Come Alive – Part 2

# Good Friday Message 2019

This morning the kids were asking me what we were going to do tonight. And so, I wanted to clarify what we are doing this evening as we gather together. Tonight, we are going to remember an event much like we do on Christmas Eve. Now, who knows what we celebrate on Christmas Eve?

On Christmas Eve we celebrate his coming, right?

In a similar way, tonight we remember the reason why he came, tonight we remember the purpose behind his coming. And so, we’re going to look at the story of Jesus life on a Thursday night and Friday almost 2000 years ago.

Tonight, we remember God’s plan of redemption, his salvation which changed the world forever, because the power of sin and death was broken through the crucifixion of Jesus. Death was defeated and true life came alive, spiritual life, God’s life triumphed that first Easter Sunday.

And so, we’ve embarked on a journey together through the events of Holy Week to Come Alive to God’s story, to Come Alive to Jesus’s life, and to focus on the cross as we Come Alive to the sacrifice Jesus made. And then on Sunday, Easter Sunday, we’ll celebrate Jesus’s resurrection and Come Alive to his power to change our lives.

The life Jesus offers is reason to celebrate! It is reason to respond to God’s invitation to draw near to Him. And so, I’m glad you’re here tonight, on this Good Friday, but I want to give you a hint that it’s not an easy Friday. It’s good as we continue to discover the life-giving truth God’s power to transform each of us into new creations.

Now, I’ll admit that it’s difficult to look at death. Maybe some of you are hunters, others of you may have been in the room when someone took their last breath, but you never forget it because life is fragile. However Jesus came that we would have life and have it to the full, that we would have an abundant life, and so I need to remind you, on this Easter weekend, that our battle as followers of Jesus, is not against flesh and blood, but it's against powers and principalities of this dark world. The reality is that there is a very real enemy that hates God. He is the Prince of Darkness and he hates the kingdom of light and therefore all the forces of hell will try to stop the purposes and power of God moving forward in your life.

In fact, the Bible tells us of a time when Jesus warned Simon Peter of this, he said,

"Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers."

But he replied, "Lord, I am ready to go with you to prison and to death."

Jesus answered, "I tell you, Peter, before the rooster crows today, you will deny three times that you know me” (Luke 22:31-34).

Now, this was a guy who would have claimed loyalty to Jesus above all else. Over and over and over again he said, 'Jesus I've got your back, I'm your guy!' In fact, Peter even stated:

"If I have to die with you, I will never disown you…" (Matthew 26:35).

Peter said, "I never will, I’ll never disown you, I promise!' But he didn’t understand that loyalty is proven and not proclaimed. And as the Bible says in Proverbs chapter 20,

“Many a man claims to have unfailing love, but a faithful man who can find?” (Proverbs 20:6).

And so, like Peter we need to learn as followers of Christ, not to just "Talk the talk" but "Walk the walk". As we’ll soon discover, Peter had much to learn, because the Bible tells us in Matthew chapter 26:

“Then Jesus went with his disciples to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to them, "Sit here while I go over there and pray." He took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee along with him, and he began to be sorrowful and troubled" (Matthew 26:36-37).

Here we find Jesus at this most critical moment of his earthly ministry. Here in this garden, the night before he’s about to die for the sins of the world, he’s in a very vulnerable moment, as he’s battling between the will of self-preservation and the will of his heavenly Father. And so, he’s here in Gethsemane with 11 disciples because one had already left to betray him, and he says something very interesting,

“Sit here while I go over there and pray.”

Just a short distance, but the distance from here to there is the distance between religion and relationship, bondage and freedom, and sickness and healing. They didn’t realize what was happening, but Jesus was about to go the distance for them that night. You see, his entire life was developed for this moment, this was his divine purpose, and Jesus knew it and so, he left eight disciples at the edge of the garden and took Peter, James, and John deeper into the garden where he shared with them his heart. He said,

“My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me” (Matthew 26:38).

In other words, he’s like, “I’m so stressed out, my heart is hurting, and I feel like I could literally die right now.” And this is the real power of Jesus, this is not a supernatural Jesus, but this is a human Jesus, a real Jesus. Tonight, we will see the power of Jesus in his humanity. In the fact that he’s going through some stuff, facing some struggles, and yet he came out on the other side victorious. Even though he was overwhelmed, even though he had sorrow inside, he had the desire to press on, to go the distance, and even in that moment he had the courage to say, “Keep watch.”

Jesus said, “Sit here while I go over there and pray. Peter, James, and John, you come with me.” And then Jesus does something that we don’t see anywhere else in scripture, it’s just a thought, it’s just a split second, but he literally prays not to do what his Father had sent him to do. Matthew chapter 26 records this prayer in verse 39,

"My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will." Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping… He went away a second time and prayed, "My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may your will be done" (Matthew 26:39-42).

**Special Music – Gethsemane**

I believe it was at this very moment that Jesus committed, no matter how much pain, ridicule or torture, at that moment he was committed to the end. “Not as I will, but as you will!” (Matthew 26:39). And it was so well illustrated in the movie “The Passion” when they were beating Jesus and maybe you remember the scene where he fell down to the ground and the soldiers stopped beating him for moment. But he didn’t stay down, he got back up, because he knew there was more pain to endure and he finished the work that he came to accomplish. Matthew tells us that when Jesus returned to his disciples,

“He again found them sleeping, because their eyes were heavy. So, he left them and went away once more and prayed the third time, saying the same thing. Then he returned to the disciples and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and resting? Look, the hour is near, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us go! Here comes my betrayer!" (Matthew 26:43-46).

Picking up the story in Mark’s Gospel at chapter 14, verse 43,

“Just as he was speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, appeared. With him was a crowd armed with swords and clubs, sent from the chief priests, the teachers of the law, and the elders.

“Now the betrayer had arranged a signal with them: "The one I kiss is the man; arrest him and lead him away under guard." Going at once to Jesus, Judas said, "Rabbi!" and kissed him. The men seized Jesus and arrested him. Then one of those standing near drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his ear.

"Am I leading a rebellion," said Jesus, "that you have come out with swords and clubs to capture me? Every day I was with you, teaching in the temple courts, and you did not arrest me. But the Scriptures must be fulfilled." Then everyone deserted him and fled.

“A young man, wearing nothing but a linen garment, was following Jesus. When they seized him, he fled naked, leaving his garment behind” (Mark 14:43-52).

Luke adds in chapter 22, verse 54,

“Seizing Jesus, they led him away and took him into the house of the high priest. Peter followed at a distance. But when they had kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard and had sat down together, Peter sat down with them. A servant girl saw him seated there in the firelight. She looked closely at him and said, "This man was with him."

“But he denied it. "Woman, I don't know him," he said.

“A little later someone else saw him and said, "You also are one of them."

"Man, I am not!" Peter replied.

“About an hour later another asserted, "Certainly this fellow was with him, for he is a Galilean."

“Peter replied, "Man, I don't know what you're talking about!" Just as he was speaking, the rooster crowed. The Lord turned and looked straight at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word the Lord had spoken to him: "Before the rooster crows today, you will disown me three times” (Luke 22:54-61).

Three different times, three different people came up and said, “Hey, weren't you with that Jesus guy?” And Peter's like, “Jesus who? What are you talking about? I don't know any Jesus!” And after the third time, the rooster crowed and you can almost sense Peter’s ego deflating, the discouragement and defeat, recognizing that he’d let down the most faithful, the most loyal man he’d ever known. Not just one time, but three times, and the Bible says:

"He went outside and wept bitterly" (Luke 22.62).

And so, the devil was sifting Peter, wasn’t he? But Jesus had prayed for him that his faith would not fail and that he’d strengthen his brothers. But in this moment, Peter found himself in the lowest place he’d ever been, because he had a very real enemy who was viciously attacking, much like a roaring lion. He wanted to give up, to throw in the towel, and in the same way, when you feel like giving up the most, it’s because you have an enemy who’s trying his best to talk you out of doing what God has called you to do. But tonight, we need to stay the course and remember that so often the most meaningful times in life are on the other side of the greatest trials. Our enemy will give us a million reasons to quit on whatever matters most, but the good news is that Jesus lives to intercede for us. That’s good news, because you only need one good reason to go the distance, to stay the course. In fact, there’s a song by a worship pastor named Brandon Frazier who’s lived this out, he’s very passionate about this because he just about ruined his life, but he found one good reason to press on and that reason’s name was Jesus.

**Song: One Good Reason to Stay**

For those of you, who maybe like Peter, are discouraged and tempted to give up. Maybe you want to walk away, I want to share with you the words of Jesus when he continued to press on and go the distance when it would have been so much easier to give up. Just a few days earlier in John chapter 12, verse 23, it was just before the Passover and Jesus said,

“The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified” (John 12:23).

In other words, it was time for me to give my life. And then in verse 27, Jesus said this, he said,

"Now my heart is troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour” (John 12:27).

In other words, Jesus was experiencing the deep agony of the soul because he knew the torture and suffering that was coming. And so, he’s like, “Father, I know what's coming. I know what they're going to do to me. And I know this is what I’ve been sent to do, because it was for this very reason that I came to this hour". And so, Jesus knew beforehand that he would experience not only the physical pain, but also the emotional/relational pain of being rejected by Judas. He knew that he would be betrayed not just by Judas, but also by Peter and all of the others, regardless, Jesus pressed on, he went the distance, he stayed the course, and the Scriptures tell us in Mark chapter 15,

“Very early in the morning, the chief priests, with the elders, the teachers of the law and the whole Sanhedrin, reached a decision. They bound Jesus, led him away and handed him over to Pilate.

"Are you the king of the Jews?" asked Pilate.

"Yes, it is as you say," Jesus replied.

“The chief priests accused him of many things. So again Pilate asked him, "Aren't you going to answer? See how many things they are accusing you of."

“But Jesus still made no reply, and Pilate was amazed.

“Now it was the custom at the Feast to release a prisoner whom the people requested. A man called Barabbas was in prison with the insurrectionists who had committed murder in the uprising. The crowd came up and asked Pilate to do for them what he usually did.

"Do you want me to release to you the king of the Jews?" asked Pilate, knowing it was out of envy that the chief priests had handed Jesus over to him. But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have Pilate release Barabbas instead.

"What shall I do, then, with the one you call the king of the Jews?" Pilate asked them.

"Crucify him!" they shouted.

"Why? What crime has he committed?" asked Pilate.

“But they shouted all the louder, "Crucify him!"

“Wanting to satisfy the crowd, Pilate released Barabbas to them. He had Jesus flogged, and handed him over to be crucified.

"The soldiers led Jesus away into the palace (that is, the Praetorium) and called together the whole company of soldiers. They put a purple robe on him, then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on him. And they began to call out to him, "Hail, king of the Jews!" Again and again they struck him on the head with a staff and spit on him. Falling on their knees, they paid homage to him. And when they had mocked him, they took off the purple robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him out to crucify him.

“A certain man from Cyrene, Simon, the father of Alexander and Rufus, was passing by on his way in from the country, and they forced him to carry the cross.

“They brought Jesus to the place called Golgotha (which means The Place of the Skull).

Now, let’s stop right there and review what led Jesus to this point. If you remember, the Bible says clearly, that God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, Jesus, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but would inherit eternal life. And so, God gave us his Son, Jesus, who was born of the virgin Mary, born without a father, born without the sin nature. And what did Jesus do?

He lived the perfect sin-less life, completely fulfilling the will of God for his life. I mean it’s amazing, completely amazing, Jesus never did anything wrong, he loved everyone and anyone and he preached the message of God’s love with power and clarity. But even though he did everything right, he was betrayed by one of his friends, he was given a mock trial and framed. He was set up, condemned, and they forced him to carry his cross to the point of execution. The Scriptures tell us in Luke chapter 23,

“Two other men, both criminals, were also led out with him to be executed. When they came to the place called the Skull, there they crucified him, along with the criminals — one on his right, the other on his left” (Luke 23:32-33).

And so, it was there that they drove the spikes through the flesh in his wrists and in his feet, lifted him up and hanging him on this cross. But never once did he curse or retaliate, never resisting those who were torturing him, in fact, it’s not even recorded that he ever spoke up until this point.

Here we are in Luke chapter 23, Jesus is now hanging on the cross, he’s suffering for our sins, when he began to speak. Verse 34 records this amazing prayer:

“Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing” (Luke 23:34).

Jesus in the middle of his suffering prayed for those who were mocking him, ridiculing him, and abusing him. And it’s through this prayer that Jesus fulfilled prophecy written over 600 years before this event. The prophet Isaiah actually described this event saying, speaking of Jesus, that,

“He poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors. For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors” (Isaiah 53:12).

And so, he was counted with the transgressors, there was a criminal on the left and a criminal on the right. He bore the sin of many because he was the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). And he made intercession which is just a big word that means he prayed for the transgressors, he prayed for those who were inflicting this cruelty on him, and he prayed, “Father, forgive them.” It was with this prayer that he addressed man’s most important need, the forgiveness of sin, and that’s why he came. He came so that we could have life. That’s why as Jesus was sitting around a table with his closest friends, celebrating the Last supper, he held up the cup and said,

“This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins” (Matthew 26:28).

It’s the blood of the covenant, it’s the passion of Jesus, and in this prayer, he revealed our greatest need. He doesn’t curse those who were abusing him. He doesn’t pray for relief from his physical pain. He doesn’t do any of the things that we would expect him to do. But in the intense agony of the moment, in the excruciating pain, he looks up to heaven and prays for us, he prays for humanity.

“Father, forgive them, for they don’t even know what they are doing" (Luke 23:34).

Jesus models for us a heart that loves, that longs to see God’s best for others, and it was here on the cross, when mankind was at its worst, that Jesus was at his best. Jesus prayed for our greatest need, our most important need, the forgiveness of our sins. And that’s why he came. He came so that we could have life. He prayed for forgiveness and he died for our reconciliation with the Father.

The Bible teaches us that Jesus, the sinless Son, the innocent Lamb of God, did something for us that we couldn’t do for ourselves. He gave his perfect life for us in a cruel death upon the cross, paying a price that we could never pay, doing something

that we could never do or earn. And yet today, by faith in the perfect work of Jesus, our sins are forgiven. We see that demonstrated so powerfully here in the next few verses, verse 39,

“One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: "Aren't you the Christ? Save yourself and us!" (Luke 23:39).

With all of the arrogance that he could muster hanging on the cross, gasping for breath, he was shaking his fist at God. He was guilty, but he rejected the consequences, didn’t see a need for God, mocking him instead.

What about you?

Tonight, I want to ask you three critically important questions. Number one, “Do you see your need?” You see, the truth is, most people don’t see a need for God. They think they’re a pretty good person, they try pretty hard, and besides they would say, “I’m not as bad as so-and-so. You know, I’ve never killed anyone, I pay my taxes, and I tell the truth most of the time, etc. etc.” And a lot of people simply don’t see their need, but I wonder how many of you, if you’re really honest would admit that you’ve put something ahead of God, before worshiping him, before giving to him, before serving him?

And so, if in your own life you have put something ahead of God, what does that make you? That makes you an idolater, and so let’s just nail it down in case there is any confusion. Do we deserve to be right with God? That we should be entitled to share in the glory of heaven for eternity? No, we don’t deserve it, do we?

Do you see your need? Let me tell you what I deserve, and this may upset some of you, but it’s the truth. Because of my sin nature before God, the Bible says that I deserve death. The Bible says,

“For the wages of sin is death…” (Romans 6:23).

What’s really interesting is that next to Jesus, there are two criminals, two transgressors hanging on each side of him. Both criminals were guilty, just like you’re guilty, just like I’m guilty. Both criminals heard and saw the same exact thing during those last few hours. Both criminals were suffering severely, dying, and both criminals needed a Savior; but one recognized his need and the other didn’t.

Do you recognize your need? Here we are sitting side-by-side, one person is getting it, and another one doesn’t. Do you see your need? This is important because the Bible says,

“All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23).

In other words, we all fall pathetically short of the standard of God’s righteousness. Do you see your need? Here at the place called the Skull, Golgotha, we’ve got to criminals who saw the same things, heard the same things, and yet one sees his need, he gets it, and the other doesn’t. Do you see your need? And the second question I want to ask is, “Who do you say Jesus is?”

This is critically important as we’ll see in the next few verses. In verse 40, the one criminal rebuked the other saying,

"Don't you fear God," he said, "since you are under the same sentence? We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong" (Luke 23:40-41).

You see, even the criminal on the cross realized that there was something different about Jesus. He said, “This man has done nothing wrong.” And so, tonight this question becomes very personal, very powerful, as we consider the question, “Who do you say he is?”

Was he just a nice guy? Was he just a phenomenal teacher? Was he just a guy who had mysterious powers from somewhere to raise the dead, to heal the sick, to open blind eyes, and open deaf ears? Was he simply a man, who for whatever reason, altered our calendar, splitting time in two with his coming? Or, was he as the Bible says, the sinless Son of God, the innocent Lamb of God, who gave his life in our place, for us, for our sins, and on the third day, God rolled away the stone so that the world would discover that the tomb was empty and that he had risen from the grave? Who do you say he is? Not your mom or your dad, not your grandmother, not your children’s church teacher, but who do you say he is?

As we look at the Bible, it’s interesting to see what others say about Jesus. In fact, when God looked down at the baptism of Jesus, the Holy Spirit rested on him, and God said,

“This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:17).

One time, Jesus asked Peter directly,

"Who do you say I am?" Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matthew 16:15-16).

When Judas betrayed Jesus, afterwards he recognized his mistake and said,

"I have sinned, for I have betrayed innocent blood” (Matthew 27:4).

When Pilate condemned Jesus to death on a cross, Pilate said,

“I find no basis for a charge against him” (John 19:4).

When Pilate was judging Jesus before the chief priests and elders his wife sent him a message saying,

“Don't have anything to do with that innocent man, for I have suffered a great deal today in a dream because of him” (Matthew 27:19).

Who do you say that he is? The apostle Paul testified that Jesus,

“Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death — even death on a cross!” (Philippians 2:6-8).

Question number one, “Do you see your need?” Question number two, “Who do you say that Jesus is?” And question number three, “Have you experienced his grace?”

Have you experienced the grace that this one believing and repentant criminal on the cross experienced? In verse 42 he cried out to Jesus,

“Remember me when you come into your kingdom” (Luke 23:42).

Jesus replied to him with the most grace filled words that I’ve ever heard. To a man who had no opportunity to do anything good, nothing religious, couldn’t join a church, couldn’t get baptized, couldn’t pay back the debt, but could only believe that Jesus was who he said he was. Jesus answered him,

"I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:43).

Three questions that make all the difference in the world. Do you see your need? Who do you say Jesus is? And have you received his grace? You see, this is so important, because each one of us find ourselves in that place, each one of us, each of our lives are illustrated in these two criminals.

In fact, in the Bible, we consistently find ourselves in one of two places. The New Testament shows us that we are either in Adam, and in Adam all die; or we’re in Christ, and in Christ we all live. In all reality, you’re one of those two criminals hanging on one of two crosses. Both criminals wanted to be saved. One said, “Save yourself and us?” And the other said, “Don’t you fear God? This man’s done nothing wrong. Jesus, remember me when you come into Your kingdom.”

So, the big question is what does it take to get to Heaven? And that’s an important question because you don’t want to get it wrong, you can’t do it over, you can’t get a redo. You see, many people hope to get to heaven based upon their good works, trying to be good enough, but if that was the case, then Jesus wouldn’t have had to come and die for our sins, would he? The criminal on the cross who was forgiven, couldn’t do any good works, couldn’t pray, couldn’t get baptized, couldn’t go to church or turn over a new leaf. All he could do was throw himself upon the mercy of God. The Bible says it this way,

“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith — and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— not by works, so that no one can boast” (Ephesians 2:8-9).

You are never saved by works, the Bible says, it’s only by grace. I want to remind you that you are one of those two criminals on one of those two crosses. Which one are you? Jesus is right there, but one criminal mocked him, he rejected Jesus. The other one, the other criminal threw himself upon God’s mercy and simply said, “Jesus, remember me.” And Jesus to him and he says to all who trust him,

“Today you will be with me in Paradise” (Luke 23:43).

Suddenly, the Bible tells us in Matthew chapter 27 that:

“From the sixth hour until the ninth hour darkness came over all the land” (Matthew 27: 45).

Now, what does that mean? Well, the day began at the crack of dawn, and so the first hour began at 6 AM, and the sixth hour would be about 12 o’clock. And so, from 12 o’clock to 3 o’clock, right in the middle of the day when it should’ve been the brightest, darkness came over all the land. The Bible tells us that it was there on the cross that Jesus became sin for us and his Father turned away, his Father withdrew his presence, and the whole world became dark. Verse 46 testifies to this fact, giving us some of the loneliest, most haunting words recorded in the Bible.

“About the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, ‘Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?’ which means, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” (Matthew 27:46).

Jesus cried out and what’s really interesting to me is that as we look at Jesus’ life, we know that from the very moment he was born, that his spiritual enemy Satan was trying to destroy him. When he was a little baby, King Herod sought to have him killed, in his hometown they attempted to push him off the edge of a cliff, they said he was demon possessed, they attempted to stone him, and finally he was falsely accused, tortured, beaten, and taken to the cross. And yet what’s really interesting is that through all of that drama, the suffering he experienced at the hands of men, never once did he complain. In fact, these words recorded here are the closest to resembling a complaint, at this moment when he became sin for us, when the world became dark, and the Father turned his back on him. Jesus cried out,

“My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” (Matthew 27:46).

You see, Jesus could endure the physical pain, the emotional pain, the rejection, the relational pain, because the only thing that he needed was the presence of his Father. That was it, and so, the only time that he complained was when the father had to withdraw his presence. And the same is true for us, because we only see part of the story, we only see our part. And God’s perspective is so much bigger. I like the way Paul said it in first Corinthians, chapter 13, he said in verse 12,

“Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror…” (1 Corinthians 13:12).

It’s helpful in difficult times to remember that we only see part of the story, that God’s perspective, the Bible says, that his ways are higher than our ways, his thoughts higher than our thoughts (Isaiah 55:9). God’s infinite wisdom is far more than our finite knowledge can even comprehend, and so when you think about God’s part of the story, where God’s heart is at this moment, as he turned away from the most sacrificial, selfless act of love that you could ever imagine, as he loved you so much that he allowed his Son to suffer for you, in your place.

God the Father forsook Jesus because he became sin. Jesus became sin for us. The Bible says in second Corinthians chapter 5 that,

“God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Corinthians 5:21).

This is so important to remember, don’t ever forget that God hates sin, that God is holy, and therefore sin must be judged. That’s why Jesus became sin for us and died in our place, paying the penalty, the wages for our sin. But God couldn’t look at this, as the Bible tells us in Habakkuk chapter 1,

“Your eyes are too pure to look on evil; you cannot tolerate wrong” (Habakkuk 1:13).

And so, when Jesus became sin, when he became hatred, murder, adultery, rape, jealousy, lust, envy, and lying… When he became sin, God couldn’t look upon that, and therefore he had to turn away. God is holy and full of love, but from his perspective, looking upon Jesus on the cross, he had to turn away. And this is important, we can’t forget his perspective.

Now, at this point, we pick up the story in John chapter 19, starting in verse 28 where the Bible says,

“Later, knowing that all was now completed, and so that the Scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said, "I am thirsty." A jar of wine vinegar was there, so they soaked a sponge in it, put the sponge on a stalk of the hyssop plant, and lifted it to Jesus' lips. When he had received the drink, Jesus said, "It is finished." With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit” (John 19:28-30).

Now, it’s easy for us to miss this, but when Jesus said, “It is finished.” This was one power packed word in the original language that can be translated, to complete, execute, or to discharge a debt. In other words, Jesus knowing that all was now completed, said to his Father these words of victory, “It is finished, it is complete.” And the Bible confirms this in Hebrews chapter 10 where it says in verse 14,

“By one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy” (Hebrews 10:14).

The perfect work of Jesus is finished, the debt has been paid in full, your sin has been paid for by the shed blood of Jesus Christ. Nothing more needs to be added, but the place your faith in the perfect work of Jesus Christ. All was now completed!

Matthew tells us in chapter 27, verse 51,

“At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook and the rocks split. The tombs broke open and the bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life. They came out of the tombs, and after Jesus' resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many people.

“When the centurion and those with him who were guarding Jesus saw the earthquake and all that had happened, they were terrified, and exclaimed, "Surely he was the Son of God!"

‘Many women were there, watching from a distance. They had followed Jesus from Galilee to care for his needs. Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joses, and the mother of Zebedee's sons.

‘As evening approached, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who had himself become a disciple of Jesus. Going to Pilate, he asked for Jesus' body, and Pilate ordered that it be given to him. Joseph took the body, wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, and placed it in his own new tomb that he had cut out of the rock. He rolled a big stone in front of the entrance to the tomb and went away. Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were sitting there opposite the tomb” (Matthew 27:51-61)

Just imagine hearing those words, “It is finished” Can you imagine the regret, the guilt, the sense of disillusionment that the people might have felt? Here’s Mary Magdalene and Mary, the other one, sitting there in front of the grave, with all of their hope lying dead in that tomb. All the others were in hiding, they were hurting and confused, but just because something is over, that doesn’t mean it’s a reason to stop. You see, there’s a huge difference between the end of a season and the fulfillment of a destiny. Sometimes we’ve just got to come to grips with the fact that a season in our lives is over, because we have the choice to either live under the power of the past or we can commit to the future and determine to move on and move up to God’s promise of a future in Jesus name. This is so important, because when Jesus said it was finished, “that” was over, the crucifixion was over, but he wasn’t finished. The best was yet to come!

You see, Jesus knew all that he would experience these past 16 or 18 hours, but he had one thing on his mind, one reason to stay the course, and when everything in him wanted to give up, you were that reason. In fact, as he was getting closer to this event, he began to feel the pressure building, the stress rising, and he said,

"Now my heart is troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour” (John 12:27).

You were that reason and it was amazing what Jesus was able to endure when he had a reason. The Bible tells us what kept Jesus on course, how he kept going when everything within him wanted to quit in Hebrews chapter 12, verse two,

“…for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart” (Hebrews 12:2-3).

Jesus needed just one reason, one good reason to press through the pain, and what was his reason? His reason was the joy set before him. And you were that joy, you were the joy set before him. He only needed one good reason to stay the course and you were his reason. You were his joy, he did it for you.

For the joy set before him, Jesus endured the pain of the cross, and so whenever mankind was at its worst, Jesus was at his best. When they mocked him, when they hated him, when they insulted him, he stayed the course. When he was tempted to take a different road, to walk away, to call upon legions of angels, to rid himself of the torture and shame, he stayed the course, he stayed on the cross, until that moment he said,

“It is finished." With that, he bowed his head and gave up his Spirit” (John 19:30).

He did it for you, he gave his life, and darkness covered the earth, the ground shook, everyone stepped back in terror, but he stayed the course. He gave his life for the joy set before him and you were that joy. And so, if I was enough, if you were enough for Jesus, Jesus is enough for you. You don’t have to give up when everything in you wants to, because of what he did. Because of his example and his faithfulness, you won’t grow weary and lose heart. You were enough for Jesus, all he needed was one good reason, and that reason was you.

**Closing Song: “Were You There”**

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