

## John 19:16b-42

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[ 0 : 00 ] Please turn back to John 19, page 905, and let's go back to the cross of Christ.! Let's pray as we do that. Our Father, we come before you this morning, if your word opened before us with the hinge of history displayed here, and we pray that you would help us to see and hear and understand that our lives might be changed, because we ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

Amen. When I was a little boy, it was our first house. It was the first house that I lived in, so we lived there until I was 11, so I must have been younger than 11. There was a picture on the wall in my bedroom. It wasn't one that I'd put there. It was one that my parents had hung there.

I don't know why, but it was a 16th century scene. It was a poster of a 16th century scene. It didn't date back to the 16th century. If it had, I wouldn't be here now. I'd be in a castle somewhere, but there we are. It was a poster of a 16th century scene, and if you'd asked me, age 10, age 9, age 10, what was on that picture in your bedroom, I would have said, well, up close there's a man's face, and he's wearing a hat, and his mouth's open, and in the background there are some people doing things. One evening, my parents were having a party downstairs. They had guests over, and there was all kinds of things going on in terms of dinner and clinking of glasses and cutlery and all that kind of thing. My bedroom was beside the toilet, and one of their guests came up to use the loo. I was lying on my bed doing, contemplating my inner life. I don't know. I was nine years old, and the guest put his head around the door. I knew him. He was a friend of my father's, and he said, you know, hi, and we had a bit of a chat, and he saw the picture, and he said, oh, interesting. He said, do you know this picture? And I said, what do you mean? Yes, it's a poster in my bedroom. And he said, no, no, no, have a look. What do you see there?

If you'd asked me, I think I probably said to him, I see a man in the foreground. I see some people in the background. And he said, no, look again. What do you see? And I kind of looked a bit more closely. He said, oh, there's a table there, and so on. And for about 10 minutes or so, he said, look again. What do you see there? That person's clothes are torn. What does that tell you about them? And after he had pressed me to look hard and to notice the details that the painter had included in this picture, this familiar picture, this thing that had been right beside me in my bedroom for all the years of my life up to that point, it took on a whole different light.

It was peasants drinking and carousing. It was a party scene that, as I say, dated back to the 16th century. But once I had seen those details, the whole scene, it came to life. It was a totally different picture. Well, this morning, I want to play the role of my father's friends as we come to this passage in John's gospel. And I want to ask us to look carefully at a scene that is familiar to many of us, but that has details that John has intentionally included, but that we might have missed or that we've breezed past with the familiarity of this in order that we might get a deeper and a fuller picture, in order that we might never look at the cross the same way again, in order that we might see a richer and fuller picture. And it's especially important that we do that in John's gospel. John's gospel, his agenda in writing his gospel is explicitly theological. Do you notice that as we've gone through his gospel, there are lots of things that he says that aren't in other gospels, and there are things that he records about details that are in other gospels that aren't in those other gospels? So when it comes to the cross, there is much less detail here than Matthew and Mark have about the actual historical events. Do you notice that? You could say the physical reality of the cross, 19 verse 18, it just gets one verse, they crucified him.

[ 4 : 37 ] What John provides is, of course, historical, but he wants us to grasp why it happened more than that it happened. He wants to communicate the theological significance of these events. And to do this, he provides for us a symbol-laden account of the crucifixion. There are details here that John is putting in to tell us deeper things about what is going on than merely Jesus Christ dying on the cross for our sins. Not that that is ever mere, but you know what I mean. He wants to portray

Jesus in a particular light. He is saying things about his identity with the details that he includes, and he is revealing specifically things that his death accomplished that other gospels don't include. So those two categories in mind, his identity and what his death accomplishes, I want us to look.

I want to ask the question, what do you see? And I want to ask it twice with those two. Look at his identity and look at the details John has given about what his death has accomplished.

So point number one, what do you see? Is he an innocent man being crucified? Soldiers gambling for his belongings? Distressed family watching on as he speaks his last words? A final shout as he dies? A soldier puncturing his corpse with a spear causing a mess as bodily fluid squirts out. Some kindly people taking him to a tomb and anointing him for his burial. Maybe you say, what do you say? Well, I see maybe something more theological. You think, oh, well, he said to me this is theological. So you say, ah, well, I see the Son of God bearing the wrath of God in the place of the people of God for the sins of the world.

Yes, okay. But look again. First, let's go to the sign, verse 19. Put a sign above his head. It read, Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.

Many of the Jews read this inscription for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city, and it was written in Aramaic and Latin and in Greek. Now, if you were here last week, we discussed the way that the soldiers in the way that they were acting, and Pilate, in the words that he used, act and speak better than they know. So we won't take long on this point. But all the political maneuvering by the Jews and the Romans culminates here. If you want to see where it's all going, look at the sign. And in this three languages, trilingual declaration, we have the truth about Christ.

[ 7 : 18 ] Christ. He is the King who rules. What do you see? You see the King who rules. Whoever would pass by could see in their own language that the crucifixion of Jesus was His exaltation. The wooden cross had become His royal throne, and He is ruling, and He is reigning. Yes, here is a broken and a wretched man, but He at the same time is the one before whom every knee will bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth. Everyone who has ever lived, everyone who has ever had breath in their body will confess His lordship. Every single one, every nation, every government, every homeless person, and every billionaire, and everyone in between will all acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord because of this event. That's what the Apostle Paul says in Philippians chapter 2. A great hymn you remember when it says that He chose to humble Himself to the point of servanthood, and the greatest servanthood of all death, and the greatest death of all death on a cross. He could not have gone any lower. This event, Jesus chose this. He submitted Himself to this, and what does Paul say? Therefore,

He has been exalted to the highest place. The reason that He has exalted to the place of lordship over all, over every square inch, is that He humbled Himself to the cross. Can you see the King who rules?

Let's go next to the small pile of clothes at the foot of the cross. Verse 23. Come with me to verse 23. When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they took His garments and divided them into four parts, one part for each soldier, also His tunic. But the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom.

And so they said to one another, Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it, to see whose it shall be.

Again, John gives us details here that we don't get in the other Gospels. The soldiers gambling for the outer garments, that's in all the Gospels. They divided into four parts, that's in the other Gospels.

But John mentions his tunic, the inner garment, and specifically that it was both seamless and woven. Now, what's that about? Why do we need those details? Well, John wants us to identify this with the garment of the priest. What can you see? Here is the priest who mediates.

[ 9 : 52 ] The reference to this tunic being seamless suggests that it was made with great care, befitting the way priestly clothing was to be made. Also, in the Greek translation of the Old Testament, the word woven here is only used to refer to priestly garments. Exodus 28, Exodus 35, Exodus 36, the same word is used only in regard to priestly garments. Why has John chosen that word? It's because that's the point that he's making. And then, of course, the decision not to tear it, that not only fulfills the Scripture, but it alludes to the command in Leviticus 21, verse 10, against the tearing of the robes of the high priest. John is telling us that the crucified Christ is the high priest of God who, by his own kingly authority, offers himself as the once-for-all sacrifice for the sin of the world. Jesus makes himself the propitiation for our sins. He mediates for us. He bears the wrath of God in our place so that we can be reconciled to the Father.

John is showing us here that everything we would expect of the high priest, sacrifice, reconciliation, cleansing, forgiveness for sins, intercession, all of the things that the Old Testament priest did, it is now accomplished through Jesus, our high priest. And how significant is it that this garment lies unworn at the foot of the cross? It's no longer needed because Jesus has fulfilled and superseded the role of the high priest. We no longer need an earthly priest to mediate because Christ is our true high priest who, the writer to the Hebrews says, who sat down at the right hand of the throne of the majesty in heaven, a minister in the holy places, the true tent that the Lord set up, not man. Do you want to come into the presence of the living God? Do you want to be reconciled with all of the things that you know are true about your heart and your life and the way that you've lived?

Do you want to know that you can be reconciled to the God who made you for himself? Christ brings you in. He is the priest who mediates. Can you see him? Can you see the priest who mediates and he mediates for you? Next, let's follow John as he shifts our focus to the people around the cross, the sign above the cross, the clothes at the foot of the cross. Now we go to the people around the cross. Verse 25, but standing by the cross of Jesus where his mother and his mother's sister, Mary, the wife of Clopas and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, woman, behold your son. Then he said to the disciple, behold your mother. And from that hour, the disciple took her to his own home. This exchange between Jesus and his family, it's his mother, his aunt. In fact, it's probably two aunts and two close disciples. This event is often taken as an act of familial care on Jesus' part. He is ensuring that his mother is looked after when he departs. That, of course, is possible, but I think there is much more going on than that. I think what we're supposed to see here is that he is the son who succeeds. The son who succeeds. Can you see, Jesus doesn't just say to the disciple, please take care of my mother because I'm leaving. But he starts actually by commanding his mother to take care of the beloved disciple. But notice specifically, he doesn't refer to her as his mother, but as woman. Now, we know John's gospel. That rings a bell with us. That takes us back to chapter two when he spoke to her that way at the wedding at Cana when the wine was running out. Now, this language, woman, behold, what does he say? Woman, behold your son. This language is actually designed to put distance between Jesus and his mother, not in a bad way, but simply to highlight the larger context of what Jesus is accomplishing. Same thing as chapter two. So here in this moment,

[ 14 : 31 ] Jesus is not primarily, he's not first and foremost Mary's boy, but he is the unique son of his heavenly father who through the events that they are witnessing, through him being on the cross, creates a new family, the children of God. The son of God on the cross is distinct from the sons of God who stand at the cross, and yet in this event, it is the cross that unites them in the same father.

Look at verse 30. When Jesus cried out, it is finished, it is a cry of victory. We said that last week. He is declaring his work complete. His work is accomplished, and that work is the work of the true son of God.

So you remember in the Garden of Eden, Adam was created as the first son of God. He was to live in obedience to the Father, to glorify God and enjoy Him forever, but he failed, and in his failure, he plunged the whole world into sin. God promised to put that right, and so he called Israel to be his people and designated the nation of Israel to be his firstborn son, Exodus 4, 22. They were then to live as his redeemed people according to his law, but we know what happened. They failed as well. But then, in the words of the Apostle Paul, Galatians 4, verse 4, For when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law so that we might receive adoption as sons.

Jesus is the Son of God who succeeds where the other sons failed, and it is through faith in Him that we become God's children, and we receive life. You remember He said it right back in the prologue, to all who received Him, to all who believed in His name, He gave the right to what? Become the children of God, and here it is. This is why it's possible.

[ 16 : 45 ] And when you become a child of God, you receive life. You receive full access to the Father, full participation in the family of God, the church.

All the benefits of belonging to His family flow down to you because He was the Son who succeeds. Look at the cross. Look carefully. Can you see the Son who succeeds?

Well, keep looking one more time. Look again. One final aspect of Jesus' identity. Go with me to verse 30. When Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, It is finished, and He bowed His head

and gave up His spirit.

It's a final insult from the soldiers. They stuff this sour wine in His mouth, and then He cries out, It is finished. It's one word in the original. You know that. Tetelestai.

It is a cry of victory. I've just said that, but we need to see that John follows it with verse 31. And what are the details He gives us there? There are details about the rules for the Passover celebration. Do you see that? Since it was the day of preparation, the Sabbath is being mentioned. [18:03] He's bringing us back to the reality of Passover, and so He's showing us that Jesus is the Lamb who triumphs. The Passover Lamb who triumphs. So, John is reminding us here, the King who rules, the priest who mediates, the Son who succeeds is also the Passover Lamb who triumphs. He fulfills all of these things in His person, the Lord Jesus. And the emphasis on the fact that His legs weren't broken. Do you see that? Verse 31 and following. They press the point even further. He is the perfect Passover Lamb who triumphs. All that He had to be in order to fulfill the law, He is.

And so, we look and we see the victim is really the victor. Think about the words that might bring you joy. I do. I love you. You've passed. Not guilty. I'm sure that brings lots of people joy when they hear them. These are on me. Great words that bring us joy. It is finished. Tetelestai must be the word that outstrips them all. It must be the most thrilling word that we can hear. Because when Jesus cried out, Tetelestai, it is finished. He is declaring to the whole world that His work of fulfilling the Old Testament law, the meticulous demands of the Passover sacrifice has been accomplished. And so, with a word, all sin is paid for in full. With that word, Satan is destroyed. With a word, death is defeated. With a word, eternal life is given. And with a word, hope then floods the universe. Pinned to the cross. The moment when Christ can do nothing is the moment when He has done everything. And again, look, don't miss His control. Verse 30, we talked about this last week. Verse 30, He gave up His Spirit. No one took it from Him. He handed it over. The victim is really the victor. Yes, and He is so completely on His terms. Look, can you see the perfect Son of God giving His perfect life as a perfect sacrifice for you?

Can you see the Lamb who triumphs? God's King, Priest, Son, Lamb. John brings them all together at the cross.

[20:47] So, can you see the picture is filling out? Oh, yes, I see that now. But as I say, I want us to look again and ask the question a second time as it relates to how John described what His death accomplished or the details that John includes that point us towards what His death accomplished. So, question one, what do you see? Question two, what do you see?

When the soldiers come to remove the bodies, verse 33, what do you see? But when they came to Jesus and saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs. But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water. The soldier crudely jams his spear up under Jesus' ribs and outflows water and blood. For the last century or so, we've been told that this significance of this is to offer proof that Jesus was really dead. Medically, we're told this shows the heart sack has probably been pierced, or there's some biological or anatomy, anatom something thing going on there. Anatomical. Now, this is certainly possible, of course, but given that John has just told us, verse 33, that Jesus was already dead, I think it's better to see that John emphasizes this detail again to make a theological point in line with the rest of his gospel. And so, what he's doing here is showing how this death has achieved, first of all, new life. New life. The reference to blood relates to what we've just seen about the sacrifice of the Passover lamb. This is the rubber stamp on John the Baptist's statement in chapter 1 that Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

Then the reference to water, that recalls, you remember John chapter 7, streams of living water that Jesus promised those who trust in him. John 7, 37, if anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water. And then John explains what that means. Now, this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified. Chapter 7, he hadn't been glorified. Here he is, chapter 19, he's been glorified.

The glorification of Jesus. The cross is the epitome of that. We're told that in chapter 12, that's what we're to look forward to. And that glorification has made possible the coming of the Spirit. And what does the Spirit do? The Spirit is the one who gives life.

[23:36] One commentator says, John is not primarily giving proof here of the death of Jesus, but proof of the life his death now offers to the world. That is why Augustine could say this. I think this is

beautiful. Quote, just as the first woman, the mother of all living, was formed from the side of the man when asleep, so also this second Adam, the son who succeeds.

I added that. Augustine didn't say that. This second Adam bowed his head and fell asleep on the cross that a spouse may be formed for him from that which flowed from the sleeper's side.

End quote. As the bride of Christ, the church, we are birthed. We are given new life through the death of Jesus. As the water and the blood from his wounded side did flow, can you see the new life that is offered to you at the cross?

The death of Jesus means that new life is on offer. It is held out to all who will trust in him. Have you done that? Have you turned from your sin? Have you put your faith in the king, priest, son, lamb, and received the new life that he gives?

All of your sins forgiven, conscience cleansed, all of it, those things that you know to be true of your life, the things that lurk in the bottom of your heart, of which you are ashamed, the things that you keep in the bottom drawer, as it were, of your heart, and you never want them to come out. You don't want anyone to know about them. But the fact that they're there and you know that they're there eat away at you from the inside. Guilt and shame, issues of identity and self-worth, all of those things, because you know you're a broken person.

[ 25 : 37 ] The king, priest, son, lamb deals with them all. And so guilt is removed. Shame can be chased out of the room.

You can be made new. That's what the new life that Jesus gives through his death brings.

Put your faith in him. Become one of his children. New life, that's not all, because there's one more detail we need to see.

Again, we're looking at the details that only John mentions when he records this event, and that takes us to his mention. Do you notice verse 41 of the garden? Now, in the place where he was crucified, there was a garden. And in the garden, the new tomb in which no one had yet been laid. John draws attention to the garden at the start of chapter 18. So the whole passion narrative, you could say, is framed by this image of a garden.

Why mention that? Why mention the fact that Jesus was crucified in a garden, and the tomb, a new tomb, no one else had used it, was in that garden?

[ 26 : 59 ] Well, John is showing not only that Jesus' death brings new life, but that Jesus' death brings in a whole new world. You see, gardens don't just frame the passion narrative. They frame the whole Bible story, don't they? The whole of history started in a garden, Genesis 1, and is headed to a garden city, Revelation 21. In the first garden, humanity was plunged into death, and in the second garden, we will enjoy life forevermore. And the redemptive mission of God is to bring us from the first to the second garden. That's really the story of human history. We failed in the first garden in our first parents. God promised to put that right, and He is taking us to the second garden.

John is telling us here with these details that this new world starts in the garden tomb. Jesus will lie in the tomb for His Sabbath rest, but Sunday will follow the first day of the new world, and new creation will burst out of the tomb. Lord willing, we'll get there next week with chapter 20.

But here's the thing. The cross of Christ is both the end of the old order where sin is in charge, and the beginning of the new order where life is one and redemption of the cosmos begins.

Can you see how the garden points us to the new world breaking in? New life bursts up, as it were, in the new world. So when you think about the significance of the cross of Christ, don't think merely about individual forgiveness and salvation. Think about a whole new world.

So what can you see? The scene that John depicts here shows us how God's true King, Priest, Son, Lamb has now one new life and a new world for all who put their faith in Him.

[ 29 : 04 ] Many ways it's a familiar picture for us, but has that familiarity caused us to miss the depth and the stunning beauty that John brings to life here?

But here's the thing. He doesn't just do that for our interest. He doesn't just tell us these things so that we can say, all right, that's a more interesting picture. I think I understand it more. He does it so that we will give ourselves to the one who is at the center of it all. We will receive the new life in all that it represents, all that it means for us, and we will be a participant in this new world that He has won for us. That's why John tells us this. The purpose of his gospel is that we would believe that Jesus is the Son of God and have life in His name. So we look at the picture, we understand the beauty and the depth, and we enter into it by faith. We put our trust wholeheartedly, body, soul, everything we are. We give it to Him. That's new life. That's a new world. Let's pray.