

Good Friday 2019: Mission Accomplished

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Preacher: Hoong Phak Ng

[0 : 00] Good morning.

It's a privilege to stand before you to share from the last passage that we just read, I will be just heard being read to us from John 19, 17 to 42.

Let's pray. Lord, we just ask that your name be glorified. We just ask that Jesus might be glorified, Lord, even through all that we have done today and that we might see him glorified on the cross. Help us, Holy Spirit, to look at your word and to understand what you want to say to us. In Jesus' name we pray. We all know the satisfaction of seeing a project completed.

Many of you in the working world have got projects to do and projects to complete. And especially when he has taken a lot of time, effort, planning, we feel very satisfied.

[1 : 28] However, there's a world of difference between having something declared complete and something truly completed without defects. The two daily plane crashes involving the Boeing 737 MAX is an example of a plane design that was said to have been completed but turned out not quite.

Some of us have experienced the comforting words of doctors saying that they have removed a tumour at surgery, they have removed it completely, or that the cancer has disappeared after chemotherapy.

And we pray and hope each time at follow-up it remains so. When something is said to be finished, we want it to be really so. This morning we are looking at an account of the end of Jesus' earthly ministry.

Now John is an eyewitness. He has carefully written in his Gospel with the aim that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name. In verse 35, John assures us that he has testified truthfully. He writes, The man who saw it has given testimony, and his testimony is true.

[2 : 48] He knows that he tells the truth, and he testifies so that you may believe. The hour that Jesus talked about during his three years of public ministry has finally arrived.

The Jewish leaders and Pilate have rejected Jesus as King. We saw that last week, last Sunday. Jesus was condemned to be crucified. The Jewish leaders are now looking on with satisfaction. There goes the blasphemer Jesus carrying his own cross to the place of execution. Is Jesus finally silenced? As we had the opportunity to examine the arrests and the trials of Jesus over the last few weeks, we saw that Jesus was really the one in control.

He is King even though he is rejected first by the Jews and finally Pilate. This morning we will see this theme continuing. God will move events and people to point to Jesus as the long-awaited King. Jesus prayed back in John 17, Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son that your Son may glorify you. As much as both the Jews and Romans would reject and try to suppress the truth of Jesus' identity, God will use unwitting humans to confirm and glorify his Son.

[4 : 16] The truth will not be contained. Firstly, God declares Jesus' kingship through a gentle governor. When Pilate nails on the cross the notice, Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.

For the first time, Pilate stood his ground. He ignores the demand of the chief priests to make a change to the church to reflect that Jesus only claimed to be king.

The refusal to change the notice did not necessarily indicate belief on the part of Pilate. It was probably his way of getting back at the Jews for threatening to report him to Caesar for treason. Instead of stating the crime Jesus was accused of, the notice effectively became a statement of Jesus' identity. Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.

When his own people rejected his kingship, God used Pilate to unwittingly proclaim his true identity. The sign was written in three languages, Aramaic, Latin and Greek.

[5 : 28] The Romans would understand the Latin, the Jewish population would read the Aramaic, and Greek was the universal language of the Mediterranean world. Pilate has effectively placed on the public display an announcement of Jesus' kingship for all peoples.

Now John does not want us to miss the fact that the events of the crucifixion fulfilled messianic prophecies. He would write, this and this and this happened, that scriptures might be fulfilled. You will find this in verse 24, verse 28, and again in verse 36. Some of these prophecies were written 1,000 years before it happened, and we have read one of the messianic psalms just now. The Roman soldiers were blissfully unaware that their actions were actually fulfilling Jewish scriptures. They were just going about their usual business. Let's have a look at these prophecies. Firstly, the garments. Psalm 22, 18 reads, They divided my clothes among them and cast lots for my garment. And here, in verse 23 and 24, we see the soldiers doing exactly that.

[6 : 48] The drink. Psalm 22, 15 reads, My mouth is dried up like a pot shed, and my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth. And we see Jesus saying, I am thirsty.

And Psalm 69, 21 reads, They gave me vinegar for my thirst. And we see that a jar of vinegar was, wine vinegar was there. In verse 29, And so they soaked a sponge in it, put the sponge on the stalk of the hyssop plant, and lifted it to Jesus' lips.

The bones. Now, crucifixion is a very cruel and degrading form of execution. It takes hours to days for the victims to die of exhaustion or asphyxiation.

And bodies are often left to decompose on the cross, to serve as a warning to the people. We read in verse 31, Now, this is a day of preparation, and the next day was to be a special Sabbath.

Because the Jewish leaders did not want the bodies to be left on the crosses during the Sabbath, as this would defile the land, they asked Pilate to have the legs broken and the bodies taken down.

[8 : 05] Why break the legs? This was done to hasten death, as the loss of support from the legs would make it impossible for a man suspended on a cross by only nails through his wrist to breathe for long.

The victims will soon die of asphyxiation. So, using a mallet, the soldiers in verse 32 broke the legs of the first man who had been crucified with Jesus, and then those of the other.

But when they came to Jesus and found that he was already dead, they did not break his legs.

Verse 36 says that these things happen so that scriptures will be fulfilled.

Not one of his bones will be broken. And this is the fulfillment of Psalm 34, 20, where God, speaking of the righteous person, says, He protects all his bones.

Not one of them will be broken. The piercing. What the soldiers did next was to confirm that Jesus was truly dead. One of the soldiers pierced Jesus' side with a spear, bringing a sudden flood of blood and water.

[9 : 13] There are various theories for the origin of the blood and water, such as the blood was from the heart and the watery fluid from the collection of fluid around the heart, or it was blood and serum which has accumulated in the chest cavity as a result of the flogging.

What is important, though, is that Jesus did not flinch when he was pierced. He was dead. The piercing fulfilled Zechariah 12, 10, that reads, They will look on the one they have pierced.

In Zechariah, God says that the Israelites will mourn because they will look upon God whom they pierced. Actually, there's another piercing that fulfills scripture, the crucifixion itself.

In Isaiah 53, 12, So I hope you see that within a short span of a few hours, at least six Old Testament scriptures have been fulfilled, all pointing to Jesus as the anointed king, Israel's long-awaited Messiah.

And there's one more scripture that Jesus would fulfill, his tomb. If you read Matthew's gospel, you will know that Joseph of Arimathea was a rich man and he had placed Jesus in his own new tomb.

[10 : 59] Isaiah again, in Isaiah 53, prophesied that the suffering servant of the Lord would be assigned a grave with the wicked and with the rich in his death.

So, even though the Jews would reject their rightful king, God had sovereignly moved events to confirm the identity of Jesus as their long-awaited Messiah.

And in case you missed the significance of the burial of Jesus, let me point out to you that it was actually a royal burial. Look at the details in verses 38 to 42.

God had given Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus the boldness to give Jesus a decent burial. Without them, Jesus' body would have been tossed into a common grave for executed criminals, since the religious leaders did not want any corpse left hanging on the cross on that special

Sabbath.

Instead, because of what they did, Jesus had a burial befitting his kingship. Note, firstly, the large amount of expensive spices that Nicodemus brought.

[12:13] 75 pounds. 75 pounds of spice is said to be enough for use in a hundred or more ordinary Jewish burials. Large amount of spice were used at the funerals of some of Israel's kings.

If you look at 2 Chronicles 16, 14, it's one example. Josephus, a first-century Jewish historian, recorded that when the highly respected rabbi Gamaliel, when he died, 40 pounds of spices were used at his funeral.

Nicodemus used 75 pounds. Furthermore, Jesus' tomb was in a garden, which is following the tradition of many of Israel's kings, including King David.

Even today, few people have the luxury of a garden tomb. So this darkest hour is in fact an hour of glory.

God the Father is glorifying His Son. We saw Jesus lifted up, His kingship announced to the whole world. The events that took place during the crucifixion would point to Jesus as the long-awaited King.

[13:25] The royal imagery is complete with the regal burial He received. This tomb is not a chamber of deflated, exhausted defeat.

It is a place of glory and victory. The tomb is filled with the fragrance of a regal spice as Jesus is laid to rest. He is now on His way back to the Father.

I also want to point out to you just how much Jesus is in control of His life, even to the point of determining the moment of His own death.

He said in John 10, referring to His earthly life, No one takes it from me, but I lay it down on my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and the authority to take it up again.

And this command I received from my Father. Now look at John 19, 29-30. Verse 29 says, Later, Knowing that everything has now been finished and so that Scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said, I am thirsty.

[14:41] Now Jesus knew that He has done all that the Father required of Him. He had received, He had revealed the Father. He has said that if you have seen Him, you have seen the Father.

He had exhibited God's love and revealed His Word. It was now time to lay down His life and return to the Father. And verse 28, it reads, So that the Scripture would be fulfilled.

What Scripture was He talking about? What was He going to fulfill? Yes, one, His thirst and the drink of vinegar. But let me suggest to you that He also intended to ensure that His bones were not broken.

He knew it was a day of preparation and the next day would be a special Sabbath. So He knew that the Jewish leaders would ask for a hastening of their death by the breaking of their legs.

Therefore, knowing what would soon happen, He knew it was time to go. After taking the drink, He said, It is finished and then handed over His spirit.

[15:50] He died without His bones broken. Instead, He was pierced at His sight. Both incidents fulfilling Scripture. The Jewish leaders thought that they were in control.

Pilate thought He was in control. The soldiers thought they were in control. In actual fact, Jesus was in control, even of His own death. While men were responsible for the crime of injustice and murder, it was God who put Himself on the cross.

The Maker of Heaven and Earth died. His human heart stopped. His breath stopped. Hands that flung the galaxies into space still.

If we think that when Jesus said it is finished, it meant that He has finally ended His suffering, we have misunderstood Him. He didn't say, I am finished.

He said, It is finished. It was not a cry of desolation. In John 12, He said, And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men.

[16:57] And again, should I pray, Father, save me from this hour. But this is the very reason I came. Father, bring glory to Your name.

This hour has been God the Father's plan for His Son. And unlike Adam, Jesus has obeyed the Father perfectly. He has completed His Father's will successfully.

Yes, Jesus is the victorious King. God is glorified and the Son is glorified, not in a show of strength. He did not command His legions of angels to destroy His enemies.

Instead, He saved them. In His glory, in His weakness, in His humility, and in His perfect obedience to the Father, that was how He was glorified.

What was the main mission God sent Him for? Let's have a second look at Jesus on the cross. Why must the Messiah King die? Now, John the Baptist had announced right at the beginning of Jesus' ministry, Look, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

[18:06] Now, the Jews were in the midst of celebrating Passover. They were celebrating a feast that commemorated how God had led them out of Egypt during the first Passover.

At that time, God was going to kill every firstborn male in Egypt. In order to protect the firstborns of the Israelites, God gave instructions to the Israelites to sacrifice the Passover lamb, smear its blood over the top and sides of their door frames.

They used a bunch of hyssops to apply the blood. They would eat the meat of the lamb, but they were forbidden to break any of its bones. Note the blood, note the bunch of hyssop, note no bones broken.

At midnight, God struck down all the firstborn males in Egypt, both males and livestock. However, he passed over the homes which had the blood on its door frames and spared its inhabitants.

John does not want us to miss the fact that Jesus died as our Passover lamb. Take a look at Jesus on the cross again. He died during the Passover week.

[19:21] His blood was shed by the flogging and the piercing of nails and spear. A stalk of hyssop was used to leave the drink of vinegar to his mouth.

His bones were not broken. So again, note the blood, the hyssop, and no broken bones. Can you not see the motifs of the Passover lamb here?

Paul would say in 1 Corinthians that Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. And Peter would write that you were redeemed with the precious blood of the lamb, of the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.

And Jesus himself said, Hear what Isaiah prophesied of the suffering servant of God in Isaiah 53, written 600 years before Jesus was even born.

But he was pierced for our sins. He was crushed for our iniquities. The punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we were healed.

[20:34] We all, like ships, have gone astray. Each one of us have turned to our own way. And the Lord has laid on him the sins of us all. For he was cut off from the land of the living.

For the transgressions or the sins of my people he was punished. He was assigned a grave with the wicked and with the rich in his death, though he has done no violence nor was any deceit in his mouth.

Yet it was the Lord's will to crush him and cause him to suffer. The Lord makes his life an offering for sin. So Jesus became our Passover lamb when God puts all our sins on Jesus and punished Jesus for them instead of punishing us.

The Lord made his life and offering for our sins. We ask, why can't God just simply forgive us? Just close his eyes and wave our wrongdoings away with a smile.

Why do we need the death of his son? To see God himself suffering and dying on the cross for our sins tells us one thing. It tells us how much God hates sin and how his wrath burned against it.

[21:53] He said in Ezekiel, the one who sins is the one who will die. We are facing a holy God. A God who will not let sin go unpunished. Sin is not just the wrong things we do.

Sin is rejecting God's rule in our lives. It's telling God, thanks but no thanks. I will run my life my way. It is telling God, something else is more important to us than him.

It will manifest in how we treat other people, how we excuse our sins, how we revel in immorality, in self-centered behavior and thinking, in worshiping counterfeit gods in their various forms.

If we can atone for our sins by our own good deeds and our regrets, Good Fridays would not have been necessary. If God is not an absolutely holy and righteous God who cannot tolerate sin, Good Friday would have been unnecessary.

Our sins are so grave, we can never save ourselves. It needed a sinless, blameless and perfect Messiah, God himself, to take our sins and its punishment upon himself as a substitute in our place.

[23:15] That is what was needed for our sins to be forgiven and God's wrath to be satisfied.

There may be some of us here who have never made a decision to accept God's gift of forgiveness and salvation through the sacrifice of Jesus.

You may be a non-Christian, checking out what Good Friday is all about. Or your friends may have invited you. Or you may have been following your families here for years, but have never submitted to Jesus as Saviour and King.

I would urge you today to consider the claims of Jesus. Jesus says that whoever believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. If you want to find out more, speak to your friend, or speak to the leaders of this church, or sign up for a course that we are having on 30th of April, Christianity Explored, where you will be able to learn for yourself or find out for yourself the incredible identity and mission of Jesus.

Now besides showing the terribleness of sin, the cross actually shows us the extent of God's love and grace towards us.

Jesus told Nicodemus one windy night that God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son. The cross shows us how far God would go to redeem us, how much he would sacrifice to make forgiveness possible, how far he would go to be able to give us his righteousness and to make us holy and acceptable to himself.

[24 : 52] If God is not love, Good Friday would not have happened. He made himself nothing, became a man, humbled himself, became obedient to death, even death on a cross.

He experienced human frailty, suffering, humiliation, even in the hands of those he created. And finally, experienced the horror of taking upon his holy and divine self the sins of the whole world. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us so that we might become the righteousness of God. I find his love and his grace absolutely overwhelming.

Words are simply inadequate. When you know that your God loves you that much, you will never doubt that he is always for you. He will not withhold any good thing from you.

He did not even withhold his own son. You can trust God with your life. Whatever circumstances you are going through now, know that God knows what he is doing.

[26 : 10] You see how even in the darkest hour of Jesus' life, God is in total control. He is sovereign over events of the world, over history, over the circumstances of your life.

If you are going through trials or testing at the moment, rest assured that he loves you and has the best for you.

He has not abandoned you. He may be silent, but he is in the suffering with you. You are not alone. Perhaps it's your health. Perhaps it's your work, your job.

Or maybe you are worried about a child who has strayed. Perhaps it's your marriage. When God doesn't answer our prayers the way that we want him to, it is not that he has rejected us or rejected you or turned you or turned away from you or is ignoring you.

Remember that we are not omniscient. We do not know everything. Timothy Keller puts it this way. God always answers your prayer in precisely the way you want them to be answered.

[27 : 21] If and only if you knew everything he knew. Because if he knew everything he knew, we would pray perfect prayers and he would answer them. We can trust him because he has proven it on the cross.

Lastly, Jesus said, it is finished. On that cross, Jesus bore the penalty of every one of our sins, every one of our rebellion.

The price of redemption is completely paid. The justice of God is completely satisfied. The deliverance of sinners is completely secured.

Its effect is eternal. John would write later on, the blood of Jesus purifies us from all sins. This sacrifice does not have to be repeated.

It is complete. The writer of Hebrews in Hebrews 10 will say that we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

[28 : 27] When Jesus has offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God. For by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.

The hymn goes, my sin not in part but the whole is nailed to the cross and I bear it no more. Praise the Lord.

Praise the Lord O my soul. What does it mean? It means that you can trust God for your salvation. There's nothing you can do to add to the completed work of Christ.

Our salvation is based on the finished work of Christ alone. Let me quote Matt Carter who wrote this in his commentary. When we understand the work of salvation is complete then we will also understand that we can do nothing absolutely nothing to earn or to keep or to maintain it.

Jesus has done it all. The moment you stop believing Jesus finished salvation is the moment you start working for your salvation. You will wonder what activity you need to do to keep you in God's favour.

[29 : 43] When trials come you wonder if it is because you have done something wrong. Your relationship with God will become a checklist of do's and don'ts. My confidence in God and the assurance of my salvation cannot be anchored in my religious performance.

It is finished. What was needed to satisfy God ought to satisfy us as well. This is the good news of the gospel.

Unquote. Let me summarise the main points for today. We saw in today's passage that God confirms that Jesus is indeed the promised king. His kingship is seen when he is lifted high on the cross, fulfilled the prophecies written of the Messiah, laid down his own life on his own accord and was buried as a king.

He is glorified in his humility, his weakness and in his submission to the will of the Father. This king is also the Passover lamb provided by God as a once and forever forgive offering for sin.

And through him we have complete forgiveness and we are completely forgiven and justified if we have repented, believed and received him. we can trust him for our salvation.

[31 : 01] We can trust God in all our circumstances when we see how much he loves us and how he is sovereign. There's much more that Jesus' death on the cross has achieved and how it has changed humanity but we don't have time to review them.

But let me urge you in view of what Jesus has done for us, how he loved us and continues to love us despite our failures, let us give our lives fully to him to worship him, to obey and serve him as our king and our saviour.

Let's pray.