

Good Friday 2026: What's so good about Good Friday?

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[0:00] Let me pray. Our Lord Jesus said in John chapter 10, 'Father, would you give us great joy as we can understand why his death is such good news?'

And would it strengthen, reinforce our belief in him through all the seasons of life? And we ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen. Let me start with a question.

What's so good about Good Friday? What is so good about the cross? That great symbol that we all celebrate? Anyway, after all, as Christians, so many of us, we have them in chains around our necks.

Many of us will have crosses in our homes. We hang them on the fridge in places where everybody can see. And in church, you have one gigantic one over here and one in front of the pulpit. And what's so great about that?

See, to the ancient people, the people who existed when Jesus died, the cross was not this great symbol of love. No, it was the opposite. It was a symbol of torture, of execution, of pain, of humiliation.

[1:30] It was the most painful, most humiliating way to die. And it was reserved only for the worst of criminals. It is the equivalent of the hangman's gallows today, or of the lethal injection or the electric chair.

And I'm sure you would agree, it would be weird, right, if in churches we had an electric chair up there, or a hangman's gallows. It's something horrible. So why do we celebrate it? What's so good about it?

It is such a significant part of many Christians' lives. And more than that, why do we celebrate a man who dies just like the worst of criminals? What's so good about Good Friday and the cross that is its symbol?

Well, that's what John wants to show us in today's passage in John chapter 19. If you're familiar with John's gospel, you know that he writes as someone who is an eyewitness, he was there at the events surrounding Jesus' life, death, and the resurrection.

And in John's gospel, he has told us that he writes all this down so that we'll believe in Jesus and have life in his name. And so as we look at what Jesus does on the cross today, that is what he wants.

[2:40] In our passage today, John puts the cross, this ancient symbol of torture, right in the front and center. How do we know that? Well, it's because John repeats that idea all the way through the passage.

Seven times, I counted, he repeats that Jesus was crucified. That's another word for saying he died on the cross. And the word itself, the cross, is repeated twice, so that's nine times.

You can't miss it. But here's the other thing. John is not just interested in the fact that Jesus died. He wants us to understand that the cross shows us something deeper about Jesus.

If you look at the cross, especially through ancient eyes, you will just see a criminal hanging there, dying because he has done something horribly wrong. But John wants us to see that the cross is actually the fulfillment.

The completion of God's great plan to save people from the Old Testament. And that's why, if you've noticed in the reading, three times, right, three times, he records something happening to Jesus, and then he says that the scripture might be fulfilled.

[3:45] Three times, verse 24, verse 28, and verse 36. See, John wants us to look beyond the surface. We might think that Jesus, if he's crucified on the cross, might just look like a criminal, a horrible tragedy, maybe a mistake.

But Jesus' death actually accomplishes something so big, so important, that it has earth-shaking implications for us, even here, 2,000 years later. And so that's what we're going to unpack in the two points in our handout.

So if you look at the handout, we'll see the two points. Firstly, the cross proves that Jesus is God's loving king. And second, the cross shows that Jesus dies as a substitute for sinners.

So let's get into that as we get into the text. Our first point on your handout, the cross, the crucifixion, shows that Jesus is God's living king. Well, as we get into our passage, John shows us how the crucifixion happened.

And on the surface, Jesus, he looks exactly like the worst criminal in the world at that time. Now, that's why they crucify him in the center of two other criminals. Look again in your Bibles at verse 16.

[4:57] John writes, But that's not enough.

To emphasize how bad a criminal he is, he is the only one who is given a sign. And it's a sign that everyone can read. It tells people this is the crime.

Verse 19. Pilate had a notice prepared and fastened to the cross. 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, the three languages of the day. It's as if the sign was written in English, in Bahasa Melayu, and maybe in Mandarin.

So that as many people in Kuching can understand it as possible. And what is his crime? Well, he claimed to be the king of the Jews. The problem was that in those days, the Jews were under the rule of Caesar, the Roman king.

[6:08] And to claim to be a king was to say, I'm challenging Caesar's authority. And that is why Jesus was hung on the cross. But aside from highlighting him as the biggest criminal of the day, the sign was also intended to mock him.

Because which king, who claims to be powerful and victorious, which king gets humiliated, forced to carry a cross, have nails driven through his hands, and crucified like that? He's the opposite of a king you would expect.

Are you sure you want to worship this guy? You see John's point. On the surface, he looks like a condemned, hopeless criminal, not a king. But that is why John quotes from the Old Testament to show us something deeper, underneath the surface.

Look at the next scene in verse 23. That's when John quotes for us. Verse 23, when the soldiers crucified Jesus, they took his clothes, dividing them into four shares, one for each of them with the undergarment remaining.

Now notice how detailed John is as he reports this. He was there. He can even tell you that the garment was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom.

[7:19] And so verse 24, the soldiers say, let's not tear it. Let's decide by lot who will get it. And then John shows us the deeper significance of this scene when he quotes from the Old Testament, from Psalm 22, verse 18.

John says, This happened that the scripture might be fulfilled that said, They divided my clothes among them and cast lots for my garment. So this is what the soldiers did.

Now notice how these words happen. Exactly as written. In fact, the whole of Psalm 22, if you've read it, it was written hundreds of years before Jesus dies, and yet it has so many similarities to the way that Jesus died.

On the screen, you can see Psalm 22, verse 15 to 18, and I'm just going to read it out and just listen out for the details that sound so similar to how Jesus died.

King David writes, My mouth is dried up like a pot should, 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 and circles may be pierced by hands and my feet.

[8:23] Doesn't that just sound like a crucifixion on the cross? Verse 17, All my bones are on display. People stare and gloat at me. That's what happens with the sign. And verse 18, which is quoted in John, They divide my clothes among them and cast lots for my garment.

What is John's point? Well, firstly, he wants us to see that Jesus is crucified exactly in the way that David spoke about hundreds of years before. As a soldier's divide of his garments, he's fulfilling this pattern that David set for God's king.

You see, the people in Jesus' day were expecting a king who was going to be like David. Someone who would crush the Roman Empire would give them freedom. Someone who would lead armies and liberate them from slavery.

And so a man on the cross, that is the exact opposite of what they would expect. And it's the opposite of what you and I would expect as well. But actually, John is saying that there is more to God's king than just the fact that he will conquer.

Because if you remember the story of David, in Psalm 22, he's suffering. He suffered terribly. And that's why he writes these words, as a lament. As a way of saying, this is what I'm going through, even though I am God's king.

[9:38] And Jesus fulfills these words. He is the true king from David's line who suffers just like David. You see, if the Jews had known their Old Testament, they should have known that the pattern of God's king is not just that he will conquer.

It is that he will suffer even up to death before conquering. And so when we look at the cross, and when we think about what to expect of God's king, John is saying, this is not a mistake.

This is not a tragedy. Jesus is really God's king, even as he hangs there on the cross. At the very same point, it's reinforced in a couple of verses down, as John shows us how Jesus actually dies, the moment of his death, in verses 28 to 30.

So just look down at those verses with me, verses 28 to 30, in John chapter 19. Here's what John writes, John 19, verse 28. Later, knowing that everything had now been finished, and so that scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said, I am thirsty.

A jar of wine vinegar was there, and so they soaked a sponge in it, put the sponge on the stalk of the hyssop plant, and listed it to Jesus' lips. When he had received the drink, Jesus said, it is finished.

[11:01] With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit. It's an interesting detail, isn't it? That he wants to fulfill the scriptures, there's that phrase again. And so, he says, I am thirsty.

And what do they do? Well, they give him vinegar to drink. Again, John is calling us back to the Old Testament, to another psalm written of David, Psalm chapter 69.

And again, in Psalm 69, it is very similar to Psalm 22, because David is suffering. He's lamenting. He's saying, it's terrible for me, even as God's king. And on the screen is Psalm chapter 69, verses 19 to 21.

And again, look how similar it is to how Jesus dies. David writes, you know how I am scorned, disgraced, and shamed. All my enemies are before you. Scorn has broken my heart and left me helpless.

I looked for sympathy, but there was none. For comforters, but I found none. They put gall on my food, and there is the verse that Jesus fulfills directly, and gave me vinegar for my thirst.

[12:07] Again, it's the same point that John is making. Hundreds of years later, as he hangs on the cross in death and shame, as he is scorned and mocked as people look at the sign, John is saying, no, Jesus is God's king because this happens to him.

He fulfills the pattern that David set hundreds of years ago, as he drinks that vinegar while hanging on the cross. So what should we see when we see Jesus crucified, hanging on the cross?

Should we see someone who is utterly defeated? Someone who is a horrible criminal? God's plan A may be gone horribly wrong. Well, John's answer is no.

He wants us to see that the crucifixion, the cross, it proves that Jesus is God's king. This is plan A. It was God's intention all along that his king should suffer, should die.

God's king, he is marked by suffering, even death. It is his plan A. Now, of course, you might be wondering, so Jesus is God's king, okay, fine.

[13:21] Well, what kind of king is he? And why on earth does he have to suffer and die to fulfill God's plan? How does the cross bring victory?

Well, those are things that we're going to explore as we look into the next couple of verses in our passage. John first wants to answer what kind of king is Jesus in our next two verses in verses 25 to 27 in John chapter 19.

In these verses, John zooms in on the cross a little bit more into a particular episode when Jesus speaks to his mother and to the precious women in his life. And in these verses, we get a small glimpse into his heart.

What drove him to the cross? We see that he is not just a king. He is a loving king. Verse 25.

What's going on?

Remember I said earlier that the cross is the most painful, most humiliating, most torturous way to die. Let me describe it for you a little bit. Remember we were told that Jesus was carrying his cross?

[14:45] How heavy do you think a cross is? How heavy do you think that cross is? That's probably quite lifelike, isn't it? Well, ancient records show us that a cross can weigh anything from 100 to 150 kilograms.

That is twice as heavy as me, at least. Just imagine the criminal having to carry that cross by himself walking to the place of his execution.

It's excruciating. And then when he gets there, what happens? When the cross goes on the ground, the soldiers, they throw you on the cross, they tie you down with ropes with your arms and your feet, and then they take these gigantic nails, eight-inch nails, and they hammer them straight through your wrist.

They hammer them through both your feet so that you are fastened there through the cross. Just imagine the pain that is radiating from your arms and your feet and the blood that is gushing out. It's terrible. Your nerves and your tendons and your bones are severed. And then from the ground, they raise you up so that you are hanging there, supported only by your arms and your feet.

[15:55] Your arms are pulling you, the gravity is pulling you down, it's painful. But the other thing that people don't really realize is that it causes you to suffocate because you're hanging there. And if you've ever hung from a pull-up bar before, you'll know this.

After a while, it gets hard to breathe because there is so much pressure on your chest. And after a while, you have no strength to pull yourself up or push yourself up with your legs. And so you begin to suffocate slowly, bit by bit, as your brain is starved of oxygen.

Mental, physical torture of the highest order. That's what's happening to Jesus as he hangs on the cross. And yet, as he looks through that brain fog, he sees his mother, his mother's sister, and another precious woman there.

What is his first thought? She needs to be cared for. And so he speaks to the disciple whom he loved, that's John, and he says, this is now your mother. Take her.

Care for her. for the rest of your life. How much love does one have to have in your heart for you to look through the pain and think about others?

[17:03] That's not what we are like. A couple of weeks ago, I was having a really bad case of food poisoning, and I was on the toilet every hour. And the last thing I wanted to think about was to help my parents.

Because my mom had fractured her foot. Look, she really needed help getting around the house. But I was just too wrapped up in my own pain. I didn't really want to help her. But Jesus is so different from me and from you.

Even through the pain, he loves. Seeking Jesus, he is radically different from every other king, every other leader, every other politician in this world.

We all know this, don't we? All these people, they only love themselves. They live for your approval, or for the money, or for the power that it brings them. I'm sure you identify with this.

When it's election time, what happens? Well, these politicians, they come out, they go on their stage, they make big speeches, they make big promises to you. They say, I will fight for your rights, I'll fight for your welfare. Prices will go down.

[18:05] You get housing, food, transport. But the moment they are elected, what happens? Nothing. At most, you get a little bit of improvement. Sometimes, most of the time, in fact, in most countries around the world, things get worse.

Why? Because all they really care about is themselves. They don't care about you. But our king, Jesus, he is different.

He is a loving king. We get a small glimpse of that in this small little scene where he asks John to care for his mother. But as we get into our next point, we'll see that his love is not just for them. His love is shown in the way that he sacrifices his life for us as sinners. So let's get to the next point. The crucifixion shows Jesus who sacrifices his life as a substitute for sinners. And that shows us his love for us. Second point on your handout. Now, verses 28 to 30, they are key verses in our passage.

[19:12] We saw earlier that Jesus fulfills the pattern of Psalm 69 as the king. But there is more to these verses than that. If you look at those verses again, you'll notice that twice we are told that something has been finished.

Something has been completed. Verse 28, John writes, knowing that everything had now been finished, Jesus said, I am thirsty. He drinks the sour wine.

And then verse 30 again, he tells us, when he had received the drink, Jesus himself says, it is finished. And with that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

And the question we should be asking is, what has been finished? What has been completed? When Jesus hangs and dies on that cross? Well, the answer is that Jesus has finished his mission to die for the lives of many.

That is something that has been told to us already in John's Gospel. I'll just put two verses up there on the screen for you, just so you can see that I'm not getting it out of thin air. John chapter 12, when Jesus speaks about his mission, he says, the hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.

[20:20] Very truly, I tell you, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. What's the point of the image?

Well, it's simple. Unless a seed goes into the ground and it dies, it cannot produce a plant that produces more seeds, that produces more plants and more seeds. A seed must die in order to produce more life and abundant life beyond it.

And further on, in verse 32 to 33, he describes exactly how he is going to die. Jesus says, and I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.

He said this to show the kind of death that he was going to die. And now, when we come back to John 19, that has happened. Jesus has been lifted up on a cross.

He's hanging for everybody to see with a sign that says he claims to be the king of the Jews. And he is hanging aloft, suffocating, slowly to death. So part of his mission is to die to bring life.

[21:30] What on earth does that have to do with being a substitute? For to answer that, we have to see that John is going to drop for us another series of Old Testament pictures.

We call them allusions. John has given us some quotations, right? He said, scripture might be fulfilled. He's very clearly signposted it for us. And he gives us the quotation. But another way that New Testament authors point us back to the Old Testament is by these things called allusions. They are like hints. If you know the Old Testament, you would pick up these things. So they're not quite as obvious as the previous ones, but they are there. And I want us to see that these allusions, they point us back to the Passover lamb of the Exodus.

And before I point out the allusions to us, maybe I'll better explain what the Passover lamb is so that the allusions will become obvious. So let's travel back in time, right? Travel back in time, thousands of years before, back to the time of the Exodus.

Remember the story in the Exodus, the Israelites, they were slaves in Egypt. And Pharaoh, the king, had refused to let them go. And so in Exodus chapter 12, God said to the Israelites, my angel is going to come, he's going to visit the land of Egypt tonight, and he's going to take all the lives of all the firstborn sons in the land, all of them.

[22:51] And when this tragedy happens, well, Pharaoh will finally release them. It will be God's judgment on Pharaoh for refusing to obey him. But of course, there's a problem because the Israelites are also in Egypt, aren't they?

How are the Israelite children going to be spared? Well, the night before this was to happen, the Israelites, they were to find and unblemish the perfect lamb and they were to slaughter it. Moses then said, you're going to take some of the blood and use a hyssop plant, a hyssop plant, to spread the blood on the sides and the tops of the door frames of your houses. And so when this happened, when the angel of God came to take the lives of the firstborn in Egypt, he would see the blood on the door frames and he would pass over their houses.

And that is why this event, this festival is called the Passover. And that is why that lamb is known as the Passover lamb. It was the lamb that would spare the lives of their children. So why does God bother with all this drama about lambs and blood and hyssop plants?

Well, God wanted to teach Israel simply that they were not less sinful than Egypt. Actually, there are people too who are deserving of death because they too have heart-resistant hearts to him.

[24:10] And it must be God who will provide a way out so that they could escape. And if you know your Old Testament, their history absolutely proves that. Time and time again, they would disobey the very God who loved and blessed them.

They would spit in his face, shake their fist at him because they thought he owed them what he didn't. And so in order for God to pass over them in judgment, well, this perfect animal must be sacrificed, his blood must be spilled.

It would be their substitute. It would die on their behalf so they could live. That is the significance of the Passover. So now that we know the details, perhaps it will be easier to spot the allusions that John makes to the Passover lamb in these verses.

The first one is in verse 29. Did you notice what the plant was that brought the vinegar to Jesus' lips? It is the hyssop plant, that very same plant in the Exodus.

But that one hint, you know, it could be a coincidence. John drops a second one. After Jesus dies, to show us that that is exactly what he intends us to think. That allusion, that quotation actually, is to do with Jesus' legs that remain unbroken.

[25:25] So let me just explain the events leading up to that and we'll see the quotation at the end of verse 36. So come with me to chapter 19, verse 31. How did Jesus' legs remain unbroken?

Verse 31 tells us a story. Now it was the day of preparation and the next day was to be a special Sabbath. Because the Jewish leaders did not want the bodies left on the crosses during the Sabbath, they asked Pilate to have the legs broken and the bodies taken down.

The soldiers therefore came and broke the legs of the first man who had been crucified with Jesus and then those of the other. Now to us, that sounds pretty weird, right? How on earth does this all fit together?

Well, the Jewish leaders, they make this request because the day after the crucifixion was a special Sabbath, right? And dead bodies, they are unclean to the Jews. They don't want them hanging up there slowly dying while they celebrate this Sabbath.

So how do you take the bodies down before the Sabbath? Well, these jokers hang on the cross, they've got to die more quickly. That's the only way, right? Can't take them down while they're still alive.

[26:31] And that's why they say break their legs. Once their legs are broken, what happens? Well, they no longer have legs that they can push them up to support their chest while they breathe. They've only got their arms which will tire up much more quickly.

And so once their legs are broken, the pain, the lack of strength will cause them to suffocate and die more quickly. That's why the Jewish leaders asked for this.

And so the soldiers, they do it. They break the legs of the two guys standing crucified next to Jesus, but then when they get to him, look at verse 33. But when they came to Jesus and found that he was already dead, they did not break his legs.

Instead, one of the soldiers pierced Jesus' side with a spear, bringing a sudden flow of blood and water. 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.

Again, John gives us detailed eyewitness testimony. He was there when the garments were being divided and he also saw the blood and the water that shot out from Jesus' side after they confirmed that his legs didn't need to be broken.

[27:44] This detail of the blood and the water, it tells us that Jesus was really dead. And when someone dies, well, the blood begins to separate, right? The red blood cells that give blood its color, they disintegrate.

And all those chemicals, they sort of aggregate, they come together, and they separate from the water that is in our blood. And so when the soldiers pierce Jesus in the side and they see this clear water and this red stuff coming out, that's confirmation.

He really is dead. That's why they leave his legs unbroken. But John isn't just interested in confirming that he died or that his legs weren't broken. Again, like I said, John sees in this detail a connection to the Passover lamb of the exodus, a connection to the fact that Jesus is like that lamb who dies as a substitute for sinners.

That's what verse 36 tells us. Look at verse 36 in your Bibles. Again, John says, for these things took place that the scripture might be fulfilled. Not one of his bones will be broken.

This detail, it takes us to Numbers 9. Numbers 9, verse 12. There it is on the screen. In this passage, Moses is explaining how the Passover lamb is prepared.

[29:00] Here's what Moses said, they are to eat the lamb together with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. They must not leave any of it till morning or break any of its bones. Remember what the lamb was supposed to be?

Perfect, unblemished, able to stand in the place of blemished, imperfect sinners. And the reason Moses says don't break its bones is because any lamb with broken bones was imperfect. It was blemished. It wasn't fit to be offered as a sacrifice. But Jesus dies as a perfect sacrifice. That is a symbol of his perfection. The fact that he can stand in the place of dirty, imperfect sinners like you and I as the true and the final Passover lamb.

Jesus dies as the perfect substitute for us. Those are the Passover allusions. In the second quotation in verse 37, it also makes the same point.

John draws on this piercing of Jesus and the fact that he draws them together. Because this quote, it comes from Zechariah 12 verse 10.

[30:09] They will look on the one that they have pierced. This should be the next quotation that's coming on the slide. Here's Zechariah 12 verse 10.

God says, I will pour on the spouse of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and supplication. They will look on me the one they have pierced and they will mourn for him as one mourns for an only child and grieve bitterly for him as one grieves for a firstborn son.

See, in Zechariah chapter 12, God is promising that he will rescue Israel from the enemies that he had sent on them. Why were Israel underseed by their enemies? Well, the Old Testament tells us it's because they were sinful.

They deserve God's punishment and so God sent these enemies on them. But Zechariah 12 says, one day I will free you from them. And that must mean that God will somehow deal with their sin, with the thing that got them under siege by enemies in the first place.

And that's why in the first part of verse 10 in Zechariah 12, he says, I will pour out on the house of David a spirit of grace and supplication. Somehow God will show them grace.

[31:20] grace. But how can he do that? Right, Israel, they are a sinful, disobedient people. The Old Testament uses the language of being stiff-necked.

They refuse to turn to God. How will God show them grace? Well, the next part of the verse shows us because God himself will come and he will get pierced for them.

He will die on their behalf, just like the Passover lamb did for Israel. And that is what Jesus fulfills.

John has already told us earlier in John that Jesus is God himself. Jesus said, I and the Father are one. In other words, I am God. And as Jesus dies on the cross, not just as a man, but as God himself, he fulfills this prophecy.

He is pierced. As he dies on the cross, he is pierced as the soldiers spear goes through his dead body and brings forth the blood and the water.

[32:26] And he is pierced because he is the substitute who dies as a sacrifice for sinners. So that's significant, isn't it?

Why is it significant for us? We are not the Jews. We are not people who have been in the Old Testament. We weren't under slavery. We weren't under exile. Well, it's significant for us because Jesus says that this death is for all people.

John 12, 33, when I am lifted up, I will draw all people to myself. His implication is that all of us are in need of the salvation that he brings. Why is that so?

Well, it's because you and I, we are not different from the Israelites. We too are stubborn, hard-hearted people by nature. We're not upright or good people in God's eyes.

Some of us like to think, you know, that when we go before God on the last day of judgment, God will look at all the good deeds we've done and say, well, good. You know, we've done some bad things, but it's okay, I'll let you into heaven. But the answer, sadly, is no.

[33:34] All of us have lied, all of us have hurt people around us, and God's standard for getting into heaven is perfection, 100%. Tell one lie, hurt one person, and you have fallen short of that.

But more than that, the deeper issue is that none of us naturally treat God like he deserves, with full respect and honor. See, here's the thing.

All of us, we live in God's world. We live in the bodies that he made for us, that he designed painstakingly to function and give us life. We eat his food, Malaysian food is fantastic, better than where I grew up in Singapore.

Much better. We eat his wonderful food, we breathe his air, we drink his water, we enjoy all the blessings that he's given us. And yet, naturally, if no one had told us, we ignore God completely. We push him out of our lives, and we treat him as if he is nothing. In the Bible's words, we reject him, we rebel against him. And that is what the Bible calls sin.

[34:41] It's not just about disobedience or doing a couple of bad things here and there. It's about a heart that refuses to honor and obey God despite the fact that we should. That was Israel's problem all through the Old Testament.

And that is our problem even here today. That's transgression, as we saw in the opening video. But the deeper issue is not just that we are these broken people who disobey God.

God is the highest authority in the universe. One day, we will all stand before God, the judge, and we will give an account of all that we have done and the way we have treated not just the people around us, but God himself.

And it will be obvious, plainly, that we have sinned. And the Bible's answer is very clear. For all who sin, we deserve death, eternal death, what the Bible calls hell.

That is the bad news that all of us have to contend with. And it is only with this backdrop that what Jesus does becomes good news, the best news in the world.

[35:47] Because as we've seen in John today, he's our loving king and he steps in as our substitute. That love that we saw him show to his mother, that is a small picture of the greater love that he has for all people who would believe in him, who would come back to him and trust him.

Why does Jesus come to earth? What is his mission? Well, he comes to earth, he goes to the cross, he dies this horrible death so that sinners like you and I would never have to face that, but instead would have life eternally with God, the opposite of hell.

If we will believe in Jesus, if we will trust his death, when we go before that judgment seat at the end of time, God will accept us. Because Jesus is that perfect Passover lamb, unblemished, not like us.

And we will spend eternity in heaven with him. So when Jesus said on that cross, it is finished, this is what he has finished. Salvation as a substitute, dying, sacrificing for sinners like you and like me.

In April 1912, the Titanic set sail. It was the world's largest cruise ship at the time and its designers had called it unsinkable.

[37:07] That was his claim to fame. The ship that could never sink no matter what happened to it. But I think we all know what happened. In the middle of the night, the ship struck an iceberg in the Arctic Circle and this unsinkable ship inevitably began to sink.

Thousands and thousands of lives were at stake. The party on board quickly turned into panic. But amidst this tragedy, there were several recorded stories of people who stayed on board so that others could escape.

The ship's engineers, 35 of them, all of them stayed below the decks of the ship, near the compartments where the water was flooding in. They were closing hatches. They were maintaining the electrical systems.

They were pulling people out of their bungs and sending them to the surface so that they could escape in the lifeboats. There were two Christian ministers, Pastor John Harper and Father Thomas Biles.

They refused to board the lifeboats. They gave their life jackets to others. And there were many, many more who did the same. And all these people perished in the icy waters of the Arctic Circle as the ship finally sunk in the early hours of the morning.

[38:21] But their sacrifices were not wasted. They gave their lives so that hundreds, thousands of others might live. And that is a small taste, a small picture of what Jesus Christ did on the cross on the very first Good Friday.

That is a sign of his love for us, his willingness to lay down his life for people who don't deserve it. That is why Good Friday is good.

You know, as a pastor, I meet many people who think Jesus is a good teacher. Right? He says nice things, you know, love your neighbor as yourself. Treat others like how you want to treat, how they want others to treat you.

And they think he's a good teacher. His advice is worth following. Many people look at the cross, right? The cross there and they think Jesus is a great example for us. We should follow him. We should be loving to other people.

And there are many others who think nothing of Jesus. Maybe he existed, maybe he didn't, but he's not really important. Not an important figure in history. But what John shows us in this passage is that Jesus is the most important person in the world.

[39:35] He is God's loving king. He's not just a good teacher. He's not just a great example. And he didn't die just to set an example for us. He died to make life possible.

He died as our substitute because there is a punishment for sin that you and I can never escape but for him. And on that cross, he shows us how much he loves us if we would believe in him.

I started by asking, what's so good about Good Friday? What's so good about the cross? What's so good about this ancient torture instrument? Why has it become a symbol of love and sacrifice?

Well, John shows us why.

He dies as a substitute for sinners as our loving king. So as we conclude, what does John want for us?

He doesn't just want understanding. He doesn't just want us to go, oh, good Friday is good, great, thank you, move on. No, he wants that understanding to lead to belief. Look again at verse 35 in John chapter 19.

[40:43] He writes, the man who saw it, that's John himself, has given testimony and his testimony is true. He knows that he tells the truth and he testifies so that you also may believe. Like I've said, belief in Jesus is the only way to escape the punishment that we deserve for our sins.

And for some of you here today, this may be your very first time hearing about what Jesus did on the cross. If that's so, it is wonderful that you've got to hear this from John's gospel itself.

And I want to say that today is a great day to believe in Jesus. Because let me ask you, what are you going to say when you stand before God one day? You will have no excuse.

Your life will show that you have never ever bothered about God until that day. And you will deserve the punishment of death and hell unless you have believed in Jesus first.

So John is asking, will you believe in him today? Will you trust his eyewitness testimony and put your trust in Jesus? Well, I understand you may have questions. Maybe this is the first time and there's lots of other things you want to work out.

[41:49] And that is normal. Do come and speak with me or with Pastor Brian after this service. We'd love to have you think about Jesus more. What can I say to you? Please, don't ignore what Jesus has done.

This is the most important day in the history of the world. And it's the only way to escape the death that you and I deserve. Don't treat him as nothing. Investigate him. And you will find life. I know the vast majority of us here would consider ourselves believers.

So we say, okay, we already believe. And that's great. But maybe the strength of your belief has begun to wane.

Maybe Jesus has begun to take a position of secondary importance in your life. I'm not sure what it is that has caused that for you. For some of us, your life is busy and it's tiring.

Our work is distracting you. The pressure of raising children. Maybe you've got aged grandparents to take care of. Maybe you are the aged grandparents and the aches and pains of life are catching up to you.

[42:53] You're distracted. Maybe you are disheartened. You're discouraged. And the preciousness of what Jesus has done has begun to fade just a little bit in your heart and in your mind. There may be some of us who interact with other people who are not Christians and they think you're weird.

Maybe they laugh at you. Maybe you've got family who exclude you. They don't really want to talk to you because they know you're Christians. Maybe you find coming to church on a Sunday or reading the Bible to you is becoming more of a chore rather than a delight.

Perhaps that career or the money that you can earn is becoming more precious than it should. I don't know what it looks like for you, but these are some of the things that have made my own belief in Jesus begin just to wobble a little bit.

But if that's you, I hope that today's passage strengthens your belief. I hope that you have seen today how precious it is that Jesus has come and he has died as your substitute. It is not foolish. It is not a waste to wholeheartedly trust in Jesus. It is also not blind because John has written this entire book, the whole New Testament, the whole Bible is written to show us that Jesus is historical and can be believed.

[44:07] Brothers and sisters, when you stand before that judgment seat at the end of time, all the things that you have valued in this life, all the things all the aches and pains that you have gone through, your family, your friends, your career, your money, none of those things will matter.

Only one thing will. Whether you have believed in Jesus to give you life. So I hope that as you hear these words today, that you will ask God to help them, to help press the wonderful importance and the goodness of them into your heart.

And I hope that you want to keep believing fiercely in the Lord Jesus and to never let him go. Jesus is God's loving King who was crucified as your substitute and he loves you more than you can ever know.

And that is what is so good about Good Friday. Let me pray for us. Father in heaven, we thank you for giving us such great clarity about the cross.

In your plan, it wasn't a tragic mistake, but it was the fulfillment of your plan to save people from death. We thank you that this shows us that Jesus loves us so much that he will give up his life for us though we don't deserve it.

[45:17] So Father, help us not just to understand this, but to believe in it wholeheartedly. Help us to rediscover afresh how good it is to believe in Jesus, our loving King who gave his life for us. And for those who have not yet believed, Father, please would you help them to come to Jesus with joy, knowing and trusting that he alone saves.

We pray and ask all these things in Jesus' name. Amen.