

Glory. Sovereignty. Victory
John 19:16b-42

Luther said, “I feel as though Jesus Christ died just yesterday.”

When you read the final chapters of the gospels around the Easter season, you get a profound sense of the glory and gravity of the event.

Each gospel writer gives us a different lens through which to interpret the events of Good Friday.

- Last night we considered Jesus as our suffering substitute from Mark’s gospel in the Last Supper and the Garden of Gethsemane.

John wants us to view the cross with three concepts in mind: **glory, sovereignty, and victory.**

Often people think Good Friday services should be **gloomy** because of the agony that Jesus experienced.

- But John doesn’t go into detail regarding the agony of Christ.
- He simply says, “They crucified him.” (v. 18)

John then goes to great lengths to tell us how everything happened according to prophecy, under the sovereign hand of God, resulting in Christ’s glorious triumph.

Often sermons about the cross go into great details about the agony of Christ.

- While it’s good and right to consider his sufferings, it’s **not** John’s focus.
- He has mentioned it, but briefly (12:27)

John has a **high Christology.**

- He began - unlike the other Gospel writers — by talking about Christ’s deity (Jn 1:1).
- He continued by showing the **signs of his deity** (from water to wine to raising Lazarus); and by giving us the great **I Am** statements.
- He has told us that **Jesus is in charge** of his death (Jn 10:18).
- This “**hour**” had not yet come (7:30), until we arrived at **13:1**.
- And this hour was an hour of **“glory.”** (13:31; 17:1)

All this to say, when we read of the crucifixion, we are not to read it feeling sorry for Jesus.

- **Jesus triumphed! He won! And all who are in him win!**

We should rejoice in our King’s glorious, sovereign, and victorious death!

The Passion Story Summarized

All four gospels share the same basic outline, but some include or omit certain details. The inclusions/omissions highlight the particular focus of each author.

The Consistent Details in All Four Gospels (ht: Gary Burge):

1. Jesus and the disciples depart from the city for a location on the West side of the Mount of Olives.
2. Judas arrives with the crowd to take Jesus into custody.
3. Jesus is examined by the high priest (Annas/Caiphaz).
4. Jesus is examined by the Roman Pontius Pilate.
5. Pilate infers Jesus' innocence and offers to release one of his prisoners.
6. The crowd calls for Barabbas's release.
7. Pilate gives the order of death for Jesus.
8. Jesus is crucified with two men.
9. The soldiers divide Jesus' clothes among themselves.
10. Jesus is offered sour wine.
11. Jesus dies.
12. Joseph of Arimathea requests Jesus' body.

Omissions in John:

- The betrayal with a kiss.
- The prayer in the garden.
- The sleepiness of the disciples.
- The healing of the servant's ear.
- Simone of Cyrene.
- The mocking crowds.
- Jesus' cry from Psalm 22:1.

Additions in John (notice the sovereignty of Jesus):

- Roman soldiers falling to the ground when Jesus identifies himself. (Boldness)
- Jesus' conversation with Annas.
- Jesus' conversation with Pilate. (My kingdom is not of this world!... You would have no authority if it weren't given to you from above)
- John's emphasis on the inscription of the cross. (Detail about his kingship)
- A full description of Jesus' garments.
- Mary given to the Beloved Disciple at the cross.
- "I thirst" and "It is finished!" (Victory)
- Jesus' body threatened with the breaking of his legs. (Didn't, fulfilling Scripture)
- Jesus pierced with the soldier's lance.
- Nicodemus joining Joseph at Jesus' burial.

You can see John's high Christology.

- John is presenting Jesus as the reigning King, who reigns from the cross – the place of shame became the place of glory.
- His death fulfilled prophecy, demonstrating the meticulous sovereignty of God.
- His death is to be viewed as victory, as a mission accomplished.

Glory. Sovereignty. Victory.

#1: Glory. The shame of the cross actually became the place of glory (19:16-18).

We may consider briefly the shame of it in these opening verses; John has already told us it is actually Jesus' glory. It is a place of exaltation.

16b: “They took Jesus” – that is the Roman soldiers.

- At this point, they probably flogged Jesus.
- So he is now fully prepared for crucifixion, having just received this awful scourging.
- Many died from it.
- He would be bleeding profusely, his clothes soaked in blood, the thorns piercing his head...

17: The vertical beam of **the cross** was usually kept at the site, while the victim carried the crossbeam, placed over his neck like a yoke.

- He carried his own cross for a while, until he could not do so any longer (Simon would carry it, as other writers note).
- Those watching on the Via Dolorosa would have seen a horrific spectacle as they looked at Jesus, as blood dropped all over the road.

17: The **Skull**. Golgotha (Aramaic) (Latin: *Calvaria*).

- It was public. Not a hill far away, but where people could see – at about eye level.
- It was populated – thousands there for Passover.

18: “They crucified him”

- This was a death reserved for lower classes, slaves, foreigners, and criminals.
- No Roman could be crucified apart from the Emperor's sanction.
- The victim was normally crucified naked.
- The crucified one would die by means of **suffocation**, or possibly a combination of **exhaustion** and suffocation – **eventually the person could no longer hold up his chest cavity.**
- It would often last for hours, but could even last for days.
- It was meant to cause the most amount of excruciating suffering.
- Josephus referred to it as “**the most wretched of all deaths.**”

18b: two criminals, likely terrorists, guerrilla warfare soldiers were crucified with him.

- **Isaiah 53:12** fulfillment.

Jesus of Nazareth on the cross; this most wretched of all deaths.

- **It was a place of horror and shame.**
- Family members would often not even try to bury a relative who died in this way – in this honor and shame culture.
- But we know, this was the place of glory, for our Lord.
- He finished his work by dying there; reigning from the cross.

‘The Crucified One is the true king, the kingliest king of all; because it is he who is stretched on the cross, he turns an obscene instrument of torture into a throne of glory and “reigns from the tree” (FF Bruce).

And now He reigns from his throne, and he shall reign forever!

He has swallowed up death forever — for us — he had put death to death!

D.A. Carson reflects on the irony and glory of the cross in this powerful poem:

On that wretched day the soldiers mocked him,
Raucous laughter in a barracks room,
"Hail the king!" they sneered, while spitting on him,
Brutal beatings on this day of gloom.
Though his crown was thorn, he was born a king -
Holy brilliance bathed in bleeding loss -
All the soldiers blind to this stunning theme:
Jesus reigning from a cursed cross.

Awful weakness mars the battered God-man,
Far too broken now to hoist the beam.
Soldiers strip him bare and pound the nails in,
Watch him hanging on the cruel tree.
God's own temple's down! He has been destroyed!
Death's remains are laid in rock and sod.
But the temple rises in God's wise ploy:
Our great temple is the Son of God.

"Here's the one who says he cares for others,
One who says he came to save the lost.
How can we believe that he saves others
When he can't get off that bloody cross?
Let him save himself! Let him come down now!" -
Savage jeering at the King's disgrace.
But by hanging there is precisely how
Christ saves others as the King of grace.

Draped in darkness, utterly rejected,
Crying, "Why have you forsaken me?"
Jesus bears God's wrath alone, dejected -
Weeps the bitt'rest tears instead of me.
All the mockers cry, "He has lost his trust!
He's defeated by hypocrisy!"
But with faith's resolve, Jesus knows he must
Do God's will and swallow death for me.

#2: Sovereignty. The events at the cross actually fulfilled Scripture (19:19-42).

“No fewer than twenty Old Testament prophecies were fulfilled within twenty-four hours at the time of the Lord’s death” (Gangel)

- **Things weren’t out of control. (Contra: apocalyptic prophet view that asserts that Jesus was proclaimed the end of the world in his time, but he was wrong; and he died on the cross as a shocked and disillusioned failure.)**
- **The wicked deeds of men actually carried out the sovereign purposes of God.**
- **“This Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men” (Acts 2:23)**
- **Observe what people say and do in the narrative, in order to see the sovereign hand of God at work.**
 - **Sometimes John mentions the “fulfillment” of Scripture.**
 - **Other times, the events simply fulfill a promise or a type. You just need to know the whole story of Scripture to see these fulfillments.**
 - **At other times, the reader can simply see the irony of what’s going on, as in the case of Pilate saying, “King of the Jews.”**
- **In every instance, in these final verses, it is clear that God is sovereign over the death of Jesus.**

A. Pilate’s Words: “King of the Jews” (19-22)

19: It was customary for the Romans to provide a public, written note of the criminals’ name and activity.

- **John tells us that this title came from Pilate.**
- **This was an act of revenge of Pilate to the Jewish council.**
- **He has been at odds with them (see verse 12)**
- **He already taunted the Jews in verses 14-15.**
- **He is now continuing to mock the Jews.**
- **But Pilate spoke better than he knew.**

20: It is written in all three major languages of the Mediterranean.

- **This was so that everyone could read it.**
- **It also illustrates how Jesus is the global King.**

21: They want to correct the inscription, but Pilate will not change it.

- **So the one who is mocked as king – is the King!**

B. The Soldiers’ Words: “Let’s cast lots for his clothes” (23-24)

- **It was common for Roman guards during the crucifixion to demand the prisoner’s clothing.**
- **John provides a bit more detail than the Synoptics.**

23: They take Jesus’ clothes and divide it into four parts; one part for each soldier, along with his tunic.

24: This tunic has a bit of value as it is seamless. So they don’t want to tear it.

They decide to cast lots, thus fulfilling Scripture. (**Psalm 22:18**)
Even the casting of lots happened under the hidden hand of God.

C. Jesus' Words: "Woman, behold your son..." "I thirst." "It is finished!" (25-27)

Statement 1: "Woman, Behold your son!" ... "Behold your mother" (25-27)

- John records a number of people at the foot of the cross: his mother, his aunt, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene, and the John.

A. Jesus is honoring his mother, and ensuring that she is taken care of.

- Even at his most agonizing moment, Jesus is thinking of others – here, his mother.
- She's about 50.
- His brothers are likely not present (John 7:5). So John will care for her.

But there's more...

B. These references to "Woman" May likely allusions to the garden, as Jesus again calls her "Woman."

- **He** calls her "mother" when he speaks to John: "Behold your mother."
- John 2 - Remember that ... **"It's not your business to tell me what to do."**
 - **That's gotta be hard to hear!**
 - **"My brother and mother are those who do the will of God"**
- While Jesus cared for his mother and honored his mother, he was in a unique role as the Divine Son of God.
- Recall the ancient promise of Genesis 3:15
 - ¹⁵ I will put enmity between you **and the woman,**
and between your offspring and her offspring;
he shall bruise your head,
and you shall bruise his heel."

And Paul's words:

⁴ But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, **born of woman,** born under the law, ⁵ to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.

The time has come for the seed of the woman, Jesus, to crushed the head of the serpent. It's an ancient promise fulfilled.

Statement 2: "I thirst" (28-29)

- This was meant to increase the suffering.
- This is not the wine mixed with Myrrh of Mark 15:23, which he refused.
- There's no compassion here.
 - This cry also fulfills Scripture.
 - Psalm 69:21, "They put gall in my food and gave me vinegar for my thirst."
 - This hyssop branch may be an allusion to the Passover, which was used to brush lamb's blood over the doorposts.

Statement 3: “It is finished!” (30)

- The final word from the cross, I will come back to in a moment.
- For now, just notice that Jesus declares, “It is finished!” – which isn’t so much a cry of relief; but a cry of triumph.
- “Tetelestai” is the word for “It is Finished” or “It is accomplished.”
- “I have glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work you gave me to do.” (17:4)

30b: Jesus “gave up his spirit” – his life wasn’t taken from him. He gave it up!

- Luke 23:44, at noon, “Father into your hands I commit my spirit”

D. Jews’ Words: “Break His Legs” (31-37)

31: “Day of Preparation” (Sabbath preparation)

The Jews were concerned over purity and wanted bodies removed on the Sabbath.

- They ask Pilate that the legs be broken and the bodies taken away.
- Romans would strike the legs with a hammer accelerating asphyxiation.

32: This happens for the two criminals, but not for Jesus.

33: Jesus “was already dead.”

- (Some have argued through the years that Jesus didn’t actually die!).

34: Knowing that he was dead, didn’t stop one of the soldier’s from driving a spear through his side. Blood and water flow.

- **The point is that he is really dead.**
- One of the false teachings around during John’s day, denying that Jesus was fully human. And consequently, that he didn’t really die. (cf., 1 Jn 5:6-9)
- Does John intend for a symbolic meaning beyond this?
 - Some have argued that it represents baptism and the Lords’ Supper, but this is outrageous to me.
 - Perhaps an allusion to Moses striking the rock? Possibly so. (Ex 17).
- What is clear is that he is dead.

35: A very interesting note by John; he slips his purpose statement in.

- He says the he was an eyewitness of these things.
- Then he tells you what you are you to do with all of this information about Jesus?
- **Believe!** (John 20:30-31). Believe that he is the Christ, the Son of the Living God, and that by believing, you may have life in his name!

36: Then John tells us that this failure to break his legs also fulfills Scripture!

- The wording is not precisely stated in the OT, but it echoes at least three.
 - **Exodus 12:46; Numbers 9:12** (these two are related – Passover typology)
 - ⁴⁶ It shall be eaten in one house; you shall not take any of the flesh outside the

house, and you shall not break any of its bones.

- **Psalm 34:20.** The Psalmist describes God's care for the righteous man: "he protects all his bones, not one of them will be broken"

37: Further, the fact that Jesus' side was pierced actually fulfills Scripture too!

"And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy, so that, when they look on me, on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a firstborn." (Zech 12:10)

E. Joseph's Words: "Let us take the body" (38-42)

Most of John's description of the burial is found in the other gospels.

- Joseph asks for the body. (38)
- He is a wealth man.
- John does add that Joseph is one of Jesus' disciples. And that he comes secretly.
- Nicodemus also is mentioned. (39)
- A remarkable amount of spices are used, reminiscent of the massive amount of wine at the wedding (39-40)
- These spices are symbol of honor.
- He is given the burial of a king.
- He is placed in a tomb of honor – it has never been used (41), near the crucifixion (42)

John doesn't state it, but this too fulfills Scripture. "And they made his grave with the wicked and with a rich man in his death." (**Isa 53:9**).

- He was assigned a grave with the wicked (the two men beside him), but what happened?
- Joseph asks for the body and it turns out that Jesus is given a rich man's tomb instead.

App: You can trust this God! Not one Word has ever failed.

#3: Victory. The man on the cross was actually a victor not a victim (19:30)

This point is a reflection on Jesus' declaration "It is finished"

And how chapter 19 leaves us in anticipation for chapter 20, "the laid Jesus there."

Chapter 20: Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early...

**His cry on the cross proclaimed his triumph;
and his resurrection would prove it.**

- "It is finished" – you need the whole Bible to understand it.
- **Tetelestai.** Spurgeon, "It would take every word that was ever spoken or ever will be spoken to fully explain that one word."
- He was saying more than what other people heard.

- Full and final Atonement has been made.
- The work is finished.
- **Jesus won! And all who are in him win!**
- **He won by dying!**

The resurrection would prove it.

The resurrection is the Father's "Amen!" to the Son's "It is finished!"

So rejoice! Christ Jesus has done for us, what we could never do for ourselves.

Colossians 2:13-15

¹³ And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, ¹⁴ by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. ¹⁵ He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him. (Col 2:13-15)

"His victory is the basis for our security. My confidence in God and the assurance of my salvation cannot be anchored in my religions performance. "It is finished" What was needed to satisfy God ought to satisfy us as well. This is the good news of the gospel." (Gary Burge)

Conclusion

If you are not a believer, then this is the message we hold out to you: "It is finished."

- **Every other religion says "Do." But the gospel says, "Done."**
- **Trust in Christ as your Savior.**
- **"Lay your deadly doing down; down at Jesus' feet; stand in him and him alone, gloriously complete."**

If you are a Christian, then rest in him and rejoice in him.

- **Rest in this one who took your place.**
- **Rejoice in this one who triumphed over our greatest enemies through his death and resurrection.**
- **Tell the world of this good news.**
 - **Turkey: Mosques: "Not a hospital or a school but build a mosque because that wins favor with God."**
 - **The good news is not: earn merit before God with your deeds.**
 - **The good news is that you can receive salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone.**

Let's pray and we will sing a song of his triumph.

