

Every prophecy in the Old Testament about the coming Savior has been fully kept. God has opened up access to himself for all people, nations, languages, cultures, and generations through the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ. God actually transferred the righteousness of Jesus to us!

Notice how we can tell that the sacrifice of Jesus is completed: He says, **"Father"** again! **Father, into your hands,** Jesus said, **I commit my Spirit."**

God's anger has been spent. The terrible separation between Father and Son no longer exists. That loud cry, **"It is finished,"** says everything.

In this greatest battle of all time, the work of atoning for humanity is over! Jesus has smashed Satan's head, as predicted in Eden. It's a clear knockout blow. The devil is mortally wounded, still walking around, but he can no longer win.

Satan had thought he had heaven's gates locked down tightly. Jesus took off the locks and has locked Satan down with a restricting chain!

The best news of Good Friday is that our home in heaven is prepaid! There is nothing more you or I, or even God, has to do to pay for our guilt and sin! We are forgiven! His work is done.

Jesus is exhausted, but everything is just as it should be. So, it's time for him to leave. The soldiers, the mockers, hell, and Satan could not kill him.

Now, of his own free will, he gives his soul into his Father's loving hands. Our holy Jesus, who remained unspotted and unblemished as he experienced our hell, now

offers his pure and perfect life as the final, once-and-for-all sacrifice that had been promised ever since Eden's garden!

The good news for this very Good Friday is that Jesus was born 4u, Jesus Fulfilled the Law 4U, and tonight we remember that Jesus Died 4u. Therefore, **It is finished 4U! AMEN**

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