

Horton Haven Labor Day Retreat-14 the Immensity of Our Redemption

by William MacDonald

The sermon emphasizes the significance of the cross of Calvary and the deity of Jesus Christ, highlighting the implications of his death for our redemption and forgiveness.

Duration: 35:41

Scripture: Acts 20:28, Philippians 2:5, Hebrews 1:3

Topics: "Redemption"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses four life-changing truths about Jesus and the cross. Firstly, Jesus is portrayed as the hub of history, the fountain of satisfaction, and the embodiment of reality. He is the virgin-born son of Mary, unique from the very beginning, born to die on the cross. Secondly, the speaker emphasizes the uniqueness of Jesus' death, both in terms of the person involved and the purpose for which he died. The death of Jesus is described as a grand and marvelous story of salvation that surpasses any human imagination. Lastly, the speaker highlights the transformative power of understanding the reality of Calvary. Believers who grasp the wonder of the cross become overwhelmed by the dimensions of their redemption and become compulsive worshipers, abandoning worldly ambitions and dedicating themselves to Christ and His service.

Transcript

Dear John and Mary Lou Phelan tonight, you know, it's wonderful to find people with convictions nowadays. Sometimes I think the only sure place to find convictions is in the dictionary. But they had convictions.

And they had convictions concerning New Testament principles. And for a year, they broke bread together, just the two of them, in their litany. And God honored that.

And Al Green and an obscure Bible teacher came down here in 1951 and they pitched a tent. And just about this time, just about this time of year, the Labor Day weekend, I think it was, the blessing started. The soul started getting saved.

And the assembly was planted in Nashville. And Horton Haven is really an outgrowth of that. Because two people, to the principle of his word, just want to say a word of tribute to John and Mary Lou tonight.

It's also great to be here with so many famous people. I haven't met you all yet, but I hope to do so. Turn in your Bibles, please, to Acts chapter 20 and verse 28.

Acts chapter 20 and verse 28. And when I first read this verse, you'll find little connection between the verse and what I'm going to be saying at first. You've heard about preachers who read a text and then depart from it forever.

Well, it's going to seem like that to you, but we'll come back to it. Acts 20 and verse 28. Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God, which he purchased with his own blood.

I know you're so used to that verse that it didn't even produce a rise in your soul, did it? I've known that verse all my life. Have we really entered into what that verse of Scripture is saying? It would blow our socks off. But how? We'll come to it.

Nothing in the history of the universe can compare with what happened at the cross of Calvary thousands of years ago. It was all compressed in just a few hours, and yet it was so awesome that as someone said, it towers over all the wrecks of time. It really does.

More books have been published about that day and what happened on it than any other day in history. Think of all the hymns that have been written. Think of all the poems that have been written.

Think of all the art that has had that as its subject. Think of all the sermons without numbers that have dwelt on that subject. It's commemorated still worldwide whenever Christians take the bread and the wine in fond and loving remembrance of the Savior.

And every time we see a cross, we're reminded of what happened on that day. We see a cross and we remember that on that original cross, the dearest and best for a world of lost sinners. The record of those hours is told in very simple, unemotional words, and yet the story never rose forward.

It was the day when the Lord Jesus died, when the Lord of life and glory died. His death was a unique death. It was unique as to the person involved.

It was unique as to the purpose for which he died. It was unique as to the persons for whom he died. And no one, no human being in his wildest imagination could have ever conceived a story so grand, so marvelous, so wonderful, so far-reaching in time and consequences.

Brilliant authors have written marvelous stories down through the years. They've documented unexpected and unlikely stories. I tell you, nothing can ever touch the saga.

So very wonderful. You know, when we come to grips with what really happened there on that hill outside the city of Jerusalem, we're faced with some tremendous issues. Tremendous issues.

There are conclusions to be drawn. There are decisions to be made. If I really face the reality of Calvary, my dear friends, it has to be everything.

That is not the type of Christianity you see around you in the world today. But I'm going to tell you, it's the type of Christianity that's assigned in the New Testament. When you really face Calvary, what happened there, there's no room for neutrality, for Christians to be keep it lukewarm about the person and work of the Lord Jesus as an insult to his majesty.

And it was not without reason that the Lord Jesus said, because you're neither hot nor cold, I will sue you. That's really the logic of Calvary. People for whom Christ died cannot deny his valid claims on their lives or succumb to a ho-hum Christianity.

That in itself is a contradiction in terms, isn't it? A ho-hum Christianity. Those words don't fit together. It's like saying you went out to Hawaii on business.

Those who face the reality of Calvary can no longer live for selfish pleasure. Our redemption demands total consecration. What do you think would happen if believers really came into the reality? If they grasped the wonder of the cross and realized more fully what was really happening there? I tell you, they would become overwhelmed by the dimensions of their redemption and they would become compulsive worshippers.

They would go around and talk about the Lord to anyone who would be willing to listen. Day after day. This is what would happen.

They would be unashamedly enthusiastic about the one who called them out of darkness into his marvelous light. Worldly ambitions would perish as they gave themselves without reserve to Christ and to his... I said to a young man, a friend of mine out there in the West Coast recently, Jeff, if people really believed the truth of what happened at Calvary, what would happen? He said to me, the world would be evangelized. An un-evangelized world is testimony to the fact that the church has lost.

The church has lost. The world takes it all rather matter of factly, as you know. The death of the Lord Jesus on the cross at Calvary doesn't impact us the way it should.

In fact, we may be so conceited that we might think it was a jolly good thing for him to do for us anyway. But maybe it was the proper thing, after all, for him to do it. Such vain conceit.

But you know, every once in a while, a shaft of light does break through the darkness on some man or woman, some young man or woman, where a believer stands before the cross and prays, Oh, make me understand it. Help me to take it in. What it meant to thee, the Holy One, to bear away my sin.

And God hears that prayer in heaven, and he looks down on that dear person. And that person's life is never the same again. Never the same again.

He goes forth, and people think he's lost his mind. He has, but he's found the mind of Christ. They think he's beside himself.

But he is. He's for God. They think he's out of step, but they don't realize he's marching to the drumbeat of a different drum.

As the significance of what happened at Calvary dawns upon him, he stands there before the cross, and he says, I've seen the vision. And for self I cannot live. Life is worse than this.

People like that can never be satisfied again with a bland, Christian life. They determine that they will never lower themselves again to the chill of their environment. Which, incidentally, friends, is a very easy thing to do.

To lower yourself to the chill of your environment. They realize that the Christianity that they see around them today is not the Christianity of the Bible. A new drive takes hold of them, and it consumes their

waking.

They don't want anything to come between their souls and total commitment to Christ. What is it that has made these people so different? Well, I'd like to suggest to you four things. Four things.

First of all, they've seen who Jesus really is. Secondly, they've seen what he did for them. Thirdly, they've had a tremendous revelation of who we are, the ones for whom the Savior died.

And finally, they think of the tremendous blessings that have flowed to us from the cross of Calvary. We want to consider these life-changing truths this evening. Who the Lord Jesus is, what he did, the people for whom he did it, and the blessings that have flowed to us as a result of that wonderful work.

Who the Lord Jesus is. Leave him out, and I tell you there's no meaning to life at all. Life is a sick joke without Jesus.

He's the hub of history, the fountain of satisfaction, and he's the embodiment of reality, the central fact of life. Who is he? He's unique. The virgin-born son of Mary, he was unique from the very outset.

Others are born to live. He was born to die. Usually when a baby is born into the world, it's great joy.

When he was born into the world, the king was troubled, and all the people of Jerusalem were troubled, too. Throughout his life, people were either for him or against him. There was no middle ground.

He's unique, but he's more than that. He's a true man. He's a true man.

He was human. He grew hungry, thirsty, and weary. To his contemporaries, he seemed quite normal in physical appearance.

He was one of us. In his twenties, he was a carpenter in Nazareth. In his thirties, the early thirties, he was an itinerant teacher going around preaching, teaching, and healing.

And no one had any reason to doubt his true humanity. But he was more than that. He was a sinless man.

He was a sinless man. There was something that distinguished his humanity from all others. That is, that it was sinless.

Just think of it. There was once a man who walked the streets of this earth who was absolutely free from sin. Hard to take in.

Never an evil thought. Never a bad motive or a sinful act in that wonderful life. Tempted from without, he was never tempted from within.

It was not possible for him to sin. He said, I always do those things that please my father. Well, that precluded sin, didn't it? He always did those things that pleased his father that left no room for sin.

I'm intrigued by the fact that even people who didn't particularly claim to be his friends had to acknowledge that he was without sin. Pilate said, I can't find any fault in him. Pilate's wife said, have thou nothing to do with this just person.

Herod said, I don't see that there's anything worthy of death in him. The dying thief said, this man has done nothing amiss. And Judas himself confessed that he had betrayed an innocent Lord.

Yes. The Lord Jesus is unique. He's truly human, and he's sinlessly human.

But that's not all. We never can comprehend a fraction of the magnitude of the meaning of Calvary until we remember Jesus Christ. Yes, that one hang in the middle cross, dear friends, is God incarnate.

God in a body. But Isaiah identified him as the mighty God. And God the Father addressed his son as God.

Thy son, O God, is forever and ever. John says the word became flesh and dwelt among us. The word was thought with God, and the word became flesh and dwelt among us.

That could only refer to the Lord Jesus. And the Lord Jesus himself insisted that everyone should honor him as they honor the Father, which means that he's God. He's equal with God in every respect.

Over 100 scriptures leave no room for argument. Jesus Christ is God. In him dwelt all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.

You know, John Wesley really caught the wonder of the incarnation when he wrote, Our God contracted to the span, incomprehensibly made known. What's a span? It's between your thumb and your little finger there. Our God contracted to a span, incomprehensibly made known.

And William Billings, who was a tanner and a musical amateur by trade, he wrote, Come see your God extended in the straw. Another poet now unknown said, Lo, within a manger lies, he who built the stars. And yet another anonymous author penned these words, Lo, cold on the cradle the dewdrops are falling, Lo, lies his head with the beasts of the stall.

Angels adore him in slumber recalling. Maker and monarch is the Savior of all. I like that British hymn writer who wrote, Down from his glory, ever living story, My God and Savior came.

And Jesus, my God and Savior came. Dear friends, the young Jew of Nazareth was the ancient of days. It was God the Son who wore that carpenter's apron amid all the sawdust of that shop in Nazareth.

It was God the Son who got down that day with his disciples and washed their feet. I have a way of asking questions. I asked an early young friend recently, How would you like it if the Lord Jesus, God the Son, got down and washed your feet? He said, I wouldn't like it.

What he meant was, it should be the other way around. He said, I wouldn't like it. I mean, just exactly what he meant.

It was the Son of God who created optic nerves for that man in John chapter 9 who was blind from birth. No one but God could stand up in that boat on the Sea of Galilee and say, He's still and the wind is still. Only God could raise a Lazarus after he had been dead and in the tomb before.

I don't think we can comprehend the meaning of Calvary until we see that the one who hung there, the one who stretches out to heaven, lays the foundations of the earth and forms the spirit of man within. We tend to make our God in our own image and in our likeness. God said that to his people in the Old Testament.

You thought that I was altogether as you are. We tend to make him in our own image and after our own likeness. But he's more than that.

That's who he is. Think of what he did for us. And I want to tell you, dear friends, if we stop to think tonight of what he really did for us, we'll be just crushed with sensory overload.

The death of God incarnate on the cross of Calvary is enough to stagger the imagination. We have been died for. If we had just been died for by another person, that would be the cause for endless gratitude, wouldn't it? Dear friends, you'll be awed.

Be patient. The one who gave himself for us on the cross of Calvary is the second person of the Trinity. It's surprising that we aren't more astonished.

Does the Bible really say that God incarnate died for us? That's why I read Acts 20. You'll want to look at it again, just for a minute. We're back to our verse we started with.

Acts 20, 28. Does therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers to shepherd the church of God which he purchased with his own blood? The antecedent of he... Now, I know that Garvey, when he translated the Scriptures, he changed it slightly. He said, which he purchased with the blood of his own.

He just said, peace, peace. But all the other versions of the Bible translate it just this way. God, which he, God, purchased with his own blood.

You know, I believe that verse when you think of something like that. You say, well, is that the only verse in the Bible? No, it's amazing. It's amazing when you look at other Scriptures.

Colossians chapter 1. Colossians chapter 1. We're not going to read the chapter, but just let me refer to it briefly. The Spirit dwells in this chapter at considerable length on the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ. First of all, he's the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.

Verse 15. He's the creator of all things. Verse 16.

He's the one who is before all things and by whom all things consist. Verse 17. Yet, dear friends, in that same context, after giving the glowing description of the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ, verse 14, in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness.

In whom? Whom? And then if you go to Hebrews chapter 1 and verse 3. Hebrews chapter 1 and verse 3. This is really startling, friends. We're so familiar with these verses that we realize what they're saying. Verse 3. Who being the brightness of his glory and the express image of his person and upholding all things by the word of his power.

Dear friends, that just tells one thing. Isn't it? Isn't that talking about the deity of the Lord Jesus? Who being the brightness of his glory, the express image of his person. I don't mean he was like God.

I mean he was God. Upholding all things by the word of his power. This is the next part of it.

When he had by himself purged our sins. Who? The brightness of his glory. The express image of his person.

The upholder of all things by the word of his power. When he had by himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the majesty. I say that.

And of course you have it again in Philippians. It's marvelous how the scriptures open up on this subject when you take a second look at them. Philippians chapter 2. Philippians chapter 2 verse 5. Let this mind be in you which is also in Christ Jesus.

Notice. Who being in the form of God. What does that mean? He was God.

What does that mean? That's a statement of the absolute deity of the Lord Jesus Christ. Thought it not robbery to be equal with God. He was equal with God.

And in that same context, after giving this description of the total deity of the Lord Jesus Christ, Paul writes in verse 8. Being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death. In some religions, men and women die for their God. But I never heard of another religion.

I don't think we ever really come to grips with salvation. Until we stand before the cross, and gaze on the Lord Jesus Christ there, and realize that he's God incarnate. Of course, this raises questions.

I know they're in your mind already. You say, well, God is spirit. And spirit doesn't have flesh and blood.

And we read that God purchased the church with his blood. Spirit doesn't have flesh and blood. No, but the incarnation solved that problem.

Where God came down and veiled his Godhead in a body of flesh. Aside, he threw his most divine array and veiled his Godhead in a garb of flesh. And in that garb, this is wonderful.

But somebody will say to me, but Fr. MacDonald, God is incarnate. But in the incarnation, the Lord Jesus made himself subject to death.

That's why he took on a human body, so that as man, he might die for you and me. Jesus was made a little lower than the angels for the sufferings of death. He, by the grace of God, might taste death for every human.

The Lord Jesus is not God minus something. He's God plus something. Is that something? Isaac Watts, I love that man's writings, he realized that the one who died for him was none other than Christ, his God.

He said, Forbid it, Lord, that I should both save in the death of Christ mine all the vain things that charm you most, I sacrifice to you. A child like that, Charles Wesley, he faced this fact, this problem. God is immortal.

How can one who's immortal become subject to death? And he said, This is real. The immortal dies. Who can explore his strange design? In vain, the firstborn seraph died from the death of love.

But mystery didn't deter Charles Wesley, because he went on to say, Dear friend, you sing it all the time, Amazing Grace. How can it be that thou, my God, And you know, we can sing it and not gasp. We can sing it and not gasp.

But there's another question arising. If Jesus is God, and God incarnate died for us, who ran the universe when his body was three days and three nights in the grave? Only Jesus' body went to the grave. He didn't go to the grave.

The moment the Lord Jesus died, he's in paradise. Today thou shalt be with me in paradise. At one moment, he's running all things here on earth.

As a man, as a God-man here on earth. He's running them all in heaven, and there's no interlude. It really isn't a problem.

It really isn't a problem. There was no interval during which he was not in complete control. You know, the amazing fact that the Supreme Being gave himself for us is nothing less than astounding.

And I want to tell you that the most brilliant efforts to describe it, including my efforts tonight, are no better than this stuff. That's how marvelous it really is. It strains the brain to realize that what happened at Calvary was not homicide.

That's where one man kills another man. It was not genocide. That's where men try to wipe out an ethnic, cultural, national group.

Dear friends, the death of the Lord Jesus on the cross of Calvary was theocide, the murder. You have taken, Peter says, and by cruel hands have crucified and slain. Spurgeon said, who would have thought of the just ruler dying for the unjust rebel? There's no teaching, this is no teaching of human mythology that Son of God loved me and gave himself for me, and yet he said we can say that and neither gasp or weep.

That we can say it and neither gasp or weep. We reel off similar verses with little or no emotion. We preach this truth so blandly and matterly, or factly, that it doesn't bring our listeners to their knees.

God help us. The shadow of Calvary. We're guilty of what someone called the curse of a dry-eyed Christianity.

Constantly we need to come back to the awesome reality that the one who died on the cross of Calvary is Jesus, God, incarnate. I think F.W. Pitt said it well when he wrote those memorable lines. The nature of the universe as man for man was made a curse.

The claims of law that he had made unto the uttermost he paid. His holy fingers made the bow which grew the thorns that crowned his brow. The nails that pierced his hands were mined in secret places.

He made the forest whence there sprung the tree on which his body hung. He died upon the cross of wood that made the hill. The sky that darkened o'er his head by him above the earth was the sun that hid from him its face by his decree was poised.

The spear that spilled his precious blood was tempered in the fires of God. The grave in which his form was laid was hewn in rocks his hands had made. The throne on which he now appears was his from everlasting years.

And a new glory crowned his brow in every meeting. I want to tell you, dear friends, the marvel of the death of the one who threw the farthest galaxy into space has just just strained the brain, that's all I can say. But it's true.

Just the same. It's true. Just the same.

But you know, that isn't the whole story. The third thing is that people are fully died. And I think we'll just wait till tomorrow morning and think about that.

But tonight, before you go to bed, just think about this. Think of the marvel of the death of the Christ that died upon the cross of Galilee. Think of men taking him and putting him to death and all the time they're doing it, their very lives depended on him for every minute that they were doing it.

Their lives were depended upon him. The breath that they took were depended upon him. And it was all for you.

Wonderful. Different. I hope that as a result of our little conference, if nothing else happens, that it will go away with a deeper appreciation of what happened to Calvin.

We kind of think, well, he died as a man, you know. We kind of soften the blow. We can't divide the person.

We can't say, well, it was just his man he died. He's the God man. You can't separate those parts.

It was Jesus, God incarnate, who died on Calvin. Father, forgive us for so often reading the scriptures and reciting verses and their wonder doesn't explode on us. We say so glibly, the Son of God loved me and gave himself to me.

And we really don't realize what we're saying. We really don't realize what we're saying. Lord, we would pray that prayer tonight.

Oh, make me understand it. Help me to take it in. What it meant to thee, the Holy One, to bear away our sin.

Help us to remember who you are. Not that you're just someone like ourselves, but you're the one to whom we owe every breath. Write these truths deeply upon our hearts and pray in the Savior's name.

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