Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

The King Crucified: Consummation at Calvary
Scripture: Luke 23:44-46
Code: 42-288

Let's open the Word of God to the 23rd chapter of the Gospel of Luke; Luke 23. In our study of this wonderful Gospel we come now to the very brief account of the actual death of Jesus Christ. It is found in verses 44 through 46; let me read it to you. "And it was now about the sixth hour and darkness fell over the whole land until the ninth hour; the sun being obscured. And the veil of the temple was torn in two and Jesus, crying out with a loud voice said, 'Father, into Your hands I commit my spirit.' And having said this, He breathed His last." Up to now in the account of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, you might think that He is a mere victim of human injustice and cruelty. In the mockery of the sequence of trials, both Jewish and Roman, to which He was subjected, there is repeated declaration of His innocence and yet He is condemned to die. It would have to rank as one of the most blatantly unjust acts ever perpetrated on any man by any tribunal in history. Beyond that, it would be the most unjust human act because Christ was absolutely sinless.

It is the worst that men could do. It is the worst that men ever did. The injustice is glaring, and it was followed by cruelty that is equally wicked. Turning Jesus into the butt of their jokes, mocking the idea that He is any kind of king, the Roman soldiers, following the lead of the religious leaders of Judaism, crush a crown of thorns on His head as a mock royal crown, throw a purple robe on Him, and put a false scepter in His hand, and hail Him as some kind of king with sneering sarcasm. When He finally is taken to be crucified, they crucify one thief on one side and another on the other side so that it mocks the idea of a king with his two most noble courtiers on his right and on his left. And then they hurl abuse out of their mouths at Him – the leaders do, the people do, the thieves beside Him do, and the soldiers as well – blaspheming Him with sarcasm as if He is any kind of king. We have called that the comedy at Calvary. It was intended to be a burlesque, a vaudeville. It was intended to be mockery of the rankest kind. But something dramatic happens at the height of the comedy. It turns into a drama. And where the Jewish leaders who were orchestrating all of this really occupied center stage, somebody else takes center stage. In a moment, the comedy is silent and the drama begins. Those who were carrying out the main roles in the comedy disappear and one great person takes center stage. It is none other than God Himself.

God shows up that day at Calvary and turns comedy into drama. All of us understand the death of Christ. We all understand that Christ died for our sins. Every true Christian knows that and believes that, but we tend to look at the cross of Christ either in the physical aspects of it, which as I reminded you a few weeks ago were the same for the thieves as they were for Jesus, and we get caught up in the physical suffering. Or we tend to view it as this great loving sacrifice on the part of Christ, which it

was. “A greater love hath no man than this, a man who lays down his life for his friends.” He said that. And while it is true that there were physical tortures that need to be understood, and there is love that needs to be understood and needs to be emphasized, there is an element at Calvary that is major in the revelation of the New Testament that often gets overlooked, and that is the presence of God. Calvary is more about the wrath of God than it is about anything else. Yes, it is human cruelty and injustice at its worst. Yes, it is an expression of sacrificial love at its best, but most importantly what goes on at Calvary has meaning for you and meaning for me because of what God does there.

It is when God shows up at Calvary that it becomes the saving event that it is. Jesus is a victim of human injustice. Jesus did suffer horrendous, agonizing pain. Jesus did willingly, lovingly sacrifice His life. Those things are true. But we need to think more deeply. We need to get out of the shallow end, if you will, of the pool and into the depths. And you do that when you begin to see God at Calvary. Jesus was crucified at 9:00 on Friday morning of Passover week. For the first three hours, the people and the rulers and the soldiers and even the criminals dominated the scene. Blasphemy, ridicule, sneering, scorn, abuse, mockery – there’s only one man who’s the exception to the rule through those first three hours, and that’s one of the thieves who is given life and light from God and sees the truth and is wonderfully saved while he’s hanging next to Jesus. The rest are content to run the joke as far as they can, but the comedy ends at noon. They’ve had their three hours and it’s over, and when it was over it was really over. God took center stage. It had been the people’s theater; it was now God’s theater. They had been the actors on the stage and now God would be the actor. These three verses are simple enough. They don’t really require an outline. It would almost be to intrude in their simplicity. You certainly don’t want to sermonize this, as if somehow you could gild this lily. The structure is obvious. This is no place to contrive some mechanism that invades the simple magnificence of this, so let’s just look at these three verses and see what they tell us.

Verse 44, “It was now” - or already – “the sixth hour.” That would be noon. That would be noon. The Jewish day essentially began at 6:00 a.m. Now remember, they didn’t have clocks so they didn’t tell time in hours and minutes and seconds. The Jewish day began about 6:00 a.m. An hour varied in length at different seasons of the year, but the sixth hour was always midday - the sun at its apex. That’s a very important fact. Spring in the land of Israel, high noon. Brilliant, dry, arid, sunny; almost so sunny that you find yourself squinting even when you look away from the sun. High noon. Turn to John 19 because I want to clarify something for you. John, like Matthew, Mark and Luke, has his historical record of the death of our Lord Jesus Christ, which perfectly accords with all the others. But there’s an interesting note to point out here in John 19 and verse 14. Jesus is before Pilate and it says in verse 14 it’s the day of preparation for the Passover. Jesus is at the judgment seat, according to verse 13, called The Pavement. In Hebrew, *Gabbatha*. And He’s before Pilate. And it says there “it was about the sixth hour.” We just read in Luke 23 that it was the sixth hour and Jesus had already been on the cross three hours. It was 9:00 in the morning by Jewish accounting. How can it also be the sixth hour when Jesus is with Pilate? Simple answer. When you’re in Pilate’s judgment hall, and Pilate’s domain, you’re in Roman time, and Roman time is calculated from midnight.

It is 6:00 a.m. when Jesus is before Pilate and Pilate finally decides, even though he knows Jesus is innocent, under the pressure and manipulation of the people and their intimidation, that he will send Jesus to be crucified. And so John simply notes that it's 6:00 in the morning Roman time, He's still before Pilate. Three hours later, at 9:00 in the morning, He is crucified. Three hours after that, the comedy ends. During those three hours that Jesus is on the cross - you can go back to Luke 23 - during the time Jesus is on the cross our Lord speaks three times. First He says, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do." Secondly He looks at His mother, Mary, and John, the beloved apostle, and He says, "Behold your mother. Behold your son." What He's doing is committing the care of His mother to John. And the third thing He said was, to the thief hanging beside Him, "Today you will be with Me in paradise." Three hours, He only made three statements. The air was filled with verbiage, but it was mockery and scorn and sneering and abuse being thrown into the face of the crucified Jesus by the crowd. But at noon it says this: "darkness fell over the whole land until the ninth hour, the sun being obscured" - literally "failing, going out."

This is midday, high noon, the sun at its apex in the middle of the sky, blazing brightness; instantaneously pitch blackness. The sun goes out; there's no moon. There are no stars. Pitch black. You can't even imagine the shock. Can't imagine. They knew what they'd been doing, mocking, blaspheming, and all of a sudden, in an eerie, frightening, panicking, disturbing moment shattering their security, sobering their frivolous minds. Without warning their world goes pitch black. No electricity; only those ubiquitous oil lamps with a floating wick – and nobody had those in the middle of the day. It falls over the whole land. We don't know how far. Calvary, Jerusalem, Judea? We don't know how far, but it engulfed that nation. What caused this blackness? Some have suggested that this is a natural eclipse. That is not possible, since Passover is set by the full moon and you can't have an eclipse with a full moon. Others have suggested that this is the presence of Satan who is bringing the power of darkness on the head of Jesus. Well, we do know that earlier in Luke Jesus had said, "This is the hour for the darkness." And we understand that Satan's kingdom is characterized by moral and spiritual darkness, but Satan is not in charge of the natural world. Yes, moral darkness; yes, spiritual darkness; but this is neither. This is darkness of a natural kind, but with no natural explanation.

We only have one other alternative and that is God. How would the Jews view this? Would say they, "Whoa, an eclipse!"? No, full moon, Passover. Would they say, "Satan has arrived!"? Would they? No. No. What would they say? What would be their first thought when instantaneous, total darkness hit them and they couldn't see their hand in front of their faces and the darkness lasted for three solid hours? They couldn't move. They couldn't walk down the hill. They couldn't go anywhere. There was no light anyplace. What would they think? What would be the thought that entered their minds? Somebody might say they wouldn't think about God because God is light. Sometimes it's true. God did appear originally in leading Israel out of Egypt as a light by day and light by night; a cloud of light by day and a fiery light by night. And God did come down in Shekinah light to dwell in the holy of

holies in the tabernacle and again in the temple, and it is true that Psalm 27:1 and other psalms say, “The Lord is my light and my salvation,” and God associates Himself with light. But they also knew more often God associates Himself with darkness. They knew that very well. That would go all the way back to the 15th chapter of Genesis where God comes to make a covenant with Abram, and God says He’s going to make a covenant with you to bless you, and through you to bless the world: the Abrahamic Covenant. And I want to seal that covenant in blood, so I want you to kill some animals, cut them in half, put them opposite each other. Put a dead bird over here and a dead bird over here and get all those bloody pieces lined up, which is what they did in ancient times. They did that as a symbol of making a blood covenant. The two people who made the covenant walked through the bloody pieces and that sealed the covenant.

Only in God’s case, this is a unilateral, unconditional covenant that God makes with Himself and there are no conditions that Abram has to fulfill, so He puts Abram to sleep. This is exactly what Genesis says happens when God arrives. “When the sun was going down, behold, terror and great darkness.” When God showed up, He showed up as darkness. He showed up in judgment form. In Exodus chapter 10, again with the people of Israel, darkness is associated with the presence of God. The Lord said to Moses, “Stretch out your hand toward the sky.” This is in Egypt. “That there may be darkness over the land of Egypt, even a darkness which may be felt.” When God brings the darkness, it’s so thick you can feel it. In the 19th chapter of Exodus, “After they had left Egypt they came to the foot of Mount Sinai and they stood at the foot of the mountain” – chapter 19 and verse 17. But verse 16 says, “There was thunder and lightning flashes and a thick cloud upon the mountain.” Verse 18 says, “The Lord descended and fire with Him, and its smoke ascended like the smoke of a furnace and the whole mountain quaked violently.” The 20th chapter repeats the same drama. God comes; there is darkness, thick cloud, smoke. You find the same representation of God in Isaiah 8:22 and other places.

The people of Israel would then well know that the presence of God could be associated with supernatural, inexplicable darkness. We’re not talking about a few clouds rolling across in front of the sun. We’re talking about pitch black darkness. But there was something even more to it because the darkness side of God was always associated with judgment, with judgment. There is a very familiar theme in the Old Testament, and it’s built around an expression called the Day of the Lord. The Day of the Lord. Sometimes you’ll even see it in capital letters because it’s a technical term. What it does is describe final judgment as if to say today is the day of man, but there is coming the Day of the Lord. There is coming the day when God comes in final eschatological, devastating, destructive judgment. And the Day of the Lord is associated with judgment and judgment with darkness. Joel 1; Joel writes about it, verse 15, “Alas for the day! For the day of the Lord is near; and it will come as destruction from the Almighty.” What are its characteristics? Joel chapter 2, verse 10: “The earth quakes, the heavens tremble, the sun and the moon grow dark. The stars lose their brightness. The Lord utters His voice before His army. Surely His camp is very great for strong is he who carries out His word. The day of the Lord is indeed great and very awesome and who can endure it?”

It is destruction. It is devastation. It is deadly and no one survives. At the end of that second chapter of Joel, in verse 30: “I will display wonders in the sky and on the earth,” continuing to speak about the day of the Lord. “Blood, fire, columns of smoke. The sun will be turned into darkness, the moon into blood before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes.” The next of the prophets is Amos. Amos chapter 5, verse 20, “Will not the day of the Lord be darkness instead of light?” Amos 8:9, “‘It will come about in that day,’ declares the Lord God, ‘that I will make the sun go down at noon and make the earth dark in broad daylight.’” Pretty specific. Zephaniah 1:14, “Near is the great day of the Lord, near and coming very quickly. Listen, the day of the Lord! In it the warrior cries out bitterly. A day of wrath is that day, a day of trouble and distress, a day of destruction and desolation, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness.”

They knew supernatural darkness was associated with divine judgment. It was associated not only with divide presence but divine presence in judgment. Not only divine presence in judgment, but that final judgment. The thought must have struck them as they were sneering and mocking Jesus and their whole world went pitch black in a moment, that the comedy was really over. By the way, a few verses later when they went down the hill finally when the light came back, they were pounding their breasts, a sign of grief and fear. Darkness symbolizes divine wrath. This kind of pitch blackness, more severe than the darkness that occurred in the covenant with Abraham, more severe than the darkness that occurred at Sinai, this is Day of the Lord darkness. This is that final darkness. What does it symbolize? The presence of God in judgment. That’s why I say there’s a new actor on the stage. The main character is now God, and He has taken center stage. God arrived at Calvary - not in light, but in darkness. He showed up to unleash judgment, not in the eschatological sense in the future against the ungodly, but in the soteriological sense against the godly One. What is really going on at Calvary, folks – and this is where you go deeper with the understanding of it – it’s beyond the physical suffering, it’s beyond the sacrifice of Christ.

What’s happening here is divine wrath is being poured out in its final form. Eternal wrath is about to be released and the darkness is everywhere. You could say it another way. God brought hell to Jerusalem that day. Matthew 8, verse 12; Matthew 22, verse 13; Matthew 25, verse 30, Jesus calls hell “outer darkness,” the ultimate black hole where there’s weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth in the eternal, unrelieved blackness. It is the darkness of God’s judgment presence. So from noon to 3:00, hell came to Jerusalem and Judea. God showed up in wrath, and the interesting thing is it wasn’t wrath on the Romans, and it wasn’t wrath on the Jewish leaders, and it wasn’t wrath on the people; it was wrath on the Son. God unleashed the full extent of His fury on Jesus Christ. As Isaiah put it in Isaiah 13:9, “Wrath with fierce anger.” Hell came there. What is hell? Hell is where God punishes people forever. Hell is where God pours out His fury on people forever. God is the power behind the punishment in hell. When you say that hell is being separated from God, only in the sense of His comforting presence, not in the sense of His punishing presence. He is the one who destroys both soul and body in hell. He is the King of hell, Satan is not. And God, who is the punisher of all the

souls in eternal hell, shows up in the darkness of Calvary to punish His Son, and He gives His Son eternal hell on behalf of all who would ever believe.

This is the cup that Jesus anticipated in the garden with such revulsion that He asked if there was any way He could avoid it. During those three hours there's no comedy, folks. There's no sneering, there's no scorning, there's no mocking, there's no blasphemy, there's no taunting recorded. No one said anything, not even Jesus. Jesus doesn't speak for these three hours. Neither does anybody else. In these three hours, Jesus suffers the eternal hell for all who would believe. So the darkness is not the absence of God, it is the opposite. It is the presence of God in full judgment, vengeance and fury; infinite wrath moved by infinite righteousness releases infinite punishment on the infinite Son who can absorb an eternal hell for all who will ever believe in three hours. It is here that He bears in His own body our sins. It is here that He has made sin for us who knew no sin. It is here that He is wounded for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquity. It is here that He is made a curse for us. These are the three hours of the wrath of God on Him. This is a stunning thing to think about. All the people who will spend forever in hell will spend forever there because they will never be able to pay for their sins. And yet Jesus, in three hours, would pay in full for all the sins of all the people who would ever believe. How? Because an infinite amount of wrath can only be absorbed by an infinite person.

Stunning. It says, "Darkness fell over the whole land until the ninth hour." At the ninth hour, it was gone. Three hours. Three o'clock in the afternoon and the light returns. Mark tells us what Jesus said. He speaks. Mark 15, verse 33, "When the sixth hour had come" - the same thing Luke says - "darkness fell over the whole land until the ninth hour." At the ninth hour, three o'clock, darkness is now gone. At that ninth hour, darkness has disappeared, "Jesus cried with a loud voice, '*Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?'* which is translated, 'My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?'" How are we to understand this? Theologians have thought and talked and written volumes on this. I certainly don't expect to have any more profound understanding of this than they, but I don't think it's as complicated as some have tried to make it. Perhaps the expectation of Jesus the man was when the darkness was over and He had borne in full for the satisfaction of God the fury of God on behalf of all who would believe, that there would have been immediate comfort. There would have been instantaneous affection from the Father. That He would have not sensed the judgment presence of God, but He would have sensed the sweet, communing comfort of fellowship with God. But He doesn't. He doesn't.

The wrath is done. God has been there in full presence. He hasn't been absent; He's been present pouring out His wrath. But when the darkness fled, so did God in some inexplicable, divine way. I think what our Lord is saying is, "Where's the comfort?" There was a moment after the judgment was over, after He had borne all the fury of God's judgment presence, that He expected sweet comfort and it wasn't there. And in the unimaginable exhaustion after the darkness, "My God, my God. Why have you forsaken me?" That's a fair question. Why didn't God bring Him instant comfort, instant, sweet communion? Well, it seems to me that this is the final suffering of hell. This is a reminder to all

sinners that while hell is the full fury of God's personal punishment presence, He will never be there to comfort. He will never be there to show sympathy. He will never bring relief. And if Jesus is to endure a full hell, it is both a punishment of God and the absence of comfort. This is hell, and hell came to Calvary that day in its fullness. "Why have you forsaken me?" But that's hell. That's hell. Punishment without relief.

The expression, "My God, my God" you might think of that as somewhat indifferent or less affectionate than "Father." It's the only time in the entire New Testament where Jesus refers to God as anything other than "Father"; always "Father" except, "My God, my God." Is that indicative of some kind of a change in His attitude toward God? Has He lost His affection for His Father? I think I can help you with that. Jesus used double expressions on a number of occasions. The first one is, "Martha, Martha." Was that an absence of affection? I don't think so. It was the presence of disappointment, wasn't it? "Martha, Martha." It's an intimate expression. It's an expression of love with disappointment in it. How about this? That's Luke 10:41. How about Luke 20:22-31? He looks at Peter and says what? "Simon, Simon." Is that a lack of love? No. That's an expression of intimacy with disappointment in it. How about Luke 13:34? "Jerusalem, Jerusalem." Is that a lack of love? "How often I would have gathered you, but you would not. Now your house has left you desolate." It's affection with disappointment in it. And so is, "My God, my God." It's intimate, endearing affection with disappointment, not unlike David who said, "Absalom, Absalom." My son. It's affection with disappointment.

You can flip it and hear this, Matthew 7, "Many will say unto Me, 'Lord, Lord,' and I'll say 'I never knew you.'" Those people who are turned down by the Lord, who have in their own minds that they have a very intimate relationship with Him, will be disappointed. When he says, "My God, my God," this is intimate, but it's the disappointment of the moment. Where's the comfort? But that's the hell that He endured. And then verse 45, God punctuated the work that He had done on the cross. Luke tells us – this is so stunning, but such understatement – "And the veil of the temple was torn in two." You read that and it's kind of a ho-hum line. You've got to understand what's going on here. It's been dark for three hours, pitch black. Nobody could see the hand in front of their face. They've been standing around for three hours trying to communicate and figure out what's going on. They would associate that with the divine presence and judgment. You've got priests down at the temple getting ready to start the slaughter of tens of thousands of lambs and other animals, ready to do their bloody butchering work on Passover. You've got all the worshipers, people that are not up where Calvary is, they're down in the middle of the city milling around by the hundreds of thousands of them – estimates run as high as a couple million – and they have been standing frozen wherever they are for three hours. The light comes on and I suppose if we just focus on the priests at the temple, they try to gather themselves, make up for the lost time in the darkness, and let's start the process, because between 3:00 and 5:00 is when you kill the Passover lambs.

Just as they begin to kill the Passover lambs, they hear a noise; a loud, tearing sound coming from inside the holy place, in the holy of holies, as God rips the curtain from the top to the bottom. Matthew tells us it was from the top to the bottom. Luke just says it was in two. Right down the middle, God ripped that curtain. There were at least 13 curtains in the temple, but one of them was the most important. That was the one that blocked the holy of holies and it was there because God ordained it to be there, because the way to God had not yet officially been opened. The high priests could go in there once a year and that's all, and only the high priests and only for a moment to sprinkle blood on the mercy seat and then get back out. Access to God had not been officially activated. "Holy of holies" symbolized the presence of God and was closed to everyone, but at 3:00, right on the nose or around that time, light dawns and God rips open the holy of holies because Jesus Christ has officially activated access. The cross is atonement. The curtain is access. By His death, the New Covenant is ratified. It had been in effect. People had been saved before that, but the official ratification and activation of that New Covenant didn't happen until Jesus died on the cross, and then God split the curtain and threw open the way to His presence.

When that happened, the temple was obsolete. The high priest was obsolete. All the priests were obsolete. All the sacrifices were obsolete. Everything going on in that place was obsolete. It was over. They were all shadows; they were all symbols of what was to come. So precisely at the moment the priests were beginning to slaughter animals who could not take away sin, God ripped open His presence because of the sacrifice of One who did take away sin. What a moment! What a moment!

Earlier in the week, Jesus had pronounced physical destruction on the temple, "Not one stone will be left upon another," chapter 21, verses five and six. And here God renders spiritual judgments on the whole system. That whole system, that whole entire system of the temple was to provide a means by which a sinner could have access to God, but none of it ever accomplished that until Jesus died on the cross and God said that did it and ripped open the curtain. If you read the ninth chapter of Hebrews you will read in the opening eight verses about how God has designed this place and a holy of holies and a curtain and separation and no one can go there. And then you flow down to chapter 9 and you come to verse 11 to 14 and all of a sudden things dramatically change. Listen to Hebrews 9 and verse 11, "But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things to come, He entered through the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands. That is to say not of this creation. Not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood. He entered the holy place, once and for all having attained eternal redemption." This is the ratification of the New Covenant, and so in chapter 10 of Hebrews, verse 19 says, "Since Jesus opened the way to the holy place, we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which He inaugurated for us through the veil that is His flesh. So let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience, our bodies washed with pure water." We can now rush, Hebrews 4:16 says, "into the throne of grace to receive mercy and help in time of need." God ripped the curtain; the work was done.

By the way, at the same moment, Matthew 27:51 says this: “And the earth quaked and the rocks were split.” This is an earthquake powerful enough to split rocks. We know about earthquakes here in Southern California. This is a powerful earthquake that splits rocks open. I don’t know what that would be on the Richter - eight? An earthquake with that kind of force would have brought Jerusalem to a halt. This is a pretty scary day, all things considered. And you know what they would have associated the earthquakes with? I read to you about earthquakes being associated with the presence of God and judgment on the Day of the Lord in the prophets. When God came down to Sinai, it says in Exodus 19:18, the whole mountain quaked. Psalm 18:7 says, “The earth shook and trembled. The foundations of the hills quaked and were shaken because God was angry.” When things go black, it’s divine judgment. When the earth shakes, it’s divine anger. Psalm 68:8, “The earth shook, the heavens dropped rain at the presence of God. Sinai was moved at the presence of God, the God of Israel.” And Nahum the prophet wrote in his little prophecy, “The mountains quaked before Him, the hills melt, the earth heaves at His presence, yes, the world and all who dwell in it.” God is in the darkness. God is in the earthquake. The Revelation tells us in the end, at the final judgment, there will be earthquakes the likes of which the world has never, ever experienced.

This is the fury of God. Not against the religious leaders, not against the Jews, not against the Romans, not against those people, but against His Son. God is there in judgment presence. That’s not all. Yes, He’s there in judgment presence, but don’t forget He also ripped the veil – the negatives indicated by the darkness and the earthquake, the positive effect of that judgment is the way is opened. There is one more positive effect. This is what Matthew says in Matthew 27:52, “The graves were opened,” right after the earthquake, “many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised, coming out of the graves after His resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many.” Wow! What are the consequences of Christ’s work on the cross? Access to God and life after death. And God puts on a dramatic illustration of that, rips the veil, which means access is open; people come out of the graves that have been dead in glorified bodies. They don’t appear until after the resurrection so that Christ is clearly the first fruits of all who have risen, and they go around and give testimony to the resurrection power of Christ. What a day. When God showed up in judgment He also showed up in salvation, didn’t He? Judgment on His Son and salvation for us. All the fury goes on Christ and the way is open for us. All the fury goes on Christ. Life after death is made available to us.

After the darkness is gone, after the earthquake is over, after the veil is ripped, the chaos must have been beyond description in Jerusalem, but there is a serene calm on that middle cross, a serene calm. Turn to John 19, and Jesus, at this moment, is the eye in the middle of the hurricane. Perfect calm. John 19:28, “After this” - after all those things we described - “Jesus, knowing that all things had already been accomplished in order that the Scripture might be fulfilled.” It’s over. It’s all over. He’s taken it all. The way is open. Resurrection life is provided. He’s done. And in that sweet, serene calm, He says, “I’m thirsty.” So wonderfully human. He wouldn’t drink anything, remember, all the way

through so that He would feel the full experience of everything coming His way. But it's over. "I'm thirsty." "A jar full of sour wine was standing there, so they put a sponge full of the sour wine, of vinegar really, on a branch and brought it up to His mouth. When Jesus, therefore, had received the sour wine, He said, '*Tetelestai!* - It is finished!' He bowed His head, gave up His spirit." Just before he yielded up His spirit, go back to Luke 23 and we'll close there.

Just before, after He had said, "I'm thirsty," after He had triumphantly said, "It is finished," – one word in Greek – just before He gave up His spirit, Luke 23:46 says, "And Jesus, crying out with a loud voice," very important. Matthew 27:50 says the same thing. Mark 15:37 says the same thing. It would be impossible for a crucified victim to do that if he were dying a natural death because you die of asphyxiation. No oxygen, no strength, barely able to whisper, and incoherent in the trauma of death by crucifixion. He is strong. He is triumphant. He said in John 10, "The great shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. He said no one takes My life from Me. I lay it down on My own initiative. I have the power to lay it down or the authority to lay it down and I have authority to take it up again." Nobody takes my life. This is the proof. "He cries out with a loud voice." He shouts at the top of His lungs in full strength. What does He say? "Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit." Well, all the Jews around there would have understood that. That was Psalm 31:5. That was Psalm 31:5, a very familiar verse. In fact it was so familiar, it was their evening prayer. That was their night prayer before they went to bed. It was their, "Now-I-lay-me-down-to-sleep" prayer. "Into Your hands I commit My spirit." Very familiar to all of them. They prayed it regularly. But there were two changes He made in it. First He added something, "Father." Sweet communion has been reestablished. Hell was there for three hours and then it was gone. Punishment is over. The suffering is over. Sweet communion with the Father reestablished.

And then he left something out. Psalm 31:5 ends like this: "You have ransomed me, O God, God of truth," or, "You have redeemed me." Well, it was not He who was redeemed at the cross; He was the redeemer. Oh, the precision of Scripture is something, isn't it? He added "Father" to let us know that this relationship all that we would expect it to be. And He took out the part about being redeemed because He wasn't redeemed; He was the redeemer. Jesus borrows from that psalm because Psalm 31 is about the prayer of a righteous sufferer who is in the midst of his suffering saying, "All I can do is commit my heart to You, commit my spirit to You, commit my life to You." And Jesus is the perfect, sinless, righteous sufferer who in death expresses perfect trust in His Father's love and promise to receive Him. Peter said He didn't revile, He committed Himself to a faithful creator. By the way, Stephen borrowed that. Remember when Stephen died, he said, "Jesus, receive my spirit," just as Jesus said, "Father, receive Mine."

So Luke says after that, "Having said this he breathed His last." Very descriptive in its simplicity but yet very restrained. So God had slain His own Passover lamb, and God's own Passover lamb was His first born. How do we respond to this? Well, we'll look at this next time, but let's borrow verse 47 at least to close. "When the centurion saw what had happened he began" – What? What? Yeah,

that’s the way to respond, isn’t it? What other kind of response would there be than praising God? Every benediction in the New Testament is an expression of praise to God for redemption. We want to join the heavenly chorus and sing “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain” as we receive power and honor and glory and riches and wisdom and strength. There’s only one way to respond and that’s to say, “Were the whole realm of nature mine, that were a present far too small.” I don’t want anything this world has to offer. I give it all up for Christ, my all and all.

Father, we thank You for the picture that is so compellingly vivid and clear at Calvary, our Lord Jesus bearing Your judgment and wrath and our punishment. We just are speechless at this point in thinking about the greatness of His sacrifice and the greatness of Your grace toward us who are so utterly unworthy. Lord, do Your work in our hearts and we’ll thank you. We want to live the kinds of lives that demonstrate that thanks. We pray for the glory of Christ, as always. Amen.

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