

2 Corinthians 5:21 - God made...

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[0 : 00] Great, well, let me give you all a very warm welcome to our Good Friday service this morning.! It's good to have you with us this morning. If you don't know me, my name is Steve. I'm one of the leaders of the church here and the full-time pastor. It is great to have you with us this morning as we gather together.

Our plan this morning is to focus on the death of the Lord Jesus Christ and to remember what he has done for us. We're going to spend our time considering the grace of God, the depth of our sin, the wonder of the achievements of the cross.

We've come together to remember that at the heart of Christian faith is not our action for God, but his action for us in the person of the Son on the cross.

We're going to hear from a couple of church members who are going to give us some reflections on passages of the Bible that have spoken to them particularly about the work of Jesus on the cross.

We're going to sing together, we're going to listen to God's word, and we're going to be sharing the Lord's Supper together.

So let's begin by praying. Let me pray for us. This is a prayer adapted from the Valley of Vision. Let me read this to you and let's pray together. Heavenly Father, you have brought us rejoicing to the cross where we fling down all our burdens and see them vanish.

[1 : 26] Where the mountains of our guilt are leveled to a plain, where our sins disappear, though they are the greatest that exist and are more in number than the grains of fine sand.

For there is power in the blood of Calvary to destroy sins more than can be counted. At the cross there is free forgiveness for poor and meek ones and ample blessings that last forever.

The blood of the Lamb is like a great river of infinite grace, with never any diminishing of its fullness as thirsty ones without number drink of it.

O Lord, forever your free forgiveness will live, that was gained on Calvary. In the midst of a world of pain, it's a subject for praise in every place, a song on earth, an anthem in heaven.

It's love and virtue knowing no end. We have a longing for the world above, where multitudes sing the great song, for our souls were never created to love the dust of the earth.

[2 : 44] Though here our spiritual state is frail and poor, we shall go on singing of Calvary's anthem. May we always know that a clean heart full of goodness is more beautiful than the lily, that only a clean heart can sing by night and by day, and that such a heart is only ours when we abide at Calvary.

Amen. Amen. I'm just going to share a short reflection on a verse from Hebrews. It's Hebrews 12, verse 2. Fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith.

For the joy set before him, he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. I often find myself quoting, for the joy set before him, he endured the cross.

To me, it's such a reminder of Jesus' love for us. For the joy he knew was to come in a relationship with us. This moment, these moments of relationship with Jesus were worth the sacrifice he made on the cross.

It talks about pioneer, the one who starts something. He was at the beginning. He leads by example. He lived by example. He doesn't ask of us what he hasn't already endured.

[4 : 11] He endured the worst possible suffering already. One, so we won't have to, and frankly, we couldn't. But two, I think there is something for us to learn of suffering through Jesus' endurance.

He went to the cross so he could display to us that the suffering we will experience in this life as we follow him is worth it. It results in joy in the end. Joy in heaven with the Father.

Joy in eternity unlike we have ever known. Knowing the joy of the future, the joy of this moment with him, he endured. He loves us so much that he went to battle with the biggest enemy we will ever

encounter and says, I defeated him.

You will fight a battle with that enemy in this life. For the joy you will see in the future, endure like I did. Endure and even experience a taste of that joy now.

And experience victory in its fullest in eternity. But as the next verse says, we are to consider him so we don't grow weary and lose heart.

[5 : 18] John 16, 33 sort of encompasses that too. I have told you these things so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart, I have overcome the world.

Our precious Jesus had to die on the cross. And many times I want to ask why. Why him? Why did he have to suffer? The one who was perfect.

I should be on that cross. Yes, I should. And we should. For all our sin and disobedience and our walking away from God time and time again. But we could never cover that price.

So he went to the cross. He knew that 2,000 years later we would be talking to him. We would be praising his name. And for that he went to the cross. I believe God has always wanted to know us. I'm not sure I will ever get over the fact that he created me. The creator who created me wants to commune with me. To have a relationship with me. And it is to restore this communion that Jesus died on the cross.

[6 : 23] And it is in the joy of the communion with his creation. The joy of the redemption of his people. The joy of restoring his people to himself. That took him and kept him on that cross.

He considered it worth it to die on the cross. What an immense amount of joy it must have been. To keep someone enduring through a suffering like that. What a love.

It could only have been Jesus. Jesus. Thanks, Natasha. Appreciate that. I'm going to share a little bit from Psalm 22.

So if you want to turn there, feel free. Just Steve asked us to share something that's been impactful for us as we think about the cross on Good Friday. And so as we read this psalm, it's a psalm of lament.

It's David pouring out his feelings, his emotions, a lot of raw emotion to God. And so in this psalm, he's honest.

[7 : 28] He's telling God, like, this is how I feel. He oscillates between things that are true about God, but his feelings of raw emotion, of being in a difficult place, of being lonely, in anguish, despair.

He's kind of going back and forth between those the whole time. And this song then became a song for Israel to sing in those moments. So it was something that countless Israelites throughout time would have sung when they were feeling the pangs of death or the loss of a loved one or life not living up to what they thought that it should have been.

And this would have been a psalm that might have been on their lips and doubtless was on many of their lips. And it's a song for us today. We can sing this.

We, in our moments of difficulty, can pour out to God. We can lament he is able to take that, and he answers that, and we'll see that here.

And so on this Good Friday, I don't want to just rush past what today is, right? So if we think about and put ourselves in the shoes of the people that were there when I do that, everything that they had poured their hope into as followers of Jesus seemed to be gone.

[8 : 40] It didn't exist anymore. It had just died on the cross. And so let's jump into it. Just read the first 21 verses I'll read here. With that in mind, that, yeah, that this is a song of lament, that it's David working his way through his emotions as he's in this difficult place.

And so it says, My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, so far from my cries of anguish? My God, I cry out day by day, but you do not answer.

By night, but I find no rest. Yet you are enthroned as the Holy One. You are the one Israel praises. In you our ancestors put their trust.

They trusted and you delivered them. To you they cried out and were saved. In you they trusted and were not put to shame. But I am a worm, not a man. Scorned by everyone.

Despised by the people. All who seek me mock me. They hurl insults, shaking their heads. He trusts in the Lord, they say. Let the Lord rescue him. Let him deliver him, since he delights in him.

[9 : 44] Yet you brought me out of the womb. You made me trust in you, even at my mother's breast. From birth I was cast on you. From my mother's womb you have been my God. Do not be far from me, for trouble is near.

And there is no one to help. Many bulls surround me. Strong bulls of Bashan encircle me. Roaring lions that tear their prey. Open their mouths wide against me.

I am poured out like water. And all my bones are out of joint. My heart has turned to wax. It has melted within me. My mouth is dried up like a potsherd. And my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth.

You lay me in the dust of death. Dogs surround me. A pack of villains encircles me. As they pierce my hands and my feet. All my bones are on display. People stare and gloat over me.

They divide my clothes among them and cast lots from my garments. But you, Lord, do not be far from me. You are my strength. Come quickly to help me. Deliver me from the sword.

[10:44] My precious life from the power of the dogs. Rescue me from the mouth of the lions. Save me from the horns of the wild oxen. So just pause right there just to say for a moment to anybody who's there, to anybody who feels like this is where they are, that that's an okay place to be.

That you're not alone. That that is part of the Christian life to feel that way sometimes. But David continues. And there's been this turning where he now sees some of the great things that God has done.

And it seems like he's maybe been delivered from this situation. And so he goes on. He says, I will declare your name to my people in the assembly. I will praise you. You who fear the Lord, praise him.

All you descendants of Jacob, honor him. Revere him, all you descendants of Israel. For he has not despised or scorned the suffering of the afflicted one. He has not hidden his face from him, but has listened to his cry for help.

From you comes the theme of my praise in the great assembly. Before those who fear you, I will fulfill my vows. The poor will eat and be satisfied. Those who seek the Lord will praise him.

[11:53] May your hearts live forever. All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the Lord. And all the families of the nations will bow down before him. For dominion belongs to the Lord.

And he rules over the nations. All the rich of the earth will feast and worship. And all who go down to the dust will kneel before him. To those who cannot keep themselves alive, posterity will serve him.

Future generations will be told about the Lord. They will proclaim his righteousness, declaring to a people yet unborn, he has done it. And so when we now fast forward and we think about Good Friday and we look to the cross where Jesus said on the cross, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

That wasn't a theological question. God knew. Natasha just read for us that it was for the joy set before him that he went to the cross. He was actually activating this whole psalm for us to say, when you're in your anguish, when you're in your pain, I feel you.

I know that. I know what it feels like to be forsaken. But he's actually also activating the second half of that to say, this is also true of me that I have delivered you through this, that even if that doesn't feel true for you right now in that pain, it is true for you as it is true for me as you are a follower of Jesus.

[13:05] And so that's my encouragement for you today, that no matter where you are on that journey, that these things Jesus has felt and they are true of him. And because of that, they can be true for us too.

If I could just ask you to take your Bibles and turn to 2 Corinthians chapter 5. I want us just to spend a little bit of time looking at just one verse from 2 Corinthians chapter 5.

It's on page 1162. If you've got a Bible from your chair, 1162. Let me read that verse to us.

2 Corinthians chapter 5, verse 21. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Let me read it again. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

[14:20] In just one short, quite simple sentence, Paul summarizes for us the great achievement of the cross of Jesus Christ. Here you have, in very few words, a description of the exchange of the cross between the sinless Jesus and sinful humanity.

That God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. Now let's just walk through it, clause by clause, really briefly. Let's start with the beginning.

God made. God made. In other words, if you want to understand Good Friday, you must start in the counsels of God. That's where you begin.

God is the actor, the initiator, the planner, the saviour. God is the one who is in the cross reaching out in love to his people. Salvation is God's work before it's anybody else's.

And so as you and I look at the cross this morning, as we share bread and wine together, we are staring down the barrels of the work of God. This is him in action.

[15:32] God did this for you, for me. What is it that God did? Well, he took him who had no sin. Of course, this is Jesus, but think about what it means.

Never an angry word. Never an evil desire. Never a proud heart. Never a dark motive. Never dishonest. Never uncaring.

Never gossiping. Never lazy. Never resentful. Never greedy. Never selfish. Of course, Jesus had to be like this, didn't he? In order for him to be the sacrifice, the suitable sacrifice for our sin.

I'm reading through Leviticus at the minute. And one of the things that you get over and over again, lamb without blemish. Lamb without blemish. It has to be perfect in every way. Jesus can have no sin of his own if he is to pay for hours.

He has to be perfect and spotless. But it's not just that he has to be in order to achieve salvation. He must be because of who he is. Him who had no sin is the divine son.

[16:39] Co-holy with the father and the spirit. It's probably a better translation of the word had is the word knew. Not as in brand new, but as in no new.

Right? He who knew no sin. So it's not just only that Jesus didn't possess sin. And it's not even that he didn't know about it.

Right? The father, the son, and the spirit are experts in sin. They know all about it. They see it, don't they? Rather, it's the relational word, isn't it?

Jesus had no knowledge, relational knowledge of sin. He knew nothing about sin. It was disconnected from him. He had no experience of it.

He was untainted and unblemished. He was absolutely holy. He was the divine son. And God made him who knew no sin to be sin for us.

[17:39] Of course, to make the innocent son to be sin requires that that sin comes from somewhere else, doesn't it? And this is the transfer. Our sin laid on Jesus Christ.

Our anger. Our dark motives. Our pride. Our unkindness. Our selfish self-interest.

Our idolatrous materialism. Our harmful desires. Our wicked intentions. All of them heaped onto Jesus Christ. For us and for our benefit. Our good.

His injury. It's mind-bending, isn't it? Right? The one who knew no sin now knows our sin. Not simply because he is the judge of sin who stands distant from it.

But also now because he carries our sin in himself to the cross. In a way, Jesus knows more of the horror of your sin than you do.

[18:41] You and I, we can only imagine, can't we? What perfect holiness would do in response to your sin? Can you imagine that? What would perfect holiness do when it encountered the dark motives of our hearts?

We can only imagine. But Jesus knows. Because that's what he experienced. He took our sin on himself. Our moral debt loaded onto him.

So that in him. That's what comes next. In him. This is where Paul says we are. We are in Christ. Faith unites us to Jesus.

This is how this transfer works. It's not so that we kind of transfer us into some kind of distant, far-off person who we have some vague idea might exist. It's not that Jesus kind of dies to make salvation sort of theoretically possible for people who he has no relation to.

No. We are counted in him by faith. Faith scoops us up in Christ, if you like. So that not only does Jesus die for us.

[19:47] But the Bible says we die in him. As our sinful natures are taken in Christ and killed on the cross. It's not, is it, that faith makes us better people.

It's rather faith makes us Christ's people. And we belong to him. We are perfected, forgiven, loved in Christ. The best definition of a Christian.

Someone who is in Christ by faith. Paul finishes off, doesn't he, that in him we might become the righteousness of God. I think it's perhaps easy to mistake the Christian life, to think that, okay, being a Christian, Jesus forgives my sin.

He takes my sin away. You may be able to think in that category. Jesus has kind of wiped my moral slate clean. Let me tell you, that is absolutely true, but it's way better than that. Because not only has Jesus wiped your moral slate clean, he has credited you with his righteousness.

So that not only does God look at you and not see the things that you have done wrong, he looks at you and sees the things that Jesus did right. He looks at you and says, you are absolutely perfect in my son.

[21 : 03] You are righteous. I am pleased with you. One of the old catechisms, you know I like old things, right? One of the old catechisms puts it like this.

How are you righteous before God, it asks. That's the question. How are you righteous before God? It answers it like this. Only by true faith in Jesus Christ. Although my conscience accuses me that I have grievously sinned against all God's commandments, have never kept any of them and am still inclined to all evil, yet God, without any merit of my own, out of mere grace, gives me the perfect satisfaction, righteousness and holiness of Christ.

He grants these to me as if I had never committed any sin. And as if I myself had accomplished all the obedience which Christ has rendered for me.

If only I accept this gift with a believing heart. This is the wonder of the cross, people. It's that God looks at you and sees all the accomplishments of the obedience of Jesus Christ and says, those are yours.

Those are mine through him. So that's what we're celebrating together, isn't it? Christ has done all that needed to be done and he did it for us.

[22 : 24] God made him who knew no sin to be sin for us so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Let me pray as we stand. Heavenly Father, thank you so much for your love for us. That sinners like us can boldly approach you as we come in the name of your son, the Lord Jesus.

Thank you that Good Friday is good because all my sin on Jesus was laid and his righteousness is given to me. May we go from this place rejoicing in what Christ has done.

Bring us back on Sunday to rejoice in his resurrection and in hope eternal as we pray in his name.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.