

The Gospel of John

Lesson 25: The Crucifixion and Burial -- John 19:17-42

They lead Him out, carrying His own cross, to a place called Golgotha, the Place of a Skull, and there they crucify Him between two others. It is the most important death in the history of the world, and John records it with a strange restraint, almost gently, as though the events are too holy for many words. Pilate fastens a sign over His head in three languages, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews," and refuses to change it, unwittingly proclaiming the truth to the whole world. The soldiers gamble for His clothing, fulfilling Scripture written a thousand years before, dividing His garments and casting lots for His seamless tunic.

Even on the cross, in unimaginable agony, Jesus is still loving and providing. He sees His mother standing near, and the disciple John beside her, and with some of His last breath He gives them to one another: "Woman, behold, your son... Behold, your mother." The Savior of the world, dying for the sins of the world, takes the time to make sure His mother will be cared for. The love that brought Him to the cross does not stop at the cross. It reaches down to one grieving woman and provides her a home.

And then come the words that change everything. Knowing that all was now finished, that every prophecy was fulfilled and every part of His mission accomplished, Jesus says, "It is finished," and bows His head and gives up His spirit. "It is finished" is one word in Greek, a word used to mark a debt paid in full. The work of salvation is complete. There is nothing to add, nothing left to pay. The price for our sin has been paid down to the last penny by the Son of God. He does not gasp it as a cry of defeat; He declares it as a shout of victory. The work the Father gave Him to do is done.

To make certain He is dead, a soldier pierces His side, and at once blood and water flow out, and John, who saw it, bears solemn witness, because it matters that Jesus really died. He was not merely unconscious; the Son of God truly died for us. Then two secret disciples, Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, the man who once came by night, find their courage at last and come openly to bury Him, wrapping His body in spices and laying it in a new tomb. The King is dead. The debt is paid. The tomb is sealed. Read this chapter slowly and reverently, and do not rush past the cross, for everything we have depends on what Jesus finished there.

Group Discussion: Jesus' last words from the cross were "It is finished" (v. 30), a declaration that the work of salvation was complete. Why is it so important that our salvation rests on a finished work of Christ rather than on anything we add, and how does this truth free us?

Personal Reflection: Even while dying, Jesus provided for His mother and entrusted her to John (vv. 26-27). What does it stir in you to see Christ loving and providing in the midst of His own suffering, and where do you need to trust that same caring love right now?

Read John 19:17–42

Study Questions

1. Pilate's inscription, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews," was written in three languages and he refused to change it (vv. 19–22). What is significant about this public proclamation of Jesus' kingship at the cross?
2. John repeatedly notes that events at the cross happened "to fulfill the Scripture" (vv. 24, 28, 36–37). What does this careful fulfillment of prophecy teach us about God's sovereign plan in the death of Jesus?
3. From the cross Jesus provided for His mother, entrusting her to the beloved disciple (vv. 26–27). What does this tender act in the midst of His agony reveal about the heart of Christ?
4. Jesus suffered the cross for us, yet still thought of others' needs (vv. 26–27). When you are suffering or under pressure, how does it tend to affect your care for others, and what would it look like to love like Christ even then?
5. Jesus' final word was "It is finished" (v. 30), a term for a debt paid in full. What was finished at the cross, and why is it crucial that the work of our salvation is complete in Christ?
6. Because the work is finished, there is nothing we can add to earn our salvation, only a finished work to receive in faith and obedience. Where are you tempted to try to earn or add to what Christ has already completed, and how does "It is finished" speak to that?
7. John gives careful, eyewitness testimony that Jesus truly died: the blood and water from His pierced side, and his solemn statement, "he who saw it has borne witness" (vv. 34–35). Why does it matter so much that Jesus really died, and how does this guard the truth of the gospel?
8. Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, once secret disciples, came openly to bury Jesus (vv. 38–42). What moved these fearful men to courage at last, and where is Christ calling you to step out of hidden discipleship into open devotion?
9. This chapter is the account of the death of the Son of God for our sins. Putting together the fulfilled Scriptures, the kingship proclaimed, the finished work, and the reality of His death, what does the cross teach us about the seriousness of sin, the love of God, and the way of salvation accomplished there for us?
10. Look back over this account of the cross. What is one specific way Jesus is forming you to rest in His finished work and to live in grateful devotion to the One who died for you?

Now or Later

Reflect on these passages: Isaiah 53:4–6, the servant wounded for our transgressions; Psalm 22:14–18, the suffering one whose garments are divided by lot; Colossians 2:13–14, the record of debt nailed to the cross; 1 Peter 2:24, Christ bearing our sins in His body on the tree; Romans 5:6–8, God showing His love in that Christ died for us.