

“Jesus: the Only Way to God”
(Mark 15:16-47)

I. Introduction.

A. Orientation.

Last time, we saw

Pilate wanting to release Jesus –

He didn’t want to condemn an innocent man.

But the people wanted Him to die –

The same people that heralded Him

As the King of Israel, their Messiah,

Just a *few days* earlier.

Remember, this was God’s plan –

Jesus *had to die*.

That’s why the Father sent Him into the world –

To live a perfect life for those who would accept Him,

To die an atoning death for those who would receive Him.

Jesus is the only Savior God has provided mankind,

But to save us, He had to give His life.

We’ve been considering

That Jesus took your place in judgment –

If you are trusting Him this morning.

And the payment He made was a complete payment

That took care not only of your guilt,

But also any punishment

You might owe after this life.

If you commit a crime,

You're liable to punishment in this world.

But if that punishment isn't carried out,

If you die without being held accountable –

Such as what happened

With the woman caught in adultery (John 8:11) –

God isn't going to punish you after you die –

He isn't going to send you to purgatory

To make up the difference!

Jesus made a complete payment –

He fully satisfied any and all punishment

That was due to you

In God's court of justice –

If you have trusted Him.

That's why remember,

He went through all these sufferings

We see in Mark's account of His life.

B. Preview.

We see now that after Jesus was condemned by Pilate,

He was led away to be scourged.

He was whipped until raw and bloodied (v. 15).

He was then taken into the Praetorium (v. 16) –

The place of Roman justice –

And dressed up like a king –

They put a purple robe on Him,

Planted a crown of thorns on His head,

And handed Him a reed for a scepter (v. 17) –

Then they mocked Him,

Beat Him on the head with the reed,

And spit on in His face (v. 19),

While they proclaimed, “Hail, King of the Jews!” (v. 18).

After they finished abusing and humiliating Him,

They put His own clothes back on

And led Him away to crucifixion (v. 20).

Jesus was so weakened by the pain and loss of blood

That they compelled a man who was passing by –

Simon of Cyrene – to carry His cross (v. 21).

They may have seen in him a sympathetic face,

Perhaps because he was already a believer,

Or this may have been

What the Lord used to bring him to faith –

The suffering of this innocent man,
This Messiah of Israel,
This King of the Jews.

Then they brought Him to Golgotha
Where after He refused wine mixed with myrrh –
That would have lessened His pain –
They crucified Him (vv. 22-24).

It's worth noting
That His friends might have been the ones
Who tried to administer this wine.
Its purpose was to make His suffering more bearable.
But Jesus didn't take it –
Perhaps to fulfill what He had said –
That He wouldn't drink wine again
Until He drank it new
With them in the kingdom of God –
Or perhaps He didn't
Because to atone for our sins
In drinking the cup of His Father's wrath,
He had to experience it fully.

Let's not forget

What the Savior suffered

In order to reconcile us to God.

But now, let's focus two things

That stand out about these sufferings:

First, the several prophecies Jesus fulfilled in His crucifixion and death that prove He is who He claims to be: the only way to God.

And second, why He must be the only way that you or I or anyone else can be reconciled to God.

II. Sermon.

A. Mark draws our attention

To several prophecies Jesus fulfilled,

Which, humanly speaking

Were entirely outside of His control

To prove that He is the Messiah:

The only Savior God promised to give mankind.

After they crucified Him,

The soldiers divided His garments among them –

Their right of spoils in this process –

But since His tunic was of one piece

They decided to cast lots for it (John 19:23),

Fulfilling Psalm 22:18, “They divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots” (Mark 15:24).

Jesus was crucified

Between two thieves,

Fulfilling Isaiah 53:12, “And He was numbered with the transgressors” (vv. 27-28).

The Jews walking by the cross mocked Him:

“If You can destroy the Temple

And rebuild it in three days

Coming down from the cross should be easy” (v. 30).

“If You’re so good at saving others

Save Yourself!” (v. 31).

“If You would just come down from the cross,

We would believe You!”

The thieves mocked Him as well (v. 32).

All of this was to fulfill Psalm 22:7-8, “All who see me sneer at me; they separate with the lip, they wag the head, saying, ‘Commit *yourself* to the LORD; let Him deliver him; let Him rescue him, because He delights in him.’”

After three hours,

The sky grew dark for three more hours (v. 25, 33).

Then at the ninth hour –

At the time of the daily sacrifice,

Jesus cried out with a loud voice,

“My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” (v. 34).

Those standing by thought He was calling for Elijah (v. 35).

And so they filled a sponge with vinegar,

Gave Him a drink,

And then waited to see if Elijah

Would come to rescue Him (v. 36).

That was the last thing

That needed to be fulfilled before He died.

We read in Psalm 69:21, “They also gave me gall for my food and for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.”

After receiving the vinegar,

Jesus said, “It is finished” (John 19:30).

“Father, into your hands I commit My spirit” (Luke 23:46).

And when He had said this,

He breathed His last and died (Mark 15:37).

At that very moment,

The veil separating the Holy Place

From the Holy of Holies

Was torn in two, from top to bottom (v. 38).

The centurion, who had charge of the crucifixion,

When he heard what Jesus said

And saw how He died,

Said, “Truly this man was the Son of God!” (v. 39).

The women who followed Him,

Who had taken care both of Him and His disciples

Were also watching from a distance (vv. 40-41).

Jesus died at 3:00 PM in the afternoon,
But they didn't take His body down until evening –
They might have left it there longer,
If the next day hadn't been the Sabbath (v. 42).
Joseph of Arimathea,
Who secretly had believed in Him,
Went to Pilate and asked for His body (v. 43).
Pilate was surprised
That He was dead already.
But having confirmed this with the centurion
He gave the body to Joseph (vv. 44-45),
Who took Him down,
Wrapped Him in a linen cloth,
And laid Him in his own tomb (v. 46; cf. Matt. 27:60).
This too was to fulfill what Isaiah wrote,
“His grave was assigned with wicked men, yet He was with a rich man in His death,
because He had done no violence, nor was there any deceit in His mouth” (Isa.
53:9).
Because the Sabbath had now come,
Joseph had a stone rolled over the entrance
And went away (v. 46),
While two of the women looked on (v. 47).

All these prophecies
That were fulfilled in this event –
Humanly speaking, outside of Jesus' control –
Are all powerful testimonies
That Jesus is in fact who He claims to be –
He is the Son of God,
He is the Messiah,
He is the only One spoken of in Scripture
That could save us from our sin.
The only One God has provided.
The only way to God.
Jesus said, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life;
No one comes to the Father but through Me" (John 14:6).

B. Second, let's consider

Why He must be the only way
That you or I or anyone else can be reconciled to God:
We see this primarily through His sufferings.
Why would the Father
Put His Son through all this –
Why would He make Him
Drink this cup –
If there was any other way?

His sufferings began earlier –

In a very real sense,

When He entered into this world:

When the eternal Son of God

Joined Himself to our nature;

When He was born of the Virgin

And He grew up among,

And ministered to, sinful men.

We can only imagine what it would be like

To have such a love for what is right

Only to live around those who love what is wrong!

Having the Spirit of God in our hearts,

We do have some idea.

His sufferings intensified throughout His ministry

Through increasing opposition.

But it began to reach its climax

When He prayed in the Garden –

When He looked into the fiery furnace of His Father's wrath –

That wrath meant for us –

And began to sweat great drops of blood (Luke 22:44).

After He finished His prayer

And knew it was His Father's will

That He drink that cup,
His sufferings increased:
He was betrayed, arrested,
Put on trial, condemned,
Rejected by His own people,
Scourged, mocked, abused,
And then crucified.

But it wasn't until He was nailed to the cross
That we see the depth of His sufferings –
Why when He looked ahead to this
He sweat blood.

We don't want to belittle
Just how horrible crucifixion is –
It's one of the most excruciating ways a person could die!
But if that's all we believe He endured,
We're missing the greatest part –
His greatest sacrifice.

What Jesus endured
He endured for all those who would trust Him.
He endured this for you
If you're trusting Him this morning.

This means at some point –
Most likely when He was on the cross –
The Father took our sins –
And those of all His people,
Any one of which
Was serious enough to condemn
Our soul to hell forever –
And laid them on His Son.

Certainly, there is a sense in which
He bore our sins throughout His sufferings.
But there is one point in particular
Where it appears our sins were placed on Him
And the Father poured His wrath on His Son:
After the sky grew dark,
At the ninth hour –
When the daily sacrifice was being offered –
When Jesus cried out, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?”

At this point
Jesus became guilty –
Not of any sin of His own,
Because He was blameless –
But of ours –

Our guilt separated

Jesus from His Father –

Not the eternal Son of God:

There was no rift in the Godhead;

But the man Christ Jesus

From His heavenly Father.

It was then He was alienated from His Father

And felt His Father's wrath against Him

For our sins.

Jesus literally suffered hell on the cross for us.

When did this end?

It ended when the Son of God

Laid down His life on the cross.

Jesus said, "No one has taken it from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative"
(John 10:18).

When Jesus died, it was over.

Just before He died, He said, "It is finished."

The Scriptures have been fulfilled.

All that is left to pay is the final price: death.

And so He said, "Father, into your hands, I commit My spirit."

And with that He breathed His last,

Bowed His head, and died.

At the time of the daily sacrifice
When the priests would have been busy
In the Temple atoning for the sins of the people,
Jesus sacrificed Himself
To atone for our sins
And for those of all who would trust Him.

It must have come as a great surprise to those priests
When the veil that shielded them
From the presence of God in the Holy of Holies
Was suddenly torn in two.
They would have run for their lives,
Since it's likely that even looking into the Holy of Holies
Would have meant certain death.

God tore this veil
From the top to the bottom
For at least three reasons:

1. That the Old Covenant was over:

You could no longer approach God in this way –
Which was the only way, prior to Jesus sacrifice.

2. That God's judgment was about to come against the Jews

For the guilt of all the righteous blood shed on earth (Matt. 23:35).

Including our Lord's!

This was the prelude to the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD.

3. But it also meant

That there was a new way to approach God

Through a better sacrifice

One that needed to be made only once –

The blood of Jesus (Heb. 7:27; 10:10).

Since He laid His life

This is the only way

That you or I or anyone else can approach God.

This follows from the fact

That the death of Christ

Is the fulfillment of everything

The Lord promised in Scripture

Regarding the only way

He ever promised to save –

Remember, even the animal sacrifices

Pointed to Christ

And had their efficacy in Him.

But it also follows from His sufferings.

Would the Father have put His Son

Through such extreme agony

If He was intending
To let you come to Him in any other way?

How cruel and dishonoring
This would be to His Son
If He allowed other ways!
Why not do that in the first place
And spare His Son the humiliation and agony!

Why also would the Lord command us
To take this Gospel –
The message of what He has done
Through His Son –
Into the world
To disciple all the nations (Matt. 28:18-20),
If the nations could come to Him
Another way?

It's because this is the only way.
If you would be reconciled to God,
If you would receive forgiveness
And the only righteousness
God can accept,
You must come through Jesus Christ.

You must turn from your sins,
You must trust what Jesus did –
His perfect obedience,
His suffering and death –
Alone to make you right with God,
And you must follow Him
The rest of your life
In loving and humble obedience.
This is the only way.

If you have not trusted Jesus
Then turn from your sins and trust Him now!
He will forgive you.
He will receive you.
He will give you eternal life.

If you have trusted Him,
Then remember, He saved you for a reason.
Certainly, it's because He loved you.
But it was also because He loves others
And wants them to be saved.

He wants you to do what you can
To bring His lost sheep home

Through this Gospel,
Through your witness and prayers.

Let this reminder of His sacrifice for you
Encourage you to sacrifice yourself for Him.
The Lord wants you to give Him your whole life –
Not just a part –
To serve Him in His kingdom:
To point to Him as the only way.
May the Lord grant us all the grace to do so. Amen.

<http://www.graceopcmodesto.org>