

Matthew Chapter 27 v 15 - 56

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[0 : 00] Isaiah chapter 53, beginning at verse 1. Who has believed what he has heard from us? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?

For he grew up before him like a young plant, and like a root out of dry ground. He had no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him.

He was despised and rejected by men. A man of sorrows, familiar with grief. And as one from whom men hide their faces, he was despised and we esteemed him not.

Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows. Yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God and afflicted.

But he was wounded for our transgressions. He was crushed for our iniquities. Upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace.

[1 : 07] And with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray. We have turned everyone to his own way.

And the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth.

Like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before us shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth. By oppression and judgment he was taken away.

And as for his generation, who considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people? And they made his grave with the wicked, and with a rich man in his death, although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth.

Yet it was the will of the Lord to crush him. He has put him to grief. When his soul makes an offering for guilt, he shall see his offspring.

[2 : 21] He shall prolong his days. The will of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied. By his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities.

Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong. Because he poured out his soul to death, and was numbered with the transgressors.

Yet he bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors. Let's pray together. Let me just say that, for those of you that have a church Bible, I'm aware that I am using a different translation.

When I come to preach, I'll be preaching from the same translation that the church uses. I do apologise for any confusion there. It's Matthew chapter 27. I want us to read from verses 15 down to 56.

Matthew 27, verses 15 to 56. Now at the feast, the governor was accustomed to release for the crowd any one prisoner whom they wanted.

[3 : 56] And they had then a notorious prisoner called Barabbas. So when they had gathered, Pilate said to them, whom do you want me to release for you?

Barabbas or Jesus, who is called Christ? For he knew that it was out of envy that they had delivered him up. Besides, while he was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent word to him, have nothing to do with that righteous man, for I have suffered much because of him today in a dream.

Now the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowd to ask for Barabbas and destroy Jesus. The governor again said to him, which of the two do you want me to release for you?

And they said, Barabbas. Pilate said to them, then what shall I do with Jesus, who is called Christ? They all said, let him be crucified.

And he said, why, what evil has he done? But they shouted all the more, let him be crucified. So when Pilate saw that he was gaining nothing, but rather that a riot was beginning, he took water and

washed his hands before the crowd saying, I am innocent of this man's blood, see to it yourselves. [5 : 18] And all the people answered, his blood be on us and on our children. Then he released for them Barabbas, having scourged Jesus, delivered him up to be crucified.

Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the governor's headquarters and they gathered the whole battalion before him and they stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him and twisted together a crown of thorns.

They put it on his head and put a reed in his right hand. And kneeling before him, they mocked him saying, hail king of the Jews. And they spit on him and took the reed and struck him on the head. And when they had mocked him, they stripped him of the robe and put his own clothes on him and led him away to crucify him. As they went out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name. They compelled this man to carry his cross. And when they came to a place called Golgotha, which means place of a skull, they offered him wine to drink mixed with gall.

[6 : 33] But when he tasted it, he would not drink it. And when they had crucified him, they divided his garments among them by casting lots.

Then they sat down and kept watch over him there. And over his head, they put the charge against him, which read, this is Jesus, the king of the Jews.

Then two robbers were crucified with him, one on the right and one on the left. And those who passed by derided him, wagging their heads and saying, you who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save yourself.

If you are the son of God, come down from the cross. So also the chief priests with the scribes and elders mocked him saying, he saved others, he cannot save himself.

He's the king of Israel, let him come down now from the cross and we will believe in him. He trusts in God. Let God deliver him now if he desires him.

[7 : 44] For he said, I am the son of God. And the robbers who were crucified with him also reviled him in the same way. Now from the sixth hour, there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour.

And about the ninth hour, Jesus cried out with a loud voice saying, Eli, Eli, lemma sabachthani, that is, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

And some of the bystanders hearing it said, this man is calling Elijah. Elijah. And one of them at once ran, took a sponge, filled it with sour wine and put it on a reed and gave it to him to drink. But the other said, wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to save him. And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice and yielded up his spirit.

And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom and the earth shook and the rocks were split.

[8 : 58] The tombs also were opened and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised and coming out of the tombs after his resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many.

when the centurion and those who were with him keeping watch over Jesus saw the earthquake and walked up place they were filled with awe and said truly this was the son of God.

There were also many women there looking on from a distance who had followed Jesus from Galilee ministering to him among whom were Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James and Joseph and mother and the mother of the sons of Zebedee.

Before we turn again and look at that passage let's stand and sing Let's pray. What a love what a cost we stand forgiven at the cross.

Father how we thank you this morning that the blessing that comes to us when we kneel in humility at the foot of the cross does not simply come to us but it flows to us it abounds to all those who would take their refuge and find their shelter underneath the awesome truth of Christ crucified.

[10 : 36] Lord we pray that you would come now in power in Jesus name Amen It's been just over 10 years now since Mel Gibson's infamous film The Passion of the Christ was released in cinemas around the world Gibson's intention in directing the film was to show in sometimes graphic detail the kinds of physical torment that Jesus endured throughout the 24 hours the final day before his resurrection if you've seen the film I think you'd have to agree with me in saying that if that was

Gibson's intention if that was one of the goals of the film then mission accomplished there are moments that are hard to watch and yet somehow stick with you for years afterwards and it was said wasn't it that as people left the cinema screens people would leave with faces that had shock

really written all over them and yet sadly the film left so many with a question that went unanswered of course it wasn't the question of when when did these things take place it was a much more profound question than that it was the question of why why did

Jesus die in such a way in fact just for me to illustrate that the truthfulness of that a pastor that I love to listen to online frequently whenever I get the chance was out to dinner on a Friday night with his wife and this was at the time the film was in the cinema two men came into the restaurant sat with an earshot of this couple and were talking about the film as they'd just been to see the passion of the Christ and these two men were obviously emotionally affected by the film who couldn't be they were affected by the film and yet it didn't take long for one to ask the other the question of why why did

Jesus die in such a way why was the man who gave such honour to so many the recipient of such dishonour why the man who lavished grace upon grace be then the object of such disgrace why the innocent one treated as though the most guilty man in human history why did Jesus die I want to suggest to you this morning that that question is actually the question it's the question because it drills down into the heart of the most significant event in both human and redemptive history and for us to find the answer

I want us to turn back to the gospel of Matthew and as we do that I want you to imagine something with me I want you to imagine this morning that the answer to this question the answer to the question why did Jesus die stands veiled underneath a covering and Matthew's intention in writing Matthew's gospel is to slowly but surely and to gradually take the veil that covers the statue and ever so slightly pull at this veil until the end of the gospel when the answer stares us in the face and the first little tug of Matthew actually comes in chapter 1 doesn't it perhaps you remember the statement you will call his name Jesus for he will save his people from their sins and Matthew continues to pull and to tug and to tear this veil off the statue as he records

[16:00] Jesus promising the impending death on the cross throughout the gospel a larger tug is made as Jesus spends the night with his disciples in the upper room you remember the scene the bread is broken and Jesus turns to his followers and he says look this bread broken is my body broken for you and then he takes a cup and he fills it with wine and he says this cup is the new covenant in my blood that is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins and as Matthew takes these tugs from the veil the mystery of Christ crucified begins to become clearer and clearer until we eventually reach

Matthew 27 when as we'll see by the ends God willing the veil is removed the statue stares at each one of us Matthew places us in the crowd he takes you and he takes me by the hand he walks us at Mount Calvary precisely to reveal the mystery of Christ crucified and as many of you know at this point in Matthew's gospel Jesus has been arrested in the garden of Gethsemane he's been brought to the Jewish leaders who falsely accused him and then to get their job done namely to have him executed they take him to Pilate to Pontius Pilate and there

Jesus stands trial before Pilate so the question why did Jesus die well we find our first answer in Matthew 27 verses 15 to 23 here's the first answer Jesus died to set the guilty free look at verses 15 to 23 now it was the governor's custom at the festival to release a prisoner chosen by the crowd and at that time they had a well known prisoner whose name was Barabbas so when the crowd had gathered Pilate asked them which one do you want me to release for you Barabbas or Jesus who is called the Messiah for he knew it was out of self interest that they had handed Jesus over to him while Pilate was sitting on the judge's seat his wife sent him this message don't have anything to do with that innocent man for I've suffered a great deal in a dream because of him but the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowd to ask for

Barabbas and to have Jesus executed which of the two do you want me to release to you asked the governor Barabbas they answered what shall I do then with Jesus who is called the Messiah Pilate asked they all answered crucify him why what crime as he committed asked Pilate but they shouted all the louder crucify him Jesus died to set the guilty free now here's the scene before Pontius Pilate we have two men we have Barabbas over here we have Jesus over here what is it that we know about Barabbas we know this that he's a guilty man and Matthew is at pains isn't he to make the point abundantly clear that he's guilty before everybody it says in verse 16 that at the time they had a well known prisoner in the

ESV a notorious prisoner guilty before Pontius Pilate guilty before Pilate because Barabbas was no ordinary murderer Barabbas was on trial for trying to topple the Roman army he was guilty before

the crowd because he was a convicted murderer it was official Barabbas is a guilty man and ultimately Barabbas is guilty before God everyone knows him to be guilty and perhaps you and I can relate to Barabbas a little bit more than we'd like to admit have you ever been seen to be guilty guilty it's almost an overwhelming experience isn't it to be caught words like unbearable seem to have been invented for such moments and such feelings

[22 : 11] I remember being about four or five years old and being taken to the Christian bookshop that the church that we were raised in owned at the time and for whatever reason decided to steal a rubber which sounds almost funny today doesn't it but in the moment of being caught by mum and seeing her face but two and two together when we got home and being marched into the shop and being asked to hand it back to the person serving at the counter it was real at the time it was real guilt in the moment I was seen to be guilty now you may be here today and it may well be that all men speak well of you and that in the eyes of the law you are not a guilty man or a guilty woman but before

God we are each seen to be guilty when left without a saviour scripture couldn't make it any more clear there is none righteous no not one that's Barabbas and incidentally that's that's us isn't it we find ourselves in this story actually stood side by side with Barabbas as though holding his hand in cuffs but then next to Barabbas next to us we have Jesus and what is it that we know about Jesus well we know this we know he's innocent and again Matthew the gospel writer is at pains to make the case as clear as he can how does he do that well do you see the way that he uses the words innocent or righteous what does it say in verse 19 while

Pilate was sitting on the judge's seat his wife sent him this message don't have anything to do with that innocent man for I've suffered a great deal today in a dream because of him Pilate's wife knows Jesus is innocent Pilate knows he's innocent he's asking the question why what evil has he done after interrogating him a few times the crowd know he's innocent because in verse 20 we're told that the crowd had to be persuaded of a reason to put him to death in other words the reason wasn't evident it wasn't staring them in the face innocent through and through Jesus the innocent prisoner and Matthew's made the case hasn't he so clear throughout his gospel what's he told us throughout the gospel he's told us that

Jesus has been innocent in his words maybe if you've had just a very light flip through any of the four gospels you've read the accounts haven't you of men and women being sent to Jesus to try to trick him in his words try and get him to say something that would incur some kind of heresy or guilt on his head and yet each and every time without fail the men return saying no one ever spoke like this man flawless in his words flawless in his actions man air man is innocent man as let me assure you, she would not say this man is altogether and in every way innocent.

In fact, if you'd been with us this morning, you probably would have heard her say that's not the case. Don't ask her about that afterwards. Think about this. Jesus' own mother worships him as God.

[26 : 54] How many mothers are there here today that would worship their sons as the incarnate God and Lord of the universe?

I'd imagine very few. Innocent in every way and from every angle and from every vista.

But what is it that transpires in Matthew's gospel? Well, Barabbas, the guilty man, goes free.

Because Jesus, the innocent one, is condemned. And even though we haven't yet arrived at the foot of the cross, we have even here a remarkable parable of what is about to take place.

The guilty one goes free because the innocent one is condemned to death.

[28 : 13] Maybe you've never thought about it in this way, but where are we in the passage? We're Barabbas, aren't we? Because for each one of us who trusts in Christ, in the moment of our guilt, we receive freedom.

Because Jesus offered himself to be condemned. And Matthew, the man who is taking you by the hand now and leading you up the mountain, knew, didn't he, an awful lot about guilt.

You remember his story? A Jewish tax collector. Tax collectors weren't exactly the favourite people. Within the first century, the Romans had invaded the lands where God's people lived.

They would charge them extortionate taxes, hire out tax collectors, and yet not give them a salary. Gave them permission to take whatever they need on top of the tax for their living expenses and their salaries.

So you can imagine, with the permission of the Roman army, how out of hand that got very, very quickly. And so for a Jew to take from his own people, to give to the enemy, and to take on top of

what needed to be, a little bit more for himself, you can imagine it would be very, very difficult for a fellow Jew to love a Jewish tax collector.

[29 : 57] That was Matthew. And in the very act of his work, in the very lifestyle in which he occupied, as he was collecting tax, Jesus approached him.

Jesus called him. Jesus loved him, and accepted him, and asked him to follow him.

The situation for you, if you're here today, and you're not yet a Christian, is actually identical.

Because in this moment, Jesus doesn't wait for you to improve.

He doesn't even wait for you to repent. He doesn't wait until you're trying harder and doing better to be a better person. Actually, in the very moment of your guilt, Jesus is condemned, so that you, the guilty, could go free.

That's the way grace works. Jesus died to set the guilty free.

[31 : 10] Why did Jesus die? Well, second, Jesus died to save us. Would you go with me to verses 32 to 44? As they were going out, they met a man from Cyrene named Simon, and they forced him to carry the cross.

They came to a place called Golgotha, which means the place of the school. There they offered Jesus wine to drink, mixed with gall, but after tasting it, he refused to drink it.

When they crucified him, they divided up his clothes by casting lots, and sitting down, they kept watch over him there. Above his head, they placed the written charge against him.

This is Jesus, the King of the Jews. Two rebels were crucified with him, one on his right, one on his left.

And those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads and saying, you who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself. Come down from the cross.

[32 : 21] If you are the Son of God, in the same way, the chief priests, the teachers of the law, and the elders mocked him. He saved others, they said, but he can't save himself.

He's the King of Israel. Let him come down from the cross, and we will believe in him. He trusts in God. Let God rescue him now, if he wants him.

For he said, I'm the Son of God. And in the same way, the rebels who were crucified with him also heaped insults on him. I want to suggest to you this morning that without knowing it, the person who mocked Jesus by saying he saved others, but he cannot save himself, was absolutely true.

Although intended to be a criticism, the criticism was actually getting right at the heart as to why Jesus died, and here's what I mean by that.

Because our sin has to be punished, the only way of us being saved is if someone takes the punishment for us.

[33 : 51] So if Jesus is the one to save us, he himself could not be saved.

For him to save himself would mean that we could not be saved. And so he saves others precisely because he does not save himself.

A number of years ago, there was a young man man who, a young lad really, who followed so closely the ministry of Billy Graham.

He loved to listen to Billy Graham preach, and he he'd crossed land and sea on this occasion to listen to Billy Graham preach, and to actually serve as a voluntary staff member in one of the crusades that Billy Graham would conduct.

And on the night that he arrived, he was staying with the Christian family, he went to bed and sinned in in a shameful kind of way. And in a feeling of such humiliation and such regret and shame, he went to bed thinking to himself, I've crossed land and sea.

[35 : 10] What am I doing here? Who am I? I don't deserve this opportunity. I'm nothing and no one. And he fell to sleep in a sense of shame and real despair.

But that night, that young man had a dream. And this is what happened in the dream, that the young man had found himself in a room that was crammed full of filing cabinets. cabinets. And in the filing cabinets were, as he soon discovered, each and every day of his life documented to a T.

Every word, every action, every thought, and every deed. Listed in chronological order, everything he'd ever done. And as he reads these documents, he begins to cry and realize that the gravity and the reality and the weight of his shame and his sin, as he's staring face to face with the reality of his fallenness.

And he reaches the end of the documents and reads the very last sin that he'd committed. and breaks down in the middle of this room in tears and yet all of a sudden the door opens.

[36 : 42] And Jesus himself walks into the room and he takes the last piece of paper that's staring this young man in the face and he points to the bottom of the document. Because at the bottom of the document, it read signed and there was a dotted line and on the dotted line, Jesus himself had written his name in blood.

Friends, that really is what the cross is all about. Jesus owns for himself our sin and our guilt so that we could be free and so that we could be saved.

But you understand, Jesus could not be saved if we were to be saved because only one name can appear at the bottom of the document and either it will be yours or it will be his.

And if it is his, then you are saved but he is condemned. And if it is yours, he is saved and you are condemned. So whose name will appear at the bottom of your file?

your name or Jesus name, I pray for each and every person in the room that Jesus name would appear so that you would be saved all because he chose not to be.

[38 : 15] He saved others precisely because he chose not to save himself. third, Jesus died to bring you to God.

Would you look again at verses 45 to 50? From noon until three in the afternoon darkness came over all the land. About three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice, Eli, Eli, which means my God, why have you forsaken me?

When some of those standing there heard this, they said, he's calling Elijah. Immediately one of them ran and got a sponge, he filled it with wine, vinegar, put it on a staff, offered it to Jesus to drink and the rest said, now leave him alone, let's see if Elijah comes to save him.

And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit. I wonder what you would consider to be the very worst part of Good Friday.

But if this were you, what would be the most unbearable part? Would it be the mockery from the crowds and being left alone without a friend or a family member there?

[39 : 51] Would it be the physical torrent of a scourging and an ultimate crucifixion? Would it be either of those two things?

Well, for Jesus, the very worst thing was to have his own father in heaven, who had only ever loved him perfectly, turn his back on him and reject him and forsake him and then ultimately crush him for the sin of all those who would come to trust in him?

And that's why, isn't it, that's why Jesus here cries, my God, my God. It was no imaginary forsaking, it was real.

And it stuns you, doesn't it? It stuns me to learn that this is the only time in all of Jesus' life that he ever referred to God in any other way but father.

He has only ever called God father and yet here on the cross, forsaken and rejected, Jesus addresses him as though to an iron and a closed sky as God.

[41 : 41] My God, why have you rejected me? And this really is one of the very worst things about sin, isn't it?

Of course, Satan never tells you this when he tempts you with sin but one of the repercussions of sin is that it separates.

You think about the spouse who commits adultery or the employee who steals from his workplace or the family member who gossips about another family member only to find out that family member heard the gossip.

It's like a chasm is all of a sudden placed in between you, isn't it? And there's no longer intimacy and there's no longer a bond and there's no longer a closeness of trust but it's as though one person stands on one end of the Grand Canyon and the other person stands on the other end. It's distance and this is what Adam and Eve found out for themselves as they were banished from the garden. And this is what we were all born into.

[43 : 02] A distance between God and ourselves and this is here the reality, the experience for Jesus as he bleeds on a cross.

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why did Jesus die?

Jesus died so that if you believe on him, you, the guilty one, would go free.

Jesus died so that you would be saved from the wrath and the punishment that Jesus here endured.

Jesus died to bring you to God. Jesus died so that if you would trust on him today, you could sing with every fiber in your being, no guilt in life, no fear in death, this is the power of Christ in me. [44 : 15] Jesus died so that his father would view you today and say to you with his vast heart brimming full of love, he would say to you, you are my son, you are my daughter in whom I am well pleased and have a permanent connection and relationship and place before the throne of God above all because Jesus was cut off for you, we get what we don't deserve, that's the meaning of the cross, it's really just like the man who is a little bit peckish in a moment and he makes his way down to Tesco and he goes to one of those Tesco superstores that are just enormous for some reason and he only wants a Snickers bar and so he picks up his Snickers bar and he's in the queue at the self-serve aisle and as he's waiting in the queue he sees to his right hand side a woman who's ploughing towards him with a trolley that looks more like a lorry she's kitting out her new house she's doing it in style so she's got flat screen

TVs in there she's got everything you could ever need for a brand new house she gets just behind him in the queue and this guy goes up to the self-serve aisle he puts it on the scan it scans and then all of a sudden the music in Tesco stops the manager comes out with a nice blazer on and a microphone approaches the man with a handshake and he says congratulations sir you're our millionth customer everything that you brought to the checkout today is free and he thinks quick and he turns around to the woman and he says darling we won we won and everything she got was free and there she is she's in the car park and she's putting it all in and she says I got what I don't deserve and she goes home and she tells her husband and he says who is this guy what's his name she says I don't know we know his name because we've received what we don't deserve grace upon grace upon grace forgiveness adoption reconciliation favor and a father in heaven who knows our name and loves us enough to give his son so I want to finish today by imploring you and begging you if needs be to look to

Jesus and be saved would you today look away from every vain attempt to boast in your flesh and would you look to him to be saved would you look away from your doubt and your skepticism even your atheism and look to him and be saved would you look away from your guilt and your sin and look to Jesus making an end to all your guilt and all of your sin to give in exchange righteousness that you would be thoroughly justified and purified and cleansed and made holy

God commands you today look unto me all the ends of the earth and be saved I want us to close now by singing 509 and can it be that I should gain an interest in the Saviour's blood let's stand 509 God gift time dear God Amen.

Amen. Amen.

[50 : 34] Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Another siete-dise but a week he elenes, the tences are between the near whom money my life.

[54 : 31] Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, to the only God our Saviour, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion and authority before all time, both now and forevermore. Amen.