

Keynotes from Clive Baines – Reflections on Good Friday 2/3/21

“The Cross” – Matthew 27 v 45-54

All scripture references are from the ESV

Matthew 27: 45 – 54 ⁴⁵ Now from the sixth hour^[f] there was darkness over all the land^[g] until the ninth hour.^[h] ⁴⁶ And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, “Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?” that is, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” ⁴⁷ And some of the bystanders, hearing it, said, “This man is calling Elijah.” ⁴⁸ And one of them at once ran and took a sponge, filled it with sour wine, and put it on a reed and gave it to him to drink. ⁴⁹ But the others said, “Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to save him.” ⁵⁰ And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice and yielded up his spirit.⁵¹ And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. And the earth shook, and the rocks were split. ⁵² The tombs also were opened. And many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised, ⁵³ and coming out of the tombs after his resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many. ⁵⁴ When the centurion and those who were with him, keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were filled with awe and said, “Truly this was the Son of God!”

Jesus: the first and the last, the Alpha and Omega, our God, the great I AM, the creator of the universe, the almighty one, the Bread of Life, the lamb of God who was and is and is to come.

Jesus: who rules in love, reigns in peace, works his justice, is perfect in every way, who healed the sick and raised the dead, who came to save the world and set us free from sin

That same Jesus became sin for us. Jesus our Lord was sentenced to death.

Earlier in this chapter of Matthew’s Gospel, we read of the Jesus’ journey to the cross. On that journey, every step and everyone is against him. Passed backward and forward between church and state authorities, between Caiaphas the High Priest and Pilate the governor, Jesus is then put before the crowd. He is judged in the light of another man and found guilty. Barabbas, a robber and rebel against Roman authority – the polar opposite of Jesus – is given his life back. Jesus takes the punishment, the just dying for the unjust. The whole trial was a farce, with the sole object of getting rid of Jesus.

At the governor's HQ, Jesus is mocked and humiliated by a whole battalion (between 300-1000 men). They stripped him and clothed him in a scarlet robe, making a crown of thorns which was pressed on to his head. He was whipped and spat on as they knelt in mockery before him. We see all of this foretold in **Isaiah 53:1-9**.

Who has believed what he has heard from us? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?² For he grew up before him like a young plant, and like a root out of dry ground; he had no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him.³ He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. ⁴ Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. ⁵ But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed.⁶ All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.⁷ He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth ⁸ By oppression and judgment he was taken away; and as for his generation, who considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people? ⁹ And they made his grave with the wicked and with a rich man in his death, although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth.

All that happened because God willed it.

Isaiah 53: 10-11. Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him; he has put him to grief; when his soul makes an offering for guilt, he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days; the will of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.¹¹ Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities.

At any moment, Jesus could have chosen to ask his Father to take him out of it, yet he chose to go through it all to reconcile us to God.

In his gospel, John reminds us that 'God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son' (**John 3:16**)

And so the journey moves on to Calvary and the cross. It was a horrific form of execution, involving unimaginable suffering.

In the seven sayings of Jesus on the cross, we can see the following:

- Jesus loves for the many – Father forgive them for they know not what they do
(**Luke 23:24**)

- Jesus saves us completely for heaven – Today you will be with me in paradise (**Luke 23:43**)
- Jesus is family – ‘Woman behold your son’. Then he said to the disciple ‘Behold your mother’ (**John 19:26**)
- Jesus is committed – My God, my God why have you forsaken me (**Mark 15:34**)
- Jesus is flesh and bone – I thirst (**John 19:28**)
- Jesus is in control – Father into your hands I commit my spirit (**Luke 23:46**)
- Jesus’ work is done – It is finished (**John 19:30**)

Jesus gives and gives, for without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness, and only Jesus could pay the ultimate price.

The precious blood of Christ not only gives peace to sinful, guilty people like us, but God is also at peace with us as he looks upon the precious blood of his Son. Because of such a great sacrifice, I, the guilty one, go free.

Jesus is the complete fulfilment of the old ways – the temporary sacrifice of bulls and goats was no longer needed with the once for all sacrifice of Jesus. His blood was shed for the forgiveness of sin. He did this for you and me.

Even as he hung on the cross, insults were hurled at him, using the very words he himself had spoken. They did not understand what he had taught them. They could see him with their eyes, but they saw nothing of the need in their hearts. Today, we cannot physically see him, but must come to him having had our eyes opened by the Spirit of God to believe.

The cross speaks to us about the overwhelming love of God. The robbers who were crucified with him also hurled insults at him, but through the amazing love of God, one of them sees his hopelessness and recognising his sin, has the eyes of his heart opened to recognise who Jesus is.

Jesus’ response is to say ‘Today you will be with me in paradise’. Amazing forgiveness, amazing love.

As darkness fell, and Jesus breathed his last, his death on Calvary broke his Father's heart. Jesus cried out 'My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?' There was no answer to that terrible cry as Jesus took upon himself the full weight of our sin. For Jesus, there was no other way for us to come to him. In the silence of that day, when darkness fell, full atonement was made and our forgiveness was sealed in his blood.

For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God
(Romans 6:10)