

John 19:1-16: The Good God of Good Friday

Exegetical Big Idea: Jesus, the Son of God, was condemned to be crucified in accordance with both the desire of evil people, and the will of God.

Homiletical Big Idea: **Good Friday is about a good God who died for a bad people.**

Fallen Condition Focus: It is too easy to ignore or miss the true meaning of the cross, and relegate it as a symbol or sentiment. If we do not approach the cross with understanding of our sin, God's sovereignty, and who Jesus truly is, then we will miss out on the saving nature of Jesus death.

Background:

Our text that we are jumping into this morning happens only a few hours before Jesus' crucifixion. In fact the events of the text today happen probably around this time of the morning which we are gathering. During the night on Thursday, Jesus leaves the garden of Gethsemane with the mob and throughout the night he stands in a mock trial with the Sanhedrin, which is kind of like the Jewish Supreme Court. During the night was when Peter denied knowing Jesus three times. At some time early morning Jesus is condemned by the Sanhedrin and taken to Pilot where the Jews seek the sentence of death for Jesus. It was during these hours that Pilot sees no legal reason for Jesus to be sentenced to death, and instead offers to release a prisoner to the crowd, hoping the crowd will pick the innocent Jesus. So he offers them a rebellious murdered named Barabbas, or Jesus. The crowd, probably to the shock of Pilot demands Barabbas. So now Pilot is stuck with Jesus. Pilot himself is stuck between a rock and a hard place, because he wants to appease the crowd while at the same time not wanting to kill an innocent man.

Here is where we jump into the story of Good Friday from John's perspective.

Intro:

I've been to the eye doctor for regular checkups the last few years, and I am pleased that each time I go I get the report that I have better than 20/20 vision. Now that's not a boast because I clearly didn't make my own eyes.

But if you ask my wife, she might argue the report from the doctor. There has been a time or two, when she asks me to please find something. She'll ask me to look in a very specific spot, for a very specific thing. Now I will look long and hard for the item, in the exact spot where she tells me to look, and it won't be there!

So what usually happens is that I will then go and report that unfortunately she was incorrect, and the thing she was looking for is not in fact where she said it was. This usually results in her asking me if I am sure.

I've learned that the correct response to that question is "no, I'm not sure, I'll take another look". Well guess what, more often than not, the thing she wants (and the thing I am looking for) is exactly where she said it was. A funny thing happens in situations like that. I tend to go blind. Now, my vision is just fine, but I often cannot see the thing that is right in front of my face!

Our world often suffers from the same lack of sight that I do. In particular we when think about the cross. Crosses are everywhere really. They are on buildings and on signs and artwork. They are in jewelry

and people have them tattooed on themselves. But do we really see the cross? I'm not talking about actually seeing it with our eyes, but do we really see it with our hearts. Do we understand what the cross of Christ is? Do we get what it means? Do we know why it was necessary? Do we understand how it can change a person for all of eternity?

The cross is everywhere, but is it truly seen?

I want you to see the cross this Good Friday. I want you to see yourself at the cross, and who it was who hung on it, and how faith in Jesus who died on the cross changes us for eternity. I want us to see that:

**Good Friday is about a good God who died for a bad people.**

**(Vv. 1-6) To see Good Friday rightly, we must see our sin rightly.**

So Barabbas has just been released in exchange for Jesus and now Pilot sets out to get this situation over with. He has already established that he sees no legal fault in Jesus and so he thinks it best to try and satisfy the Jewish leaders, while at the same time avoiding sending an innocent man to his death.

So he has Jesus flogged, and hands him over to the guards for their special kind of treatment. Pilot is not ignorant as to how the guards will treat Jesus. He knows what's going to happen, but this is all part of his plan.

The guards flog and mock Jesus by putting a purple robe on him and pressing a crown of thorns into his head. Even these Gentiles join in on the pain and mockery of Jesus.

When all this is done to the satisfaction of Pilot, he brings Jesus out to the crowd and again reminds them that he has found no guilt in Jesus. We see this in verse 4. Pilot declares to the people in verse 5 "Behold the man!" As if on parade, Pilot brings Jesus out wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Jesus is bruised and bloody and weak. When Pilot says "behold the man!" What he's saying is something like "here is the person who you considered to be such a threat that you would bring him to me to die. Does he look like a threat? Does he look like a king? I've beaten him, humiliated him, brought him down low, now let's be done with this and all go home."

But do the Jews take pity on Jesus? Do they think to themselves "ok, I think we taught him his lesson, he will surely drop the Son of God routine now"?

No they don't. Look at verse 6. They cry out "Crucify him, crucify him!"

I think because I've read this story many many times, I often forget to ask the simple questions like "why do they hate this man so much?" Pilot at least recognizes Jesus innocence, but the reality is that Jesus is innocent of all sin! He is spotless. Never in his entire life has Jesus broken even a single command of God. So why do they hate him so much?

The answer is because sin is an insatiable hunger for hatred towards a perfect and holy God. The crowd is not satisfied with seeing Jesus beaten and whipped and mocked. They want his life, and nothing less than his death will satisfy him.

[Consider a situation where you want to buy a house, so you hire a real estate agent and he or she looks for houses that might suit your needs and calls you up when they find one. So you go and take a look at the house with the real estate agent and it's a great house for a good price and you want to buy it. Now

imagine if the agent then says “ok, so the seller is willing to part with the kitchen, downstairs bathroom, and garage, but wants to keep the master bedroom, basement, and second floor bathroom. How would you respond? That’s ridiculous! You’re not interested in *part* of the house, you want the whole thing. You wouldn’t even be satisfied if the original owners kept even a single room. To buy the house is to buy the whole thing. There is no negotiation there!]

Our sin doesn’t make negotiations. Our sin, left to run wild, wants God dead. In fact, our sin wants to replace God with us.

The reality is that the same sinful nature that drove the Jewish leaders to kill Jesus, and the soldiers to mock and beat Jesus, and Pilate to give in and crucify Jesus, that same sin lives in you and me. Now thank God that he doesn’t allow everyone to exercise the full potential of that sinful nature, or else it would be the end of all of us pretty quickly. But that same rebellion against God nonetheless lives in you and me.

We must recognize that. There is no such thing as a “good person”. We must see that it was our sin that drove Jesus to the cross. If you don’t see that, then you won’t understand that Jesus took your sin away as he hung on the cross. If you don’t see your sin rightly, then you don’t see Good Friday rightly.

**Good Friday is about a good God who died for a bad people.**

**(Vv. 7-11) To see Good Friday rightly is to see God’s sovereign hand over it.**

While it is absolutely true that our sin drove Jesus to the cross, it is at the same time true that it has always been God’s plan to send his Son to die for our sins.

Pilate protests to the death of Jesus, but then he hears something that scares him. In verse 7, the Jewish leaders tell Pilate that according to their law he must die because he claimed to be the Son of God.

In verse 8 we read that when Pilate heard that, he was even more afraid. Why? Well although Pilate does not worship the true God, he is still not an atheist. It was not popular thing to be an atheist back then, and Pilate would have covered his bases and worshiped many gods. So to hear that this man had a claim of being the Son of a Deity, his superstition gets the better of him and he fears potentially angering whatever this God might be!

With renewed interest, he goes back into his headquarters says verse 8 and questions Jesus as to where he came from. But Jesus doesn’t give a response. Jesus’ silence offends Pilate and he starts to get a little upset. Pilate must be thinking “Who is this man whom I have just ordered to be flogged and beaten, and he dares to offend me by not answering my questions?”

So Pilate flexes his authority in verse 10 and says “do you not know that I have authority to release you, and authority to crucify you?”

An amazing statement, because of course as we see it yes he does! From our perspective Jesus is at the mercy of Pilate and with a single word Pilate can either save him or crucify him. But that’s not God’s perspective.

Jesus breaks his silence in verse 11 and says “you would have no authority over me at all unless it had been given you from above.”

In other words, Jesus lets Pilot know that none of this is his plan! You might think that this is happening according to your plan, but God is the one sovereign over all of this.

[It's like when I ask my kids if they want to get their teeth brushed. Sometimes they say "sure" and walk right over straight away, and other times they say "no" and try to avoid it. But here's the secret, it's not really a question. From our perspective the question "do you want to come and get your teeth brushed" seems to be under their control. But the reality is it doesn't matter if they're not in the mood for it, it's going to get done. Our house is not a democracy, it's a benevolent dictatorship with Alana and myself making the decisions.]

God's kingdom is not a democracy! We don't get to make the decisions, God does. We may *think* that we are masters of our own fate, but we are not. Psalm 2 reminds us that the nations plot, and God laughs.

Pilot thinks he is the one in control of the situation but he's not. God has ordained this day to unfold exactly how he wanted it to from eternity past. We are given the first promise of this day back in Genesis 3 when God tells Eve that Satan will one day strike her offspring in the heel, which is a picture of injury. And indeed the cross seems to be an injury inflicted by Satan. But then God says that Eve's offspring would then crush the head of Satan. Christ's resurrection on Sunday was that fatal blow to Satan.

Now to be clear, this does not mean we are not responsible for our sin, we certainly are. We are reminded of that in the last part of verse 11. Jesus tells pilot that this is God's plan, not his, but that also "he who delivered me over to you has the greater sin".

He does not say that Pilot has *not* sinned, only that there are others who are responsible for greater sin.

But the cross is not a change of plans, as if evil makes a cunning move and God needs to react accordingly. This is not a chess match where Satan and God are trying to put the other one in checkmate. The game was already over and decided before it began!

Why is it important that we see God's sovereignty at the cross? Because texts like this reveal to us that our God is an unchanging God. Because of his unchanging nature, he can make these promises and will always, without fail, keep his promises.

When you look at the cross this Good Friday. See the promise that if you believe that the death of Christ was the payment for your sins, then you will be forgiven, and Christ's righteousness is put onto you.

Look at the cross and see the promise that the just wrath of God towards the sinner is poured out fully on Jesus, and not on you.

And when you come back to church on Sunday and celebrate the resurrection of Christ, see the promise that those who believe in him will too be resurrected to eternal life.

**Good Friday is about a good God who died for a bad people.**

**(Vv. 12-16) To see Good Friday rightly is to see that Jesus was, and is, the Divine King of kings.**

Our sin drove Jesus to the cross, in accordance with the sovereign will of God. But if we don't see who it was who hung on the cross, we will miss the significance of Good Friday.

These final verses of our text this morning are full of irony. And it's this irony that points us to who exactly this Jesus is. Pilate is now pressured by a greater threat. Pilate still wants to release Jesus, but then the Jews play the best card they have. They claim, in verse 12, that if Pilate releases Jesus, then he is no friend to Caesar. The logic here is that this Jesus claims to be a king, and any claim to be a king is a threat to Caesar's throne! Is Pilate really willing to let this threat to Caesar's throne walk away? What if Caesar hears about this? What do you think will happen if Caesar gets word that one of his regional kings failed to kill someone who might lead a revolt against the throne? Not good news for Pilate!

Here's the irony: Pilate fears the wrong king!

Caesar is lord over an earthly kingdom, with an earthly army, and is capable of punishing Pilate even unto death. But Christ is King of an eternal heavenly kingdom, with an innumerable heavenly army (not that he needs an army), and is capable of punishing someone not just unto physical death, but eternal torment in hell. Pilate needs to fear the King of kings!

Which leads to the next bit of irony that points us to who Jesus really is. In verse 13 Pilate brings Jesus to a place called "The Stone Pavement". This is a place for making judgement. The picture here is that Jesus sits before Pilate, who sits on his judgement seat to judge Jesus.

Here's the irony, Jesus is the true Judge! One day the tables will turn. Now Pilate sits on a judgement seat on The Stone Pavement, but one day the risen King Jesus will sit on his white throne, signifying his perfect and holy ability to judge because he himself is holy. All will stand before Christ on his throne and he will judge the nations in a perfectly righteous manner. Those who trust in Christ and have their hearts washed white will enter into his eternal presence forever and ever. But those who hate the King, those who refuse to turn to Christ to have their sin removed will be judged for their sin and be cast into hell.

Jesus is the true and perfect King. Jesus is the true and perfect Judge. And he's your King whether you like it or not.

In verse 14 Pilate brings Jesus back out and says to the Jews "Behold your King!" Now he says this in a mocking type of way. He displays a ruined and weak man who resembles nothing like a king. But he speaks absolutely true words. He speaks better than he knows. Because this is indeed the King of the Jews!

Their response is out of anger, and they cry out in verse 15 "crucify him!" and "we have no king but Caesar". Now they don't want Caesar as king! Remember when they brought the coin to Jesus to try and trick him? They asked Jesus, do we really have to pay taxes to Caesar? Why do they ask that? Because they hate Caesar. They hate the Romans. And yet here they cry out "we have no king but Caesar". Why? It's not that they love Caesar, it's that they hate God.

[I have a trick to getting my three year old to eat his broccoli. See when I first put it on his plate he looks at it and says it's gross and doesn't want to eat it. No matter how much I tell him to eat it, he will refuse. I could even try to bribe him with something better if he just takes a bite, but he often won't. So you know what I do? I pretend I don't want him to eat it. I look at him with a very concerned face and I say

“Judah...do *not* eat your broccoli”. What does he do? He laughs at me and puts a piece in his mouth! Why? Because he loves his broccoli all of a sudden? Nope, now he eats it because it’s a game to defy dad.]

The Jews don’t love Caesar, they just hate God. They hate him so much, that they then take him away to be crucified.

Here’s the irony: Jesus *is* their King. And he’s not only the king of the Jews, Jesus is the King of the universe. He’s your King too. Because he’s the eternal God. Creator and sovereign over all.

So here’s what it comes down to. You can either be condemned by the King, or justified by the King.

You can refuse his sacrifice and fight against God. But this is a foolish life, and when you stand before you will be judged for your sin.

Or you can be justified by the same death that you are responsible for. You can see the death of Christ for what it is, a sacrifice for your sin. Where God himself stepped down from his throne in heaven to take on humanity. To live a life of perfection and without sin, so that he could die on the cross in your place, taking the punishment for you sin.

This death, that you and I are responsible for because of your sin, is the death that justifies us before God. So what will it be for you today? Will you ignore the cross? Or will you see it for what it is. It’s right in front of you. Here’s some even better news. If you will see the cross for what it is, then you can look forward to the hope of Sunday. When we will celebrate with joy and hope the resurrection of Christ, which sealed our hope in one day being resurrected unto eternal life with the King of Kings.

I hope this Good Friday you truly see the cross. I hope this morning that you see that:

**Good Friday is about a good God who died for a bad people.**