

# 4/15/22 - John 19:16-42 - "5 Declarations of the Cross"

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[ 0 : 00 ] I was reflecting this week, many weeks, if you want to be honest, about all the evil that is encircling Jesus Christ in his last hours leading to the cross, leading to his death on the cross.

And how can we be assured, truly assured, that this all happened scene by scene as we see John record?

How do we know that this happened occurring to God's plan? Every detail, right? With so much pride that has actually cuffed Jesus to the Roman government and the pain upon his body, has all of this actually been a part of God's plan all along?

Well, John makes it clear that everything is happening precisely according to God's divine decree. Whether Jesus Christ has a heart that is beating or even following after his heart stops beating, God is in control and working out his will.

And we cannot escape the surety of a passage like this. I mean, take a step back, even looking at our own world today, that we can observe so much chaos and confusion that's occurring in our world.

[ 1 : 36 ] The evil, the anti-biblical ideologies that seem to be aiming to attack God's word and take his church as far away from its founder as possible, right?

And we often forget that God is working all things out, even amidst the evil. And I believe as we observe the passage tonight on this Good Friday, Friday, it will serve to remind us that God is still in control amid the world's pride, amid the world's greed, amid the world's hatred, and even amidst our own grief of loss in this life.

God is in control. Now, a simple phrase with profound truth is this, that even the vilest act of the world against the church providentially serves the purposes of God, even the vilest of acts against the church.

And we see that at this very moment at the cross. The cross is the object that confirms that evil serves the goodness of God. Evil serves the plans of God.

Evil is a slave to God. And God is always in control. And in this, we can both have good news today, and we could also have a challenge. The good news is that we are confident even in the darkest times in our life, where we see that sun setting and all is going to hell.

[ 3 : 22 ] Or we can be challenged that in those times, we can be confronted with our own proneness to wander, our own proneness to forget that God is in control, and reflect not confidence, but compromise.

So, moreover, even if you are not a Christian here gathered with us today, will you look upon the cross today at the forgiveness of the cross and life offered and still continue to in unbelief?

I hope that you change your mind and that you are proven through God's word that there is only a response by those who hear this message to, in fact, believe. Regardless of where you are, don't lose focus tonight, and let's see the five declarations of the cross.

And so, I'm going to set this scene up in the passage as John naturally sets a narrative up with what's going on, the locations and things like that. Let's look at this setup at the end of verse 16 in chapter 19.

It says, so he delivered him over to them to be crucified. That was our message on Sunday. And the next section is, so they took Jesus and he went out bearing his own cross to the place called the place of a skull, which is in Aramaic, is called Golgotha, and that's Hebrew church.

[ 5 : 02 ] We get our word Calvary in the Latin version of that. And there they crucified him and with him two others, one on either side and Jesus between them.

We often lose sight of the fact that Jesus, within just a couple of verses, Jesus is taken from one location to another.

And we forget the suffering that happened all along the way. We forget often the ongoing humiliation, the ongoing shame, the ongoing hatred, mockery that Jesus Christ bore literally for over six football fields in length, carrying a plank upon his shoulders, weighing about 80 to 100 pounds.

Just over six football fields in length. Could you imagine? After his body being ripped apart in his torture. And then none other.

You get to Calvary, the place of a skull, Golgotha. And you have echoes of Scripture's Christocentric themes that have been resonating all throughout this history as Peter had read in Isaiah.

[ 6 : 19 ] And we even see in Psalm 22, 16, that a band of evil men have encircled me as David was pleading out to God for help.

We see Isaiah 53, 12, that he was numbered with the transgressors. That Jesus Christ was positioned just as Scripture had promised he would be.

And none other. This is the day of preparation. As we just came out of Sunday morning's sermon, right? In verse 14, it says, now it was the day of preparation.

The day of preparation. This is when the Jewish nation at large would be preparing their lambs for slaughter. And Jesus Christ is similarly being prepared by the world for his slaughter and mounted up on a 10-foot-high pole and nailed to a cross.

His nails, his feet are nailed to the cross. He's stripped completely of all of his clothes. He's exposed to the entire world, completely vulnerable, with his arms open wide, as if inviting the world to behold your sin.

[ 7 : 45 ] How often we forget this? And it's at this moment that John records the providential working of God in five declarations leading from the cross and to the cross.

And so we see the first declaration that Jesus Christ is our King. We need to personalize this and say our King. We see in verse 19, John makes this so.

He says, Pilate also wrote an inscription and put it on the cross. It read, Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews. Many of the Jews read this inscription for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city.

And it was written in Aramaic, in Latin, and in Greek. So the chief priest of the Jews said to Pilate, Do not write the King of the Jews, but rather this man said, I am the King of the Jews.

And Pilate answered, What I have written, I have written. I could almost sense his tone just being, just trying to get these Jewish men out of his hair after all of this Jewish trial, the Roman trial, everything that took place previously.

[ 9 : 02 ] It's not uncommon for Roman crucifixion to put a little plaque above the head of those being crucified. This would often create an ongoing humiliation and shaming of that criminal who was hanging on the cross.

It would be the equivalent, if you're anything like me, you wore that dunce hat in grade school. I think maybe that's not a thing anymore. The culture might be too sensitive at this point.

But, you know, the movies with the dunce hat. It was the way of just shaming you in the middle of the public, just like the middle of a classroom.

And now, regardless of the Jews, Pilate probably found a sense of humor in this, of writing King of the Jews in every language known at that time.

Aramaic, Latin, and Greek. Aramaic being the language of the Jewish people. Latin being the language of the Roman region. And then Greek being the culture at large.

[ 10 : 07 ] Everyone would be able to say, see, King of the Jews as they passed by. And not only mocking Jesus Christ, but also Pilate mocking Jesus Christ's enemies, the Jewish people.

Now, if you can remember, in a sermon long, long ago, in an archive far, far away, probably back in 2019, when we started this series, John the Baptist said something peculiar in chapter 1, verse 29.

He says, In so doing, think about it, Pilate is providentially used as a vessel to announce to the whole world, in three languages, God's judgment and victory through Jesus Christ.

And the final hours of Jesus Christ has gone international. It's an international declaration of who he is.

And a similar declaration that will occur in the final days of all history. Listed in Revelation 7, 9. Behold, a great multitude from every nation, tribes, peoples, languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb.

[11:34] Verse 10. And crying out with a loud voice, salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne and to the Lamb. You see, the declaration of the cross is that Jesus Christ is King.

Man's pride and sinful agenda has providentially worked to support the very claim that they intended to mock. Isn't that powerful to see this unfolding, not only before John's eyes, but before our eyes and having the canon of Scripture as a whole within our grasp?

So might we, too, remember amidst a mocking world that burdens us of carrying a similar declaration of who Jesus Christ is?

That the world's resistance to that message, to that declaration that Jesus Christ is King, should actually providentially affirm its validity.

That the pushback we receive is actually confirmation of what Jesus Christ did and the truth that the world despises. That is the first declaration John lays out for us.

[12:55] We see a second declaration that Jesus Christ is the high priest. And that's seen in verse 23. When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they took his garments and divided them into four parts, one part for each soldier, also his tunic.

But the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom. And they said to one another, John says, John says, At the same instance of Jesus being lifted up, Jesus is stripped completely naked.

And the Roman government, the Roman soldiers claimed his clothes and gambled away his seamless, woven tunic.

John, it seems like you gave a little bit of extra detail with that tunic. What's up with this tunic? Why not describe the nice sandals Jesus was wearing instead?

But a tunic. The details regarding this tunic are absolutely remarkable. In that they describe perfectly priestly garments.

[14:32] Not only that, they also describe perfectly the drapes of the temple of the Old Testament. And the scriptural allusions date back to King David in Psalm 22 and even further than that.

But they don't detail necessarily a desperate king in search for a God who appears absent. But he's actually turning into a fulfillment of Psalm 22, verse 18, of being in Christ is reconstituted the powerful king and the priest.

And the ever-present God. If the first declaration was behold Jesus Christ, the king, the second declaration is behold the high priest of high priests.

In the person of Jesus Christ being the high priest, we find the fulfillment of our intercessions. We find the fulfillment of sacrifice on our behalf.

We find the fulfillment of being reconciled to a holy God. We see the fulfillment of the pardon for our sin by his blood and atonement thereof.

[15:52] We see the fulfillment of our forgiveness in Jesus Christ alone, our high priest. Living in our region in Youngstown, there's a lot of emphasis about ways to be in communion with God.

And various mediators that we can probably draw, some of them being dead saints like Mary, Peter, John, and all the list goes on and on.

There might be some that I don't even know about, but they pray to them and access God through them. Or possibly even spiritual gifts in Pentecostalism.

And we're reminded here that it's through Jesus Christ alone that we receive access to God. Jesus Christ made it possible to access a holy and just God.

So you see, considering the greediness of man gambling and profiting off of God, we're reminded that even though that exists still in this life, we're reminded of God's supreme and providential control.

[17:05] The world's greedy ends are always trapped in aligning into God's righteous ends. So whatever the world plans out to meet their ends, God is working out to achieve his ends.

And we see the third declaration here. Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And I want us to feel something in this text. I want us to see the whirlwind.

I want us to feel the whirlwind of greed and pride that's been occurring up to this point. Because John hits a pivotal moment in his account of the crucifixion.

And Jesus Christ's voice goes out from the cross to people standing there. It says the soldiers did these things.

But standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother and his mother's sister. And also Mary, the wife of Clopas.

[18:13] And Mary Magdalene. And when Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, Woman, behold your son.

And then he said to the disciple, Behold your mother. And from that hour, the disciple took her to his own home.

Boy. Two things stand out within the context of our lives and in the midst of the context of the gospel of John.

And that's that no words can describe the pain and agony that Mary was feeling at that moment. No words can describe what she was feeling at that moment. There is just this natural connection between a mother and their child that still exists even long after the umbilical cord is cut and you have independent lives growing.

[19:30] There is that unique attachment that we're seeing in the midst of this narrative. Not only that, you have Jewish tradition with the Jewish Shavah of the seven days, a week-long mourning process where the Jewish people would actually hire professional people to weep with the family, alongside the family.

And here you have Mary surrounded by relatives and friends as she enters into this season of grief. And using tactful words culturally so, Jesus detaches from the earthly familial relationship and attaches the inaugurated divine familial relationship instead.

He says essentially to his mother, Behold your God. This is a moment that Jesus is emphasizing of which the angel of the Lord appeared to young Mary 33 years previously when Jesus was in the womb saying, prepare for this.

This is the Messiah. He is coming. Mary had 33 years to prepare for this moment and what a grieving process that still entailed.

Jesus Christ never once abandoned her, though, as her son. Isn't that interesting? From the cross, struggling to breathe, Jesus Christ hanging there in his last moments.

[21:14] His body is ripped to shreds. Blood is still coming out of the wounds. And feeling the pain of his body, he still found it worthy to assign mother-like care for her in this time of grief.

Imagine the love that he had. As he tells the disciple whom he loved, Behold your mother.

Essentially, care for this woman. She is grieving. We see the sonship of Christ unfolding as declared from the cross and of which we as a church have been adopted into.

Into sons and daughters of the cross in the hope that we remind ourselves of that similar hope that helps us in our grief as well.

No matter what life brings us, no matter the loss that we experience in this life, our hope is found in Christ alone.

[22:29] It is not found in anywhere else, any form of entertainment, any form of entertainment in this life, into our minds or in our wallets, our hope is found in Christ alone because Christ is the greatest grief giver that can console the deepest sorrows of our life, church.

And knowing that Jesus Christ has broken through his pain to console his own mother, we are assured that Jesus Christ will be able to break through our pain to console our deepest grief as well.

And I hope that you see this. Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And we see the fourth declaration. Jesus Christ is our Lamb of God. After this, Jesus, Jesus knowing that all was now finished, said, and John helps us with a little note of commentary, he said, to fulfill the scripture, I thirst.

verse 29, a jar full of sour wine stood there. So they put a sponge full of the sour wine on a hyssop branch and held it to his mouth.

[23:59] When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, it is finished. And he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

Indeed, church, no one took his life from him. He gave it up. He volunteered his life. If you could imagine dying on a cross, it would probably be very difficult for us to probably imagine that pain. Jesus is within a couple breaths away, as context alludes to. And I would imagine, if it were us hanging on the cross, the last thing we would be concerned about within just probably a couple dozen breaths left in our lungs to breathe, the last thing we're concerned about is a dry mouth, if we

want to be honest.

No, this isn't dying in hospice where you're trying to be comforted and you give little ice chips to make things more comfortable. Your flesh isn't ripped in hospice.

You are not going through. You're fully cognitively aware on the cross, not in hospice. And Jesus says, I thirst.

[ 25 : 16 ] To put it simply, tending to thirst in a crucifixion would only serve to prolong the suffering. It would only prolong the pain that he was feeling because when you're hanging on a cross with your flesh ripped, death at that point would be a gift to you to end that pain and that agony.

And with that in mind, could it be that the thirst Jesus Christ has upon the cross is a little bit deeper than a dry mouth? I would think so.

The king, the high priest, the son of God, thirsts. Think about that. What on earth would give God himself thirst in the final moments of his life?

I would tend to think it would be justice in this final moment. Think. The Romans were probably willing to give up their little jar of water that's full to the brim that will just give them more energy to continue to inflict pain upon Jesus on the cross.

I think they would be happy to give him all the water he would want. It will prolong his suffering. And that is their goal. But unbeknownst to them, this was precisely the reason Jesus Christ thirsts.

[ 26 : 46 ] Thirsts. John helps us in the passage to fulfill the scripture he said, I thirst. A thirst for justice to drink the cup of wrath that would continue his ongoing wrath that would fuel the wrath upon his body administered by the very same branch that the Jews used to sprinkle the blood over the lentils for Passover.

the hyssop branch. What's Jesus Christ saying? Justice. He is our Lamb of God.

You see, this thirst for justice according to scripture, having inflicted more pain than any of us could ever imagine, Jesus Christ receives whatever wrath is left to be absorbed in his body and in so doing becomes the Lamb of God.

It is finished. Justice is served in Christ alone. The fifth declaration, final declaration of the cross is Jesus fulfills our Passover.

Passover. We see in verse 31, it gives us an indicator of the day. It was the day of preparation. It was a Friday just like today and so that the bodies would not remain on the cross on the Sabbath.

[ 28 : 20 ] So the Jews asked Pilate essentially, you know, break their legs, expedite this process and so the soldiers came and broke the legs of the other two but when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs.

And read with me in verse 34, but one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear and at once there came out blood and water. Verse 35, he who saw it borne witness.

His testimony is true and he knows that he is telling the truth that you may also, that you also may believe. For these things, as John says, took place that the scripture might be fulfilled, referring to Exodus 12 and Numbers 19 or Numbers 9, not one of his bones will be broken.

And again, another scripture as John helps us says in Zechariah 12, they will look on him whom they have pierced. Let's take a pause real quick there.

The Jews' attitude of expediting this process was so that no criminals would be hung after night.

[ 29 : 40 ] This was by Deuteronomy 21 that if that were to occur, it would defile the land. So they obviously have religious rules that they're attending to as they're killing God in the flesh that they seem to be prioritizing, right?

And so they say to expedite the process. We remember the day of preparation then becomes the day of fulfillment. It is finished.

It is not only the day of preparation, it's a day of fulfillment and providentially speaking, even after Jesus is dead and his heart is no longer beating, it is still providentially being fulfilled.

And it is only a natural progression that John reveals in his book, Contrast. John loves to give us contrasts and what we see here is unbelief and belief.

Look at unbelief. The Jews, they're looking at the other men who are struggling for life. Their flesh hasn't been ripped nearly as much as Jesus' has been, but they're still alive and so they pull out the religious exemption at this time to expedite the process and let's hurry this up before we defile the land.

[ 31 : 00 ] Let's break their legs. After all, right, we want to fulfill our religious calendar. Sabbath is tomorrow. We can't work so we can't deal with the body later. Let's hurry this process up.

Pilate, right, unbelief. But we have one soldier in belief, a witness to the trial, a witness of his crucifixion, of his humiliation and shame, who looked upon Jesus Christ, stabbed him in the side, and at that moment, John details that this Gentile received blood pouring forth, water pouring forth at that very moment.

Now, we know nothing about this soldier, only that the moment of that spear entering Jesus Christ's side, something flipped in his heart.

It is a moment that he believed, a moment where John details this as blood and water pouring out from the cross. Now, could it be that John is another time, metaphorically, bringing into mind a case of blood and water, just as he has symbolically brought into our minds up until this point?

Remember when he last mentioned blood in his gospel, it was when he was feeding the 5,000. And John 6, verse 54 says, whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life.

[ 32 : 37 ] And verse 56 says something similar. Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me and I in him. What does it mean to be abiding in Jesus Christ?

What does it mean to have eternal life? His blood is the object of pardon. His blood is the object of atonement just as it was for the Lamb of God. Just as it was for the Lamb on Passover, so it is for the Lamb of God.

And we also see water being used here. In John 4, talking with the Samaritan woman, whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again.

The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life. John 7, similar.

If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.

[ 33 : 43 ] Water being spiritual life. Water being something happening internal that is welling up, beginning with regeneration.

Think about what's being said here. While scientists have debated whether water and blood were spilling out of Jesus Christ, we know that John has been metaphorically, symbolically referring to those two elements, and I believe it is happening similarly here.

To those who investigate the cross will discover that they will find their source of pardon. They will receive and experience and discover their source of life.

They will discover, believe, they will receive eternal life when blood and water pours out from that cross. Upon the cross of Jesus Christ, Jesus thirsts for justice.

From the cross, we thirst for pardon. We thirst for life. And he gave it to us there. By blood and water, we enter this life.

[ 34 : 56 ] By blood and water, we enter into eternal life. You see what John is doing here. The cross is the only way. And John is pleading to those who are more concerned about their watches, more concerned about their religious calendars to expedite this project here.

Break the legs. Come on, we got a calendar to keep. We got things to do. We got all these exemptions that can justify us to look away from the cross.

And John is making a case to look at the cross as the source of pardon, the source of fulfillment. The cross of Christ is all we need.

And we are assured that the cross declares the fulfillment of the Passover for us too, in Christ and from Christ alone. And then John closes the details here with no ordinary burial.

And we'll come to an end and end with a special song of reflection. verse 38, he closes the narrative by detailing two secretive believers tending to the fleshly corpse of Christ, taking great care, 75 pounds worth of aromas and spices to embalm Jesus according to Jewish traditions.

[ 36 : 25 ] And this is the embalming of none other than a king. This is embalming of the legitimate heir of David. This is the embalming of the Messiah of Israel.

And so they take great care. And verse 41 details something significant. It says, now in the place where he was crucified, there was a garden, and in the garden, a new tomb in which no one had ever been laid.

So because of the Jewish day of preparation, since the tomb was close at hand, they laid Jesus there. And John ends his account of the crucifixion.

For three days, John is silent in his writings, and he'll pick back up with Sunday morning. But after such a massive abuse of Jesus' body, look at what John does in this passage, which is interesting, because what do you see at the beginning of the passage tonight?

You see hatred, you see the most abuse towards Jesus' body, and it ends with such great care. It is finished at this moment.

[ 37 : 46 ] God is accomplishing what no man could do to reverse and correct the wayward path of sin in the world. Think about the garden and what is going on here.

the location of this great care. As God is taking providential great care over his redemption of this world.

Great care. He's never lost control. The garden, think about the garden of the fall where man rejected God and disobeyed his word.

And the cross being the object of man's redemption is seated in a similar garden of redemption where atonement and life are pouring out, which will find its ultimate consummation in the recreated garden for us, all who believe in eternity who believe.

This was no ordinary garden. The cross where Jesus hung was the garden of redemption, and in this garden the tree of life is in the shape of a cross of where blood and water pour out to say believe.

[ 39 : 03 ] This is no ordinary tomb. This is a new tomb. No one else had been in that tomb nor will anyone else only use that tomb for three days and then rise.

No ordinary garden, no ordinary tomb. And so church, being in the 22nd century, God only knows what tomorrow is going to hold with whatever freedom and religious provisions and exemptions that we can use in this life.

We know that things are only going to get more difficult for those who believe, and scripture makes that clear. So we, as a church, in the 22nd century, have no reason at all to fear.

We have no reason to fear or be doubtful, and we have every reason to believe. Because John has inscripturated the truth of what happened in that crucifixion, of what Jesus Christ accomplished in his flesh.

We believe in our king, our priest, our son of God, our lamb of God, and our fulfilled Passover.

[ 40 : 24 ] So even in the vilest acts that the world can afflict upon the church, serves for the purposes of God, God is always in control, and always will be, and still is, today and tomorrow.

people they say, come, plug in exclusively armies, since Coming into all, here, is going into