

John 19.16-30 Sermon / COB / 05.05.15

Introduction

- † **[Slide 1: Jose]** A March 31st story in *The New York Post* reports: **A retired New York City police detective vacationing in Puerto Rico saved a young boy from drowning... but then tragically was swept out to sea as his horrified wife and kids looked on. The body of José Rosario, 44, washed ashore Monday, two days after his heroic effort, not far from where he'd rescued another child three years earlier. His grieving sister said, "He really died a hero. He didn't think twice about it. Once a cop, always a cop." His final act occurred after he spotted a twelve-year-old boy struggling to stay afloat in the choppy waters. His stepdaughter said, "He got the little boy onto a rock that he could hold onto, and the boy was then telling him 'Grab onto me!' but my stepfather didn't want to grab onto him, fearing the boy would lose his grip. That's when another wave hit and my stepfather got pulled out farther." Rosario's wife and two children watched him drift off.**
- Think about his wife and children watching their beloved husband and father drifting out to sea, having given his life to save a young boy. What mixture of thoughts and feelings would you be experiencing if that were you?
 - Now consider Officer Rosario, making that decision, not just this day but every day of his twenty year career as a police officer, putting his life on the line to protect others, being willing to die to save someone else. If you were there at the dangerous waters – or at the scene of a burning building or you saw a child about to get hit by a truck or terrorists were going to execute one hostage – would you be willing and able to sacrifice yourself for someone you didn't even know?
 - I always want to think I would be the hero. But in my fantasies, I am know I will come through the ordeal alive; and in my nightmares, I run away from the danger. Officer Rosario never hesitated to give up his life for someone. Neither did Jesus when it came time to die for you. Let's pray and then we will see what Jesus wants for us today.

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- † **[Slide 2: 19.16-18]** The author of our gospel, John, gets a little vague with his pronouns, so I will define some of his terms as we go. We begin today in John 19.16; I will be reading from the ESV.

John 19.16-18 ESV: So he [the Roman governor, Pilate] delivered him [Jesus] over to them to be crucified [that is, to satisfy the Jewish religious leaders, Pilate sentenced Jesus to die]. So they [soldiers] took Jesus, and he went out, bearing his own cross, to the place called The Place of a Skull, which in Aramaic is called Golgotha [Γολγοθᾶ]. There they crucified him, and with him two others, one on either side, and Jesus between them.

- † John did not invest much space in talking about the walk to the cross, but we know from the other gospels that Jesus was brutally whipped and beaten before setting out. In fact, he set out carrying his cross, but fell outside the city gate, so the soldiers forced a man who was just arriving at the city to carry the cross for Jesus.
- In most movies and artwork, Jesus carries the entire cross, hooked over one shoulder; that's very picturesque, but not how it was done: the Romans would leave the vertical beams fixed in the rock on the hilltop, and the accused would carry his own crossbeam out of the city and up the hill. I put more about the process leading up to crucifixion in the devotions for this week.

† There are two locations where people commemorate the crucifixion site. In the photo here, you see a place today called Gordon's Calvary. It certainly looks like a skull, and there is a nearby Garden Tomb area which could have been close to where Jesus was buried. It is a peaceful and beautiful place, a place where you can hear good Protestant teaching, where you would like the tomb to be.

- **[Slide 3: Holy Sepulchre]** Nevertheless, scholars believe the correct site is where currently stands the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, in what is now a very urban area. A sepulchre is a tomb cut from the rock, and there is evidence of first century rock tombs in this area.
- If this is the correct site, it is hard to perceive today, because the Romans built a pagan temple on the site and later carved out a good portion of the hill make a Christian shrine, the Moslems destroyed much of what was left of the site down to the bedrock during the crusades, and multiple churches have carried out reconstruction in the centuries since, which has left a gaudy site tailored to superstitious ritual and tourism, rather than prayerful reflection.
- Today, the Greek Orthodox, Armenian Orthodox and Roman Catholic churches control most of the site, though the Egyptian Coptic Orthodox, Ethiopian Orthodox, and Syrian Orthodox churches also possess certain rights and control small portions of the complex structure.
- This supposedly is the crucifixion spot. It now is inside a church, up the stairs, encased in this glass box. They march you by it fairly quickly. I don't know if it is the spot of the cross or even if it was ever actually the top of the hill. The tradition of the site location goes back to the local legends circulating in the fourth century, but as for the rock itself, as I said, the site has been destroyed and reconstructed multiple times. Maybe...
- **[Slide 4: ladder]** I probably should show you a series of pictures of this church, so you could see what a mess even human worship can be. But here is one. When you approach the church out of the Crusades era alleys of what is now called "The Old City," you see a ladder on a second story ledge. That ladder has been there for over 150 years, because the churches who control the site cannot agree even on something as simple as taking it down.

† Anyway, the point for us is that Jesus now is up on the cross, crucified, but still alive.

[Slide 5: 19.19-22] John 19.19-22: Pilate also wrote an inscription and put it on the cross. 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, in Latin, and in Greek. So the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate, "Do not write, 'The King of the Jews,' but rather, 'This man said, I am King of the Jews.'" Pilate answered, "What I have written I have written."

† The Romans often put up an inscription stating the crime that led to death; this was part of the deterrent to others. Obviously, Pilate, as governor, did not write and post the inscription himself, but these verbs are causative in nature: he ordered someone to do it, and so it was done.

- Pilate believed Jesus was innocent; he felt forced to crucify Jesus because of the political pressure the Jewish religious leaders could bring if they complained to the emperor. So Pilate continued to mock them: they accused Jesus of wanting to be king, so Pilate kept referring to Jesus as *their* king.

† **[Slide 6: three languages]** If you travel in Israel today, you will see most public signs written in Hebrew, Arabic, and English, to accommodate the languages prevalent in that land since the Jews took control from the British in the 1940s.

- In Jesus' day, there also were three languages used: the local language of Aramaic, left over from the Persian Empire and similar to Hebrew; the business language of Greek, left over from the Greek Empire; and the legal language of the Romans, Latin.
- It is significant that all three languages were used on the inscription placed on the cross. Remember, this was the time of Passover and the Festival of Unleavened Bread, when Jews from all across the empire would come to Jerusalem for worship at the temple. With the sign in all three languages, all of these people could read it and see who Jesus was, that he really was crucified, and that he was crucified for his claim to be God's Messiah-king.
- When those Jews returned home, and their loved ones asked for stories about their trip to Jerusalem, don't you think they would include the excitement and scandal of a supposed Messiah-king being crucified right on Passover?! Of course they would. And thus knowledge of Jesus spread throughout the empire, preparing the way for when the apostles would go out and spread the gospel, the good news about who Jesus is and what he accomplished in his crucifixion and resurrection.
- Again we see the detail and thoroughness of God's plans! We have an almighty God! He can manipulate centuries of history just to bring us to one event. This should comfort us when we are in times of trouble. Should we doubt that God could help us with our troubles? No, our God can do anything! When I have felt betrayed, when I have lost my job, faced mounting bills, been essentially homeless, when I have struggled in my marriage or my pastorate, when I was in the pit of the hole I had dug for myself as a young man, I clung to these truths, that Jesus died for me, and that God could help me through anything.

[Slide 7: 19.23-24a] John 19.23-24a: 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, so they said to one another, "Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it to see whose it shall be." This was to fulfill the Scripture which says, "They divided my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots."

- † It was custom for Roman soldiers to divide up the belongings of those they crucified. Jesus likely had an outer robe, belt, sandals, and head covering, and it appears each soldier took one of these.
 - That left his tunic, which was a long shirt worn close to the body. Apparently Jesus had a really nice tunic, which the soldiers had removed before whipping him. The soldiers gambled for it. Literally, the text says they cast lots, which was something like our modern rolling of dice. Probably they were using marked pebbles or broken pieces of pottery.
 - John says this fulfilled the prophecy in Psalm 22.18. This was a psalm King David wrote about himself, but – as we have said before – because the Messiah was to be a descendent of David and God's ultimate chosen king in the line of David, God put many prophecies about the Messiah in the life and writings of David.
 - Jesus himself quoted from this psalm while on the cross, accepting the symbolism for his own situation. The devotions for this week reflect on that, if you are interested.

[Slide 8: 19.25-27] John 19.24b-27: So the soldiers [indeed] did these things, but standing by the cross of Jesus were 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.

- † That seems kind of strange, doesn’t it? In the month that followed the resurrection, all of Jesus’ brothers would come to faith, but at this point, none of them believed in him. Perhaps that is why Jesus entrusted the care of his mother to the apostle John for this tumultuous time immediately after the crucifixion.
- † In contrast to the four soldiers who crucified Jesus and then stole his clothes, John mentions four women who stood by in devotion to Jesus as he died. If you are interested in knowing more about these women, and how they might point to a family relationship between Jesus and the author of this gospel, take a look in the devotions this week.
 - For now, let’s consider just for a moment how hard this must have been for Jesus’ mother. Even if she understood all along that this was his purpose in life, even she understood all along who he really was as the Son of God and Messiah-savior, in her heart he still was her son. Imagine watching your son suffer this much and then watching him be executed!

[Slide 9: 19.28-30] John 19.28-30: After this, Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said (to fulfill the Scripture), “I thirst.” A jar full of sour wine stood there, so they put a sponge full of the sour wine on a hyssop branch and held it to his mouth. When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, “It is finished,” and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

- † Again, John points to a fulfillment of Old Testament Jewish prophecy in the life of Jesus. Throughout his gospel, John has been careful to show us how the Old Testament reveals details about the coming Messiah-savior, and how Jesus proved to be this person as he either fulfilled these prophecies or gave miraculous signs of future fulfillment.
 - Here, John probably has in mind another verse from Psalm 22, which we mentioned earlier. The point is that everything is happening as God predicted and directed. Human free will and sinful choices by others have taken Jesus to the cross, but all of that was according to God the Father’s eternal plan for Jesus to die on the cross to pay the penalty for our sins.
- † Throughout this process, Jesus actually was in control. At any time, as the Son of God, he could have broken free and preserved his human life. But he chose to be obedient to the will of God the Father, as we heard him pray before, and so he carried out the eternal plan of God.
 - Even in death, Jesus gave up his spirit, it was not taken from him. He knew his hour had come, and his earthly work was done. He knew that now he must end his life with a miracle, maybe even a greater one than with which his life had begun. His birth was by a virgin girl, her pregnancy itself a tremendous and complex miracle by the Holy Spirit to bring God into humanity.
 - His death would not be the end of his work, nor of his suffering. In some miraculous way, designed by God the Father to satisfy his sense of justice and his wrath about sin, Jesus, as he died, because he was the divine Son of God as well as a sinless man, was spiritually able to pay our penalty for disobedience and corruption and guilt, was able to suffer all the punishment and condemnation from God that we deserve.
 - **[Slide 10: imputation]** We will never fully grasp that. But if we are shocked at the level of suffering Jesus endured with the accusations, repeated beatings, brutal floggings, and cruel

crucifixion, and with his willingness to do so, then we should be even more shocked at his willingness to suffer through, and how much he had to suffer through, intervening in our destiny to appease God's wrath, satisfy God's righteousness, and thus trade with us God's judgment, such that the Son of God was declared to be sin, to be guilty, and we are declared to be innocent and righteous.

- We call this "imputed righteousness." Imputed means it is accounted to us. God the Father accounts to us the righteousness of Christ, because Christ took our sin and guilt away. We call God's declaration of our righteousness "justification." We could never be justified by our own efforts, we could never be declared righteous by our own efforts, only by God's decision to give us grace and forgiveness and mercy, through the work of Jesus Christ.

† This is not a new idea, not even just New Testament theology, it also is Old Testament theology.

- The prophet Isaiah prophesied that Israel would go into exile in Babylon because the Davidic kings had failed to reflect God's character and represent God to the world. Then Isaiah prophesied that the Messiah would come, that he would be the ultimate Davidic king and the Suffering Servant of Yahweh God, and this Servant-Messiah-King would provide the way back from exile and restoration in relationship with God.
- Isaiah said this Suffering Servant would be rejected and despised by his own people, and through he was innocent he would be pierced for their sins so they could be healed, a necessary step prior to their repentance and subsequent deliverance from exile back into the land and back into relationship with God.
- Jesus is that Suffering Servant-King, the Christ-Messiah-Savior, who though innocent was pierced in crucifixion, paying the penalty for sin, so we could be healed and thus repent of our lack of faith, and by believing in this promise of deliverance be reconciled with God.

Conclusion

† **[Slide 11: 3.16]** Now, if Jesus' saving work was completed in the crucifixion and resurrection, what does that imply about your salvation? Do you have to do anything to be saved? Do you have to be good enough to get saved or good enough not to lose salvation once you have it? Do you have to worry that you are not saved enough, that you won't make the cut on judgment day? No, no, no, no, no... Jesus did all the work and he completed that work, so all you have to do is believe.

- One of the most famous verses in the Bible is from this gospel: **John 3.16 NIV: For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.**
- Before the end of this month, we will come across a similar statement, **John 20.30-31 NIV: Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.**
- God knows that we cannot correct the corruption in our human nature, that we cannot make up for our sins, indeed that in our own strength we cannot even stop sinning now! God knows that these problems separate us from him and cause us suffering.
- But God the Father has chosen not to condemn us to eternal suffering and punishment away from him, instead he has chosen to extend us grace, mercy, forgiveness; he sent the Son of God

to come as the promised human Messiah-savior whom we call Christ, so the Son could live a sinless life, die on the cross for us, and be resurrected back to life on the third day.

- God offers us his gift of salvation unconditionally, all we have to do is accept the gift by believing it to be true, believing the promise of God about who Jesus is and what he has done for you.

- † **[Slide 12: communion graphic]** Some of you might only be coming to true faith now. You might have been in church your whole life, but only now, as we go through the gospel of John, are you coming to realize who and what Jesus really is, and only now do you fully understand all that he has accomplished for you in his crucifixion and resurrection.
 - If you sense the light bulb go on, if you feel moved inside, if you are coming to true faith in Christ and that excites you, please let us know. That not only will be the greatest day in your life, it will be the greatest day in the year of this church. We will have a great celebration, just as will the angels in Heaven.
 - With this gift in mind, let's transition into our time of communion. . .