

04/22/11

GOOD FRIDAY

Sermon by Scott Lowther

Let's open with prayer:

Father we want to thank you for what this day represents to us. You are the Father of mercy, you are the God of all grace. And tonight Lord we come to holy ground once again. May we cherish the savior who bore our guilt and in some sense may we treasure and tremble at the working that you did on that day. And so Lord would you glorify your Son in our midst in this hour so you would receive the honor that you are due. And so Father send your spirit to lead us and guide us and may we truly encounter you in a way that we will not forget. And for that we are very careful to give you the praise, In Jesus name. Amen

We are going to look at one specific aspect of the crucifixion tonight. And I pray that as we do that you would be stirred. You would be challenged. You would be encouraged with what the ramifications of this are.

Many of us have gone to Good Friday and Easter services for years. Right? We become very callused to something that we become familiar with. And we don't want that to happen tonight. We want to be very sensitive. We want to look with a fresh set of eyes on what may be happening. What the Lord would speak to us as individuals and what the Lord would speak to us as a body. And I believe that God is going to speak to each of us on a very profound level as we look at this passage.

The first thing I want you to notice as we get into the word is, the Lord, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is sovereignly working His purpose and his plan in the crucifixion of His Son. It was the Lord's will to crush Him and cause Him to suffer. Scripture says *Isaiah 53:10 "And though the Lord makes his life a guilt offering for the sins of the world. . . Isaiah 53:4-6: He was stricken by God smitten by Him and afflicted. He was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities. The punishment that brought us peace was upon him and by his wounds we are healed. We all like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all"*. We need to

see afresh what that means. And to somehow, someway have the Lord speak that into our lives so that we leave here different.

So, first and foremost it was God's purpose to crucify His Son. And it was God's plan to bring that to fruition. God is sovereignly working. Jesus said "No one takes my life from me, I lay it down". He wasn't a victim of circumstance. He was accomplishing a purpose. And it wasn't just that the crucifixion was horrible, because it was. But there was many crucifixions that took place back in early Rome. What was so shocking is the one who was crucified. The King of Kings, the Lord of Lords, the Creator of the Universe, the one who spoke the universe into existence, the one who upholds everything by the word of his power, the Almighty Eternal Son of God. Blameless, faultless, sinless, perfect, holy and righteous. It was the person that was crucified that was so shocking. And it accomplished many, many things.

As we get into the word today, I want you to focus on one term that Jesus said in John 19:28-29. I'm just going to call this "I thirst". Scripture says "after this, Jesus knowing that all was now finished said to fulfill the scripture, "I thirst". A bowl full of vinegar stood they put a sponge full of vinegar on it, put the sponge on a stalk of the hyssop plant, and lifted it to Jesus' lips". I thirst, I thirst.

And so as I told you in John 10:18 "No one takes my life from me", Jesus is doing some very interesting things here. It's His 5th saying from the cross. Look at this - he was not a helpless victim. He was voluntarily submitting himself to humiliation and suffering because of the pre-ordained purpose and plan of His Father. And as we see Jesus here, we see Him saying "I thirst". I want you to notice something very interesting which a lot of people never see. He said that to fulfill scripture. And so it would be great for us to start filing through scripture and saying "which ones is he talking about, I have some I think he is talking about". But I have a different perspective I hope will be a blessing to you.

After this scripture says "knowing that all was now finished, Jesus said to fulfill scripture "I thirst". And so the picture is one of Jesus. John references him in John 17:4: "I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do". Jesus is recalling that his work is now finished. It's approaching it's end. All that the Father had sent Him to do, He was fulfilling. And so this whole scene is one of total

devotion and total commitment to His Father. To His Father's program, for his life and a total command of the situation that He is in. And something interesting is happening.

The particular text that Jesus had in mind is not mentioned. It might be *Psalm 22:15* "My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth". But it could also be *Psalms 69:21* "They put gall in my food and gave me vinegar for my thirst". But whatever text that Jesus has in mind, there's something aware in the back of his mind that he keeps calling and bringing forward. Even in the mist of his agony, even in the mist of his suffering. He is 100 per cent committed to the word of God.

Have you ever let that sink in? Even in the mist of his most difficult day, the most horrifying death, the most excruciating of pain. The being forsaken by His Father as He bore the sin of the world. In the mist of that, he's devoted and dedicated to the fulfillment of the word of God. It's mind-boggling, isn't it. That this man lived his entire life committed to the word of God. Even in these last few moments of his life, it speaks volumes about Jesus' commitment to God's word. Huge.

And as we look at this text - Matthew and Mark show a different picture. They talk about being offered something to drink (Mark 15 & Matthew 27). It says "there was wine mixed with myrrh, it was offered to him but he refused it". He refused that drink because he wanted to face that hour of death with a clear head. He didn't want to numb the pain. He wanted to retain his faculties so that He could meditate entirely on the word of God to make sure that every little piece of it was fulfilled.

And now He receives something to satisfy his thirst. This is so significant for me. He's approaching the moment of his death, and Jesus accepts the drink of wine and vinegar to meet His own physical need, to moisten his mouth. Why did he accept that? Because he is excruciatingly thirsty. Unbelievably thirsty. Six hours of torture and pain and slow horrific death - and he's having excruciating thirst. But he needs to moisten his mouth so that he can say something clearly. He wants to insure that what he says, the people hear. And so as Psalms said "my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth". I'm certain that's part of it. And so in order to insure that what he says can be heard. And that he can speak and announce it properly, so that there is no misunderstanding - he gets a drink. And He

says “It is finished”.

And I don’t know how that sits with you. We are so familiar with the story that often it doesn’t move us at all. But Jesus said we are to remember Him and it’s good that we come back to the point and we say “what a scene it must have been. What a tragedy it must have seemed”. Jesus wanted one set of words to be clearly understood, more than any other. He wanted us to hear “It is finished”.

So is that what scripture being fulfilled is? Is that what’s it all about? I’d say “yes” but I think there is more. One of the things that is so great about the bible is Jesus said the whole of the book is written of him. So the more you get into it, the more that you see him in it. There’s always more. We are never going to tap into all about this story or all about what this gospel is.

In Mark 15:25-34 on the suffering of Jesus’ crucifixion - it’s the 9th hour. Jesus has been on the cross for 6 hours. And the combination of Jesus’ loss of blood, exhaustion and the tension and exposure and the weather and the mocking and the scourging and the heat of the day and all of it - has brought upon this raging thirst. Jesus cries “I thirst”. It’s not a polite request for a glass of water. It’s a cry of agony. It’s a cry of excruciating pain. And scripture says “so that scripture might be fulfilled he cried out “I thirst”. So what I want to address is that I think there is a little bit more. I want to go to the book of John because John uses the word “thirst” 6 times. The other 5 times that it is used, it’s used exclusively of a spiritual thirst. So I want to bring a different perspective that you can really see. Some of the things that happened on the cross that maybe we are familiar with but has lost it’s weight in our life.

In John he talks about a spiritual thirst. *John 4:13: “whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life”*. You remember the story, it’s about the woman at the well. Right? And he’s talking about a spiritual thirst. He’s talking about believing in him so that you aren’t thirsty anymore. So in other words, believe and thirst are kind of synonyms.

John 3:16: “that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life”. And Jesus said he who believes in me will never thirst. And so he is equating that there is a satisfaction that comes, there’s a part of a human

being that God has designed that they have a thirst for him and they don't know it. But Jesus here is talking about to the woman there's a spiritual thirst.

Here's two other ways that Jesus looks at it. *In John 6:35 "I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty".*

John 7:37-38: "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him". John helps us by adding the next verse *"By this we meant the spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive"*

Do you see what he is talking about here? If we put the evidence together here, we see that Jesus does have a physically thirst. But I think there is something more and the more is what we should look at. Jesus is speaking about a spiritual craving for God to the woman at the well a longing that operates deep in the heart of a human being to come to the Lord. And we know that scripture says Jesus was experiencing a thirst as well. But we have to be very clear to understand what's really going on. When the Father had turned his back on His Son as he put on Him the sins of the world, the first time ever Jesus isn't experiencing that intimate fellowship with His Father no more. Is He? No. So could it be that the thirst that Jesus is proclaiming and exclaiming is a spiritual thirst of something he's never known before. I think it is. And I think it would be helpful to us if we understood the ramifications and the consequences of that.

So he voluntary left heaven's glory, Jesus did. He emptied himself of all his divine dignity and authority and became a man. Philippians 2 "And he became one of us". But even while he was one of us, he maintained that strict, intimate, incredible communion with His Father. "I always do that which pleases Him, I only speak that which I hear Him speak". He walked with complete dependence and intimate relation with His Father and everything he did he did in partnership with His Father. And now something different is happening.

In the mist of the terrible separation from His Father, we hear this from the Son: *Mark 15:34 "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani, which means, My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?"* In this time of separation, in this

time of crucifixion I believe with all my heart that Jesus wants the fellowship back. I believe that He is crying out as in *Psalms 63:1* “*O God, you are my God, earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you, my body longs for you. In a dry and weary land where there is no water*”. Do you hear it? Do you feel it? He who knew no sin became sin. The Father is too holy to look upon sin and He turns away. And He pours upon His Son the wrath that was due all of us. Jesus experiences the pain of it. But the greater pain, I believe is the breaking of that fellowship and communion that He had eternally with His Father. And He cries out and says “My God, My God, why have you forsaken me? My soul thirsts for you in a dry and weary land where there is no water”. Jesus cries out and He wants people to know what He is speaking of. And He yells out so that scripture would be fulfilled. “I thirst”.

So I believe it is more than just fluid that He is looking for. I believe there's more. And I believe that He is the fulfillment of *Psalms 63:1*. I believe He is the one speaking. Jesus said the whole book is written of him. So I don't think it is a twist to interpret it that way. I think it's reality. And I think that's God's heart so that we would see what is really taking place. It's not just somebody playing penalties for sin. It's somebody who received the consequences of that penalty which is separation from His Father. And He wants it back. And He cries out for it. And He grieves over it.

And so as He is going through this suffering his deepest and most profound thirst was a spiritual thirst, I believe, of thirsting after His Father from whom He was separated as He hung on that cross, paying the penalty for our sin.

Let me stress the importance of this to us today. The truth is a very simple one but I think it is very profound. It's the truth of substitution. So when we look at John 19, we see the source of the promises that he has given all throughout the book of John. He's talking to the woman at the well, if you are spiritually thirsty, drink the water I give you and you will never thirst again”. She's thinking “maybe I need a bigger jug, what do I need? I don't understand what you are talking about”. Jesus said “no, I'm talking about something else. I'm not talking about going to the well with a bucket”. And so substitution is what is going on here.

Jesus Christ was our substitutionary atonement. The fifth word on the cross when He said “I thirst” means that being in Christ you don't ever have

to ever be thirsty for God again.

A true believer who has received Jesus Christ will never cry out “My God, My God, why have you forsaken me”. A true believer will never be thirsty for God like that. Will never say “my soul thirsts for God but I cannot find him”.

And so the substitutionary atonement is important in lots of areas. I’ll give you some verses: In *John 12:27* “*Now is my heart troubled, and what shall I say? Father save me from this hour. No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour, Father glorify your name*”. And so that word “troubled” is a very strong one, isn’t it? My heart is troubled. But Jesus says in 2 chapters later *John 14:1* “*Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, trust also in me*”. The point is clear, isn’t it? “He who has an ear to hear, let him hear”. Our heart cannot be troubled because Jesus’ heart was troubled for us. So in the same way our thirst can be quenched because we don’t need to be thirsty forever because Jesus was thirsty for us.

So while we were at enmity with God. While we were separate from God - Jesus Christ came and paid the penalty of our sin. Which we know. But in that atonement he substituted Himself so we won’t cry “My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?” He substituted himself so that He was separate from His Father so that we don’t ever have to be.

There’s so much here that is so rich. I think what the Lord would have me share with in the few minutes that we have is - Is it possible that there is something that the Lord would work in your own heart this very night that you would begin to develop a spiritual hunger and thirst for righteousness. Jesus said in the Beatitudes “that person would be filled”. Is it possible that there is something more in the atonement that you are not taping for your own benefit? You’re like “what”? It’s like this: Jesus said He will never leave or forsake us. Right? Do you experience Him going with you every day or do you see Him only on Sunday? Do you know that you go with the King of Kings everywhere you go? Do you know that He is with you always, never forsaking you because of what He has done? Do you know that your Father’s precious promises come to you because of what he has done? Do you know that his perfect life is given to you so that you are sinless and blameless and righteous in his sight. So that’s nothing you can improve upon. And that won’t separate you from the love

of God in Jesus Christ.

So what we look at the atonement it is a simple thing. "I thirst". What happens for most Christians is we don't thirst at all. We've become satisfied. And I think God would say we become satisfied with little. Instead of passionately pursuing much.

In this sacrifice on this day there's everything you need for life in godliness freely given. There's everything that you need for joy and peace and hope, freely given. There's everything that you need to begin to set you free from those things that easily beset you that you become complacent with and settle with. There's freedom from those. There is power in the name of Jesus Christ and there is great power in His atoning work. And I think God's heart for us on this Good Friday is to come before Him and say "Lord, is there still something there of the old man/woman you would root out today? Is there still something there that you would set me free from. Is there still something there that's hindering me knowing you more, pursuing you more, finding more joy and satisfaction and pursuit in you. Or have I become content with little"?

Have you? The things that the enemy is trying to pull us away from the simplicity of loving and knowing Jesus Christ, our Lord, for who's sake I have lost all things. Don't get distracted. There is an incredible amount of power available to you to rise up and walk in newness of life. It's Jesus Christ. He came to pay the penalty of sin. Because He is holy and righteous and sinless he can perform in 6 hours what you cannot perform in an eternity. Unless you come to Jesus Christ you will cry out "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me". If you come to Jesus Christ you will say "he will never leave me or forsake me. I will never be separated from the love of God in Him. His plan for me is good. To give me a future and a hope". He will perfect what he has willed and promised. He will complete what he has began. You need him. Maybe we need a fresh set of eyes to look upon Calvary today. To begin to look at it as much more complete. God would simply say to you "what is it my son/my daughter that is really stopping you from pursuing me with all of your heart. What is that thing"? And the Lord wants to work with us on that.

