

## ✠ The Cross is a Reality (John 19:38–42) ✠

<sup>38</sup>After these things Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus, and Pilate gave him permission. So he came and took away his body. <sup>39</sup>Nicodemus also, who earlier had come to Jesus by night, came bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy-five pounds in weight. <sup>40</sup>So they took the body of Jesus and bound it in linen cloths with the spices, as is the burial custom of the Jews.

<sup>41</sup>Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb in which no one had yet been laid. <sup>42</sup>So because of the Jewish day of Preparation, since the tomb was close at hand, they laid Jesus there.

*Joseph, the secret disciple, and Nicodemus, the night visitor, went to the corrupt Roman governor to plead for the body of Jesus. John does not make mention of guards or conspiracies to seal the tomb, but he is careful to name these two men. They were members of the Sanhedrin and important men (Luke 23:50; John 7:50). Their testimony mattered. They could, and probably did, bear witness to the truth of Jesus's death and burial. John calls them as witnesses in his case for the truth. Jesus was dead, confirmed by those who heard his death rattle, the soldiers who pierced him, and two rabbis who risked uncleanness on the day before Passover to place him in the tomb. The cross really happened. Jesus really died. We do not celebrate a myth or an abstraction.*

## Ending Our Time Together

At the conclusion of the service tonight, you will be asked to gather your belongings and exit the sanctuary through the double doors. The lights will be turned off in the sanctuary, and the doors closed behind us. We will stand in the entryway and join in prayer. This act is a symbol of joining with the disciples and believers on that dark night. In the darkness, we can only anticipate the coming of dawn on the first day of the week, when Jesus stood up from the dead.

## Good Friday Observance

*We gather this evening to remember the crucifixion, death, and burial of Jesus Christ. The solemnity of the moment is not grief but gravity. We would be aimless and lost if Christ's death had not atoned for our sin. Like planets orbiting the sun, we are drawn to the cross because it is from this dark moment that all life, meaning, and hope springs.*

## ✠ The Cross is Humble (John 19:16–24) ✠

<sup>16</sup>So [Pilate] delivered him over to them to be crucified. So they took Jesus, <sup>17</sup>and he went out, bearing his own cross, to the place called The Place of a Skull, which in Aramaic is called Golgotha. <sup>18</sup>There they crucified him, and with him two others, one on either side, and Jesus between them.

<sup>19</sup>Pilate also wrote an inscription and put it on the cross. It read, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." <sup>20</sup>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.

<sup>21</sup>So the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate, "Do not write, 'The King of the Jews,' but rather, 'This man said, I am King of the Jews.'" <sup>22</sup>Pilate answered, "What I have written I have written."

<sup>23</sup>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, <sup>24</sup>so they said to one another, "Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it to see whose it shall be." This was to fulfill the Scripture which says:

*"They divided my garments among them,  
and for my clothing they cast lots."  
(Ps 22:18)*

*John interposes Christ's kingship, confessed by the unbelieving Roman procurator, with the humiliation of being crucified between thieves, naked and mocked. Paul reminds us that Jesus "emptied himself" and "humbled himself" (Phil 2:7–8). Allowing himself to be taken to the lowest possible position opens the door for even the gravest of sinners. Crucified thieves and gambling Roman soldiers alike can look on the King of Glory and see that he has been where we all have been and offers us a new and living way in his own sacrifice (Heb 4:15, 10:21).*

### ❖ The Cross is Compassion (John 19:24–27) ❖

So the soldiers did these things, <sup>25</sup>but standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. <sup>26</sup>When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, "Woman, behold, your son!" <sup>27</sup>Then he said to the disciple, "Behold, your mother!" And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home.

*Only John records that among the women at the foot of the cross were his mother Mary, once the virgin "full of grace" (Luke 1:28) beside the former demoniac Mary Magdalene (Luke 8:2). The other gospel writers do not include Jesus's whispered instructions to John to take his mother under his care either. Jesus was the only one who could bring this disparate group together. All of them were powerless, confused and grieving as they stood there. They were no less or more undeserving of grace than the thieves or the soldiers, and yet they find a purpose, a place in His words.*

### ❖ The Cross is Bitter Salvation (John 19:28–30) ❖

<sup>28</sup>After this, Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said (to fulfill the Scripture), "I thirst." (Ps 69:21) <sup>29</sup>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. <sup>30</sup>When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, "It is finished," and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

*When John cites Psalm 69:21 in reference to Christ being given sour wine, it is a reference to the reproach and shame of his enemies that broke the heart of David. Still David wrote, "I am afflicted and in pain, let your salvation, O God, set me on high!" (Ps 69:29) The world would always oppose the Messiah, would always turn on Him, because although we need a Savior, we don't want a Savior. It is only through suffering at our hands that Christ could show us the depth of his salvation. He tastes the bitterness of all our hatred and enmity and still He finishes the work set before him, still is glorified in what was intended as humiliation.*

### ❖ The Cross is Divine Paradox (John 19:31–37) ❖

<sup>31</sup>Since it was the day of Preparation, and so that the bodies would not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a high day), the Jews asked Pilate that their legs might be broken and that they might be taken away. <sup>32</sup>So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first, and of the other who had been crucified with him. <sup>33</sup>But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. <sup>34</sup>But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water.

<sup>35</sup>He who saw it has borne witness—his testimony is true, and he knows that he is telling the truth—that you also may believe. <sup>36</sup>For these things took place that the Scripture might be fulfilled:

*"Not one of his bones will be broken."  
(Exodus 12:46; Numbers 9:12)*

<sup>37</sup>And again another Scripture says,

*"They will look on him whom they have pierced."  
(Zechariah 12:10)*

*Jesus is not just the fulfillment of some parts of the Hebrew Scriptures. He is the fulfillment of all the Hebrew Scriptures. Christopher Wright described Jesus as "the end of the time of preparation" (Knowing Jesus through the Old Testament, 6). John recognizes that Jesus, the Lamb slain from the foundations of the world (Rev 5:6), was killed on the Jewish Day of Preparation, and so he is the covering salvation of God. Jesus's bones were not broken, as was customary with the Passover lamb. He then goes further to describe Jesus as the pierced one of Zechariah's oracle. These are the words of God, and so Jesus is depicted as GOD incarnate, come "to cleanse them from sin and uncleanness" (Zech 13:1).*

*As he often does, John superimposes two seemingly contradictory concepts, creating a paradox. He also inserts his own confirmation that these things are true, placing himself in the same position as we are. The cross is the divine paradox, the irreconcilable experience of God the Son as both sacrifice and savior (Heb 7:27). Faith is found in the space created by this divine paradox. Perhaps no one has described the paradox better than Michael Card, who calls the cross "a violent grace." These two things cannot coexist, and yet John says, "it is true."*