

The Crucifixion

by Welcome Detweiler

The sermon highlights the significance of Jesus Christ's death, burial, and resurrection, and the love of God displayed at the cross, despite the human family's hatred and rejection of him.

Duration: 39:40

Topics: "Salvation Through Christ", "Dying To Sin"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher talks about Jesus Christ and his miraculous powers, such as walking on water and raising people from the dead. Despite his goodness and blessings, Jesus is despised and eventually killed. The preacher then discusses a sinner who realizes his need for salvation in his final moments and turns to Jesus, asking to be remembered in his kingdom. Jesus sees the sincerity in the sinner's heart and grants him salvation, promising him a place in paradise. The preacher emphasizes the importance of understanding that salvation comes through the death of Christ and shares a story of a high school girl who had a similar realization. The sermon concludes by highlighting the significance of the dying thief's remarkable conversion and the need for individuals to turn to Jesus for salvation.

Transcript

Will you turn, please, to Luke's Gospel, Chapter 23? Luke's Gospel, Chapter 23. Before we begin reading, may we look to God in prayer once more. Our gracious Father, we lift our hearts in thanksgiving and praise to Thee for this good land in which we are found, that we have the privilege, without being molested, to gather to sing Thy praises, and that Thou hast preserved for us Thy precious word in our own mother tongue, that we can read the holy scriptures we thank Thee for this.

We pray now that we may receive the blessing that Thou hast in store for us, if there are earthly cares or duties that would hinder us from hearing Thee. We pray that Thou wilt remove all of these things and give us receptive hearts, for we shall not be blessed unless we hear a message from Thee. We do pray that each Christian may receive strength and be blessed as we read Thy word together, and for any unsaved that may have gathered with us.

We do pray that by Thy Holy Spirit Thou wilt take the things from Thy precious word and make them simple and clear, and may it even be a means to bringing them to see the wisdom of trusting Christ before they leave this session. We do ask Thy blessing, and look to Thee, and depend upon Thee in the name of our blessed Savior. Amen.

13 And Pilate, when he had called together the chief priests and the rulers and the people, said unto them, Ye have brought this man unto me as one that perverteth the nation. And, behold, I, having examined him before you, have found no fault in this man touching those things whereof ye accused him. And they were instant with loud voices, requiring that he might be crucified.

And the voices of them and of the chief priests prevailed. And Pilate gave sentence that it should be as they required. And he released unto them him that for sedition and murder was cast into prison, whom they had desired, but he delivered Jesus to their will.

And as they led him away, they laid hold upon one Simon of Cyrenean, coming out of the country, and on him they laid the cross, that he might bear it after Jesus. Verse 32 And there were also two other malefactors led with him to be put to death. And when they were come to the place which is called Calvary, there they crucified him, and the malefactors one on the right hand and the other on the left.

Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment and cast lots. And the people stood beholding, and the rulers also with them derided him, saying, He saved others, let him save himself, if he be the Christ, the chosen of God.

And the soldiers also mocked him, coming to him and offering him vinegar, and saying, If thou be the king of the Jews, save thyself. And a superscription also was written over him in letters of Greek and Latin and Hebrew, This is the king of the Jews. And one of the malefactors, which were hanged, railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us.

But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds. But this man hath done nothing amiss. And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.

And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise. And it was about the sixth hour, and there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour, and the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was rent in the midst. And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.

And having said thus, he gave up the ghost." God will add his blessing to the reading of this wonderful portion of his precious words. We ought to be thankful that we are living in a land where Jesus Christ is still a very, very popular person. Just a few months ago, during the Christmas holidays, Jesus Christ was the central figure not only of the Christian world, but reaching even on the fringes of the pagan world.

A celebration not lasting for one day, but a celebration lasting for weeks in preparation. Oh, I know you're going to say, it was all commercial. It wasn't all commercial.

We detest the fact that it has turned to that trend, but even so, where is another person that has ever walked the face of the earth who, two thousand years later, can still command the interest of the world to the extent that one day, or more than a day, shall be set aside to remember his birth? Who is his rival? Who comes near to him? Even in our own country, what birthdays do we celebrate? George Washington, perhaps the nearest rival. And there may be a few in my audience that will have to say, now, when was it? Was it in March? But it was one of the months, at least, that we have George Washington's birthday. But not only so, I am happy that I am living in a world that recognizes at some time of the year something more than just the birth of Christ, and we are entering into a week in which the religious world, or at least those

who appreciate the Bible, have set aside a time when there will be meditation upon the passion, the death, the burial, and the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

This is even more wonderful. If I should ask you, will someone stand up and tell me what happened in the last week of George Washington's life? How long was he sick? From what disease did he die? I don't know myself. Do you know? It seems as though it's not very important.

We know that his body is resting in Mount Vernon, Virginia, but as to the details of his death, even though he was a man, we have just about forgotten so far as his death is concerned. But we are living in a world when, 1900 years later, there is a special week set aside to meditate and to think upon the importance of Jesus Christ coming into the world, his death, his burial, and his resurrection. And I am extremely thankful for this.

I know we say our Lord is now rejected and by the world disowned, by the many still neglected, and by the few enthroned, and that's true. But let's be thankful that there is some, even if it's outward, a recognition that Jesus Christ was once upon the earth, and that we are to remember his death, his burial, and his resurrection. There is no event on any of the pages of history that is quite so great as this event.

Take the pages of history, scan them carefully, and then with your red pencil put a mark. This is extremely important for our country, the Declaration of Independence, and a few other days. But what event in history is so far-reaching and has affected the entire universe as that that we read about in the Holy Scriptures this morning? The death, the burial, the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

We used to sing a hymn, I haven't heard it lately, Center of Two Eternities. Center of Two Eternities, a past eternity focusing its light upon the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. And, as far as you want to think into the future, that eternity focusing back upon this one central fact in the history of the world when Jesus Christ was dying on Calvary's cross.

Now, there's a great deal of misunderstanding concerning the death of Christ. A certain preacher was asked to speak to a little girl's class of girls 10, 11, 12, 13 years of age, and to make it informal he just asked them questions, and the first question he gave was, who killed Jesus Christ? And the girls thought, and one girl said, the Jews. That is correct.

The Jewish nation who were looking for a Messiah, when he came their minds were blinded. They did not recognize him, and it was the Jews that hated him, that demanded his death, and came to the authorities with the request he must be put to death. But the preacher said, do we have any other answers? And another girl spoke up, and she said, the Jews didn't really drive the nails through his hands.

The Jews didn't raise up that cross, it was the Roman soldiers that did it. So, more than the Jews, the Gentiles as well, and they were representative in the Roman soldiers, and Pilate and all that gave consent to his death, it goes beyond the Gentiles and the Jews are responsible for the death of Christ. But he asked, is there another answer? And some bright girl said, doesn't the Bible indicate that God put his son to death, that he pleased the Lord to bruise him, that God the Father was responsible for the death of Jesus Christ? It was a plan, it was in his purposes before the foundation of the world, and that answer was accepted.

There was a fourth answer, and it was this. No one was responsible for the death of Christ, not the Romans, not the Jews, not God. He said, no man taketh my life from me, I lay it down of myself.

I have power to lay it down, I have power to take it up again. All of these answers are correct, all are involved and are responsible for the death of Christ. I'm afraid that the world in general, those that are not reading their Bible carefully, will only realize that perhaps the murders of Jesus Christ are the only cause of his death.

And I look back to my childhood days when my first comprehension of the death of Christ was just this. He was a very good man, but there were some bad people living in that day, and the bad people just got a mob together and ran upon him, and the poor fellow, although he had plenty of power, he just didn't have enough power to defend himself. They got him, and they killed him, and it's a shame.

He did so much good, and if he had lived a little longer, he could have done a lot more good. It's too bad there was no one there to protect him. I dare say that there are some educated people today who believe that Jesus Christ simply died for a good cause.

He had principles, he had certain plans that he had in his mind, and he had courage to carry out these convictions. They were a little different than the common run of man, but he stood for them, and he stood for them so tenaciously that if it meant he had to die for his convictions, he would do it. We should be thankful that at least there have been a few men that have been strong enough to their convictions to die for them.

But beyond that, the world has forgotten the main purpose for which Jesus Christ died on the cross. He is 33 years of age. The earlier part of his life is hidden obscurity.

He's in an unknown village, Nazareth. He's in a carpenter's shop, working away. No one knows him, but for the last three years of his life, he becomes a public figure, and as such, he commands the attention of the whole countryside.

He is doing unusual things. He is the master of disease. The sick ones are brought to him.

He speaks the word, and they are made whole. He has command over the elements. He walks upon the water.

He tells the wind what to do, and the people in Judea and in the countryside of Galilee are watching this wonderful man with strange powers. He raises people from the dead, and that should be sufficient to realize he must be in a class entirely apart from the human family. Jesus Christ, a very, very wonderful man.

As he continues dispensing blessing on every hand, there is enmity, there is jealousy, and this good man is despised. Despised to the extent that it reaches the peak he must be killed. We don't want him around.

Oh, but look what he's done for you. He's healed your uncle. He's healed your grandfather.

That's all wonderful. We're glad he did it, but the bad that's in him, the disturbing of our old forms of religion, is to the extent we can't have him around. We want him dead.

Well, Jews, how are you going to do it? You don't have the right to kill anyone. We can stick together, and we can win the confidence of those who do have the authority and this thing must be carried out. But, when you come to the proper authorities, what are you going to tell them? You can't kill a man unless you have some accusation.

That's our problem. That's our problem. We have tried so hard to accuse him of this, or of this, or of this, if we could just find some good reason to get rid of him.

But, the reasons we have so far, we take to mention them to someone in authority. We might be embarrassed. But, our hatred has grown to the extent we must get rid of him.

What can you think of? Ah, here's a good one. He claims to be the son of God. Ah, isn't that terrible? Imagine the almighty God in heaven, the ruler of heaven and earth, and here a man on earth claims to be God.

I'm glad you thought of it. Who thought of it at first? Let's go. And, they go to Pilate and to other men in authority.

They bring the accusation. Even an irreligious man such as Pilate examines the case and says, I feel I've been fair. I've heard about this man.

I've examined him very carefully in an unbiased way. I'm sorry, I can't find any fault in this man. But, we've got to get rid of him.

And, the voices of the people are so strong and so severe that the man is eventually swayed and says, well, if that many of you are agreed that he'd be better out of the way, then, well, it's not my best judgment, but still, under the circumstances, I wouldn't like to stand alone and say you're all wrong and I'm right. You take the responsibility and go ahead. Go ahead.

What comes out when Jesus Christ is led to the cross? If we should ask the question of the people in your city, what do you think about the human family, the children of Adam's race? Are they a good lot of people, or are they a bad lot of people? How would you classify the whole human family? You'd get a lot of answers. But, really, we have to come to the Scriptures to find out what value God puts upon the human family. And, at the cross of Christ, if there is one thing displayed, it's the wickedness of the human heart.

Now, we'll miss the blessing if we say those people who were savages a way back yonder, who didn't know how to control themselves, it's too bad. But, we're not living in that age. You are inferring that if Jesus Christ was on the earth today and was teaching and performing miracles, he'd be accepted.

There is plenty of evidence in the Word of God that the human heart has not changed one bit since the day that in unison and chorus they cried, Away with him! We will not have this man to reign over us. This shocks me to think that my own heart is made of that kind of material, and I can't deny it, because the first time that I heard that Jesus Christ died for my sins, and it was the only way to be saved, I resented it. That's not for me.

You can have it if you want to. I intend to go to heaven on my own merits. I don't want charity.

I don't want to get up there and say, well, somebody brought me here. I'm going to be there, and when I get there, I'll be able to say, I did it. I behaved myself.

I followed God. I feared him. I served him.

That was my first reaction. I do not need Jesus Christ. If I am good, if I behave myself, if I try to follow the law of God as best I can, I have nothing to worry about, and this business of being saved by grace and through the work of Christ, that's all right for the jailbirds and the fellows that have gone down into sin, but I

don't need it.

My heart, your heart, is displayed when the best man, the man against whom they could find no accusation, is being nailed to the cross because every one of us joined in and saying, away with him, crucify him, crucify him. Shall we be proud of the human family? Adam's children, the whole human family, put together, responsible for crying and saying, regardless of how good he was, regardless of the deeds he performed, we don't want him. We don't want him.

Away with him. Now, that'll keep you from being proud of yourself. This is your heart at enmity with God.

Do you wonder when you read in the Bible that in a coming day God is going to balance the books and there will be a day of judgment? If I didn't know this, I would say, I wonder why God's going to punish fear, but let's think of the human family being responsible for the murder of his son without a reason. Just get rid of him. Do you think a just God ought to say, well, it's past and gone, I've forgotten it? He's a just God and he never will.

This poor world's got to face the books one of these days, and judgment that is well deserved will be poured out upon every person who has taken sides against Jesus Christ, or shall I say that better, to every person that has not seen the necessity of taking sides with Jesus Christ and receiving him as Lord and Savior. Don't put your hands up and say, I can't believe that God is going to punish the world. The world deserves it.

Those who will be under the wrath of God are going to have it because when Jesus Christ was crucified and the human race cried away with him, God heard it, God recorded it, and God said, I'm not going to pass judgment now, but I'm holding it in store. I haven't forgotten. They don't want my son? Who would they rather have? The second best man on earth? Who is he? Barabbas? A known murderer.

Can you imagine the wickedness of the human heart being to that extent that when two men are set up, a known murderer, a ruthless man, a man against whom you can find no fault at all, and the choice of the human family is, let's have the rascal. That's terrible, and that's exactly what happened in this day when Jesus Christ was on trial, or perhaps I should say when the human family was on trial before God. But if around the cross of Calvary the true value and the sinfulness of the human heart is displayed, there's something else displayed.

The love of God. I can understand why God should love his son who always bade him, who always brought delight to his heart. That shouldn't be hard to understand.

I could easily understand why God should love the unfallen angels who are his servants to do his bidding, who have never caused him a bit of grief or disappointment. But when God loves those whose hands are stained with the blood of his son, when God loves us while we are ungodly, when we deserve nothing, that's tremendous. And I read in my Bible that God is love, but I need something more than just those words.

God is love. How can I be sure that God loves? Go to the cross of Calvary and see the son of God who had the power to defend himself, who could call twelve legion of angels, who could put all of his enemies to flight by just speaking the word. He comes as a lamb before his shearers is dumb, he opens not his mouth, he voluntarily lays himself on the cross, and he hangs in the eastern sun for six hours, and dies.

For worthy ones, for good people, no. For worthless, hell-deserving sinners. I don't understand that.

I never shall, but I know it's true. The love of God, how could God ever demonstrate and prove that he loves us in any better way than in spite of all man's hatred to go through with all of his purposes? Will you allow me to just suppose that when Jesus Christ comes out of the garden of Gethsemane, and he faces the cross, the father says, Son, I've changed my mind. I have heard them cry away with him, give us Barabbas.

I'll answer their prayer. I'll answer their prayer. Son, come home.

Heaven's a place for you. You've been an outcast on earth. They have proved from the day of your birth right to the end they don't want you.

There's no reason why you should stay any longer. Come home. We'll give you a grand reception in heaven, and I'll send every sinner to hell where he belongs.

That would have been righteousness. He would have been absolutely just to do it, but the love of God is greater far than man's wickedness and man's sin. Think of the cross of Christ, or the cross of Calvary, where you have the hatred of man's heart displayed in its highest form, and at the same time, God turns it into a display of a wonderful love.

Why did Christ go to Calvary? Why did he die? In order that I, a poor unworthy sinner who deserved to go to hell, might not have to go there, could be forgiven, and the possessor of eternal life. There are three crosses erected on that day. The two on the outside are criminals.

There's no question about it. The trial has been held. They are condemned to die, and anyone says it's right.

These men deserve to die. Matthew and Mark simply tell us that there were two crucified at the same day, and leave it at that. Dr. Luke wants to give us a few details, for he has evidently watched a little longer, and with interest he has heard the conversation of the two companions of Christ in their suffering.

For a while, both of them are railing on Christ. They are saying, if you can do anything, do it now. We need you.

They are casting accusations of Jesus Christ. They are both exactly alike. Some would try to delve into the word and say, you know, I think that that one penitent thief must have had a little different background.

There must have been something there. I don't believe it. They could have been twins, as far as I'm concerned.

Twins, as far as background is concerned. Both guilty men, and deserve to die. It's nice that we have the record of one of them who changed his mind.

Everyone that's ever going to be in heaven will have to come to that point. It's a hard thing to do. Change your mind.

I had to do it. I mentioned a moment ago that when I first heard the simple plan of salvation, I resented it. I don't want to go to heaven on charity.

I want to earn it. I had to change my mind, and I'm glad I did. It would have taken me to hell.

Here is a man who first of all says, I'll join my buddy. I'll curse just like we've always done. But there's a certain point in his life, a certain moment while he's suffering, when he changes his mind.

What a wonderful moment. He came to himself. He analyzed his life, and he could say, there are no evidences that somehow, in a little while, they'll take me down, and I'll get a chance to revive.

That never happens. This is final. I don't know how long it'll take, but in a matter of hours, I'll be gone.

My whole life comes before me. What have I done since I've been born? What did my mother expect of me? What disappointment have I brought? I've been mean. I've been wicked.

It's really a mercy for society that I'll no longer be able to carry on my devilment. Why didn't I think of this before? Why didn't I realize? Why didn't I analyze my whole career? I'm finished. What can I do about the past? Oh, that I could live again.

No use hoping for that. Is there anything I could do? Here I am. My black life is behind me.

I am now entering into death. What lies beyond, who knows? But, if there's anything that I can do in this moment, I should do it. And, he turns to the Savior, and he speaks to the Savior.

There is evidence that he felt his need. And, before he passed out into eternity, here is a sinner who deserves to go to hell, who is going to miss hell just by the inch. Almost there, but he's not going.

The Savior who died in his place, who is hanging next to him, has spoken the words of assurance, answering him, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. We who are accustomed to a clear gospel message say, that doesn't save a man. Let's remember that the Lord Jesus could look into his heart.

What do those words mean to us? Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. It makes no difference. What the Lord saw in that man's heart was absolute faith in him.

I believe the rumors that have been out about this man, that he is the Savior of the world. A minority believes that, and I was with the crowd. There's no sense in continuing.

They could be wrong. I'll take my side with those who believe that he was sent from heaven, that he's God's Son, that he came to die for my sin, and I can't lose a thing if in these closing hours and in terrible pain, I will commit myself to him and receive him as my Lord and Savior. Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.

And what Jesus Christ saw in the heart of that penitent sinner meant salvation, and Jesus Christ was able to say, today. Today, you're going to enjoy the realms of bliss, paradise, and the dying thief is still there. This is a remarkable conversion, isn't it? Oh, I know there are people in the world today who hear the gospel, who say, I'm glad I found out how to be saved.

I remember a high school girl in Wisconsin some years ago who was somewhat interested in the gospel, but she said, I've never heard it that way, that it's through the death of Christ, and I gave her all the details, and then I said, would you like to trust him today? She said, no, I'm young and I'm having a good time, and really, I'm not interested in settling this now, but I do appreciate knowing how to be saved so that when I get to an emergency, I will know just what to do in that moment. Here is a girl who expressed what a lot of people wouldn't have the nerve to express, but they sink it in the heart. I want to know how to be saved.

And just when I feel myself slipping like the penitent thief, I'll grab it. You know what I told that girl in Wisconsin? If I understand my Bible correctly, you are in a very dangerous condition. The Bible indicates that a person who has intentions of being saved later will be suddenly cut off, and that without remedy.

And I believe that with all my heart, that the person who says, I know how to be saved, I don't want to be saved now, but just as I feel that something's going to come, this is it, I'll do it. I believe God in his wisdom is going to see to it that every person that plans for that is going to be cut down so fast that that moment will not be given. And I told that to the girl, I shall not be surprised that God cuts you off someday, whether now or 60 years from now.

But if this remains in your heart, an intention of, at the last minute, following the steps of the dying thief and cashing in his salvation in the last minute, if you count on it, you won't get it. I have reason to believe that this dying thief may have never heard the invitation before. And to those who haven't heard it, who haven't pushed it aside, there is salvation in the 11th hour, there is salvation at one minute of 12, but don't you count on it.

Because if you count on it, you won't get it.

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