

## “THE DEATH OF JESUS” LUKE 23:32-49

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### **Personal Introduction**

Hi everyone. I'm Jeff - one of the pastors here at HMCC of Jakarta. And it's my privilege to be preaching the Word of God for us today.

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### **Sermon Introduction**

For this Good Friday, we'll be taking a look at the account of Jesus' crucifixion and death from Luke 23:32-49.

And the title of this sermon is - “The Death of Jesus.”

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### **Introduction**

Now, have you ever watched a whodunnit movie?

It's a kind of story where there's a crime - usually a murder - and then as the story unfolds, you're trying to piece together the clues and answer the question: *Who did it? Who's guilty?*

And if you've watched it with family or friends, you'll notice something interesting...

- You can all be watching the exact same scenes together...
  - Hearing the same dialogue
  - Seeing the same evidence
- But then at the end, when it's time to guess - “Who did it?” - you can have different answers.
  - Some think person A is guilty.
  - Some think person A is innocent.

And in a way, that's what we see at the cross...

- In Luke 23, there are many people watching Jesus being crucified...
  - They all see the same man.
  - They all witness the same events unfolding before their eyes.
- And yet... They respond to Jesus differently.
  - Some respond with revilement and mockery.
  - Others respond with reverence and faith.

And so as we walk through this passage together, we need to ask ourselves, “How will I respond to Jesus?”

- Some of us may need to respond to him for the very first time.
- And some of us may need to respond to him again... and perhaps more deeply than before.

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### **Scripture Introduction**

Please turn your Bibles to Luke 23:32-49.

For context - This has been a long and painful night for Jesus...

- He was betrayed by one of his very own disciples.
- He was arrested, mocked, beaten, and then put on trial.
  - And even though Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor, found Jesus to be innocent... He gave in to the hostile crowd that were pressuring him, shouting, “Crucify him! Crucify Him!”
  - And so Jesus was handed over to be crucified...

That’s where we are in our passage today. And we’ll read the text along the way, so please keep your Bibles open...

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We’ll take a look at this passage in two parts; we’ll see...

### **Overview**

Two responses to Jesus’ crucifixion & death:

- I. Jesus Reviled (vv. 32-39)
- II. Jesus Revered (vv. 40-49)

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### **I. Jesus Reviled (vv. 32-39)**

Let’s read verses 32-39...

### **Luke 23:32-39**

32 Two others, who were criminals, were led away to be put to death with him. 33 And when they came to the place that is called The Skull, there they crucified him, and the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. 34 And Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." And they cast lots to divide his garments. 35 And the people stood by, watching, but the rulers scoffed at him, saying, "He saved others; let him save himself, if he is the Christ of God, his Chosen One!" 36 The soldiers also mocked him, coming up and offering him sour wine 37 and saying, "If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!" 38 There was also an inscription over him, "This is the King of the Jews."

39 One of the criminals who were hanged railed at him, saying, "Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us!"

Let's begin by looking at verse 32 - When they arrived at the place called The Skull, there... They crucified Jesus alongside two criminals (one on his left, and one on his right).

Now notice how briefly Luke describes the crucifixion itself: "there they crucified him" - just one line.

But for Luke's original readers, no explanation was needed.

- Crucifixion (where your hands were nailed to a cross) - That was the most brutal and shameful form of execution during those times.
- It was designed to produce a slow death with maximum pain and suffering.

But interestingly, Luke doesn't dwell on the physical details. But instead he draws our attention to something else...

- How the people responded to Jesus.

And as Jesus was hanging on the cross, he was surrounded by mockery.

Look at verses 32-39 - We see three different groups of people: (1) the religious leaders, (2) the Roman soldiers, and (3) one of the criminals who's crucified with him.

First, the religious leaders scoffed at him, saying, "He saved others; let him save himself, if he is the Christ of God, his Chosen One!"

Then, the Roman soldiers mocked him, saying, "If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!"

And finally, even one of the criminals crucified next to him railed at him, saying, “Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us!”

<pause>

Do you notice a pattern?

They’re all basically saying the same thing: “Jesus, if you are really the Christ... Prove it by saving yourself!”

To them, Jesus crucified was proof that he was not the Christ.

- And just to clarify: “Christ” is not Jesus’ last name.
- It’s a title which refers to the Messiah; the promised King from the line of David who’ll come to save God’s people.

And it seems like each of them had their own expectations of what the Christ should be like... And Jesus did not fit the image that each of them had in mind.

- Look at verse 35 - For the religious leaders (who were Jewish) they’ve been waiting for the coming of the “Christ of God” for many generations.
  - And their expectation was that the Christ would be a great military leader who would free Israel from Roman occupation and re-establish Israel as a great kingdom.
  - And the man crucified in front of them did not seem like a great and mighty Christ.
- Look at verse 37 - For the Roman soldiers - when they hear the word “king,” they’re thinking of someone like their great Caesar - the emperor of Rome - who’s powerful and has legions of soldiers at his command.
  - And the man crucified before them, bleeding and dying, did not seem like a powerful king of the Jews.
- Look at verse 39 - For the crucified criminal, Jesus was in the same position as he was.
  - He’s thinking, “What would I do right now if I have the power of God in my hands? I’d save myself!”
  - And so he’s thinking, “If this guy is truly the Christ then he should be able to save himself! But he’s dying there beside me, so he must not be the Christ.”

And so they’re all reviling Jesus because - in their eyes - he seems like a fake Christ.

- When in reality... he just did not fit the Christ that they had built in their minds.

<pause>

But consider what Jesus has been teaching them about the true Christ...

- Mark 10:45 - "For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."
- John 10:11 - "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for his sheep."

Now what does that tell us?

This tells us that Jesus was there crucified, bleeding and dying on the cross - not because he wasn't the Christ - but exactly because he is the Christ!

What the people misunderstood was that Christ did not come from Heaven to Earth to save his own life, but to save the lives of his people, even at the cost of his own.

That's why Jesus willingly endured such suffering and humiliation... even though - at any point - he could've called more than twelve legions of angels to come and rescue him...

- Because Jesus knew that if he saved himself, then he cannot save others.
- So ironically, the fact that Jesus was hanging on the cross - did not disprove but actually proved that he was indeed the Christ.

But that's not what any of them had in mind.

<pause>

Now, for those of us who've already put our faith in Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior... We know that Jesus is fully man and fully God. He is the Son of God, and He is also God the Son (the second person of the Holy Trinity). And to say those things to God Himself is blasphemous; it's completely inappropriate and false.

- So it may be easy for us to judge these people and say, "Man, they're so messed up for saying those things to Jesus" ("If only they knew they were speaking to God Himself").

But let's take a step back and reflect on our own hearts. We may not be saying these same things that the religious leaders, the Roman soldiers, and the crucified criminal said. But maybe we've said some things that came from the same heart posture as theirs.

Because as they were saying these things, what were their hearts actually saying? It was basically saying, "You don't fit what I think God should be like."

- And if we dig deeper, then what they're saying is... "I know better than you, God... You're not my King and you're not my Savior because you don't fit what I believe my King and my Savior should be like."
- And even as followers of Christ, don't we sometimes think like that?
- Don't we often get frustrated at the situation that we're in because we think, "God, how can you let these things happen to me? This is not what I had in mind for my life."
- When we get frustrated with our situation, we're really getting frustrated with God Himself...
  - What we're essentially saying is, "If I was God, I'd do things differently... God, I think you're making a mistake here..."
  - "God, if you're as wise as me, this is how you should've planned my career and my relationships and my finances... I have no idea why you're taking me down a different path..."
  - "You know what... If you're truly God - If you're truly the Christ - then save me from this current situation I'm in (and do it in accordance with my expectations and my timing).

And I'll be the first to admit that I can still be tempted to think like this...

- Just think of some of the things we went through as a church these past couple of years.
- Aren't we tempted to think, "God, why would you allow our church to go through these things?"
  - "If you're truly God then save us! (And do it in accordance with our expectations and our timing)."

So brothers and sisters, even as followers of Christ, we should be wary that our hearts are still tempted to revile God, especially during the times when His ways do not match with ours.

<pause>

And if you're here and you haven't put your faith in Christ, then maybe one of the reasons why you haven't done so is because you cannot fully understand who this God is and why He does what He does in these ways that you don't agree with. Because if you're God, then you'd choose to do things differently. And if He doesn't match what you think God should be like, then He can't be God.

- If that's the case, I want you to know that I was exactly in the same position that you were in, so I understand your struggle.
  - But ask yourself: Would God really be God - and would He really be worthy of your worship - if His ways are exactly the same as your ways? If He thinks exactly the way that you think?
  - I'd argue that God is God and He's worthy of our worship exactly because His ways are different than ours.
    - Because we're limited beings with limited knowledge.
    - But God is infinite in His Wisdom; His ways are greater than ours.
- So I'd want to encourage you to remain curious, and don't stop exploring who this God is just because His ways may be different than yours.
- So please reach out to me after the service or to anyone around you, and we'd love to talk to you more about this God who's greater than we can ever imagine or expect...

<pause>

Now, let's look at verse 34 - We get a glimpse into Jesus' heart... while he was hanging on the cross, he prayed, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

Isn't that just amazing? He was the one suffering, but his heart and his thoughts were not focused on himself, but instead... it's on others; particularly those who've tortured, crucified, and mocked him.

- This is what our Lord Jesus is like.
- He looks at those who've hurt him in unimaginable ways, who've disrespected him with their thoughts and words... And instead of reviling them in return, he has compassion towards them... and prays for their forgiveness...

This shows how patient and kind Jesus is... And next we'll see just how far Jesus was willing to go to sacrificially love his people...

So first, "Jesus Reviled." And second...

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## **II. Jesus Revered (vv. 40-49)**

Now, let's look at verses 40-43 - This is the second criminal rebuking the first one...

Luke 23:40-43

40 But the other rebuked him, saying, “Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? 41 And we indeed justly, for we are receiving the due reward of our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong.” 42 And he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.” 43 And he said to him, “Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise.”

So unlike the first criminal who reviled Jesus, this second criminal revered him.

- And this is more than just mere respect, but he actually put his faith in Jesus and he believes that Jesus is truly who he says he is.

Now, notice 3 things here about the faith of this repentant criminal:

- First, he **acknowledges** that he’s a guilty man before a holy God.
  - Look at verses 40-41 - He said, “Do you not fear God... We indeed justly, for we are receiving the due reward of our deeds...”
  - So he knows that unlike Jesus who’s innocently crucified, he justly deserves to be punished because he’s guilty of his crimes.
- Second, he **believes** that there’s a Heavenly Kingdom in the life to come, and - more importantly - he **proclaims** that Jesus is the King of this Heavenly Kingdom.
  - Look at verse 42 - He refers to God’s Kingdom as “your Kingdom” / as “Jesus’ Kingdom”).
  - So when this man is looking at Jesus crucified, he understands something that the religious leaders and the Roman soldiers and the other criminal completely missed. In that moment, he knows that he’s not just talking to any ordinary person, but before his very eyes is King Jesus.
- And third, he **believes** that King Jesus is the one who has complete control and authority over who enters this Heavenly Kingdom.
  - That’s why - in verse 42 - he says, “Jesus, remember me...”
  - He knows that he’s at the mercy of Jesus Christ.
    - Jesus **alone** is his Lord and Savior - as he’s being crucified and dying, he believes that there’s no other way of salvation, except through Jesus alone. No one else can save him now.

And then Jesus responds with one of the most beautiful promises in Scripture... He says, “Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise.”

Just imagine how sweet those words must’ve been to the ears of that man on the cross?

<pause>

Friends, what this shows us is that it's never too late for us (or for our loved ones) to turn to Jesus and be saved.

- So if that's you, and if you haven't put your faith in Christ yet, and you think that you're too deep in sin and that there's no hope left for you.
- Then what this means for you today is that you're not too far gone...
  - You still have hope in Jesus Christ...
  - Just look at this repentant sinner - he was saved at the very last hour of his life on Earth.
- And notice what saved him...
  - It's not his good works that saved him...
    - Just look at his life - he was crucified exactly because he wasn't good; he was a criminal. And as he's about to die, there's no opportunity for him to now do good works to save himself.
    - If good works is what saves, then he'd be in deep trouble.
      - And we'd be in trouble too - Because there's no amount of good works that'd be enough to earn our way into Heaven.
  - But what saved this man was his faith in Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior.

And so here we see a great example of what repentance and faith in Jesus looks like...

- It means confessing that we're sinners before a holy God (that we haven't lived in accordance to God's perfect standard of righteousness).
  - And what we justly deserve for sinning against the eternal God is eternity in Hell.
- But we also confess that Jesus Christ is our only hope in life and death.
  - And on this side of redemptive history, we have a fuller picture of what Jesus did for us. Because we know that - on the cross - Jesus took the punishment that we deserved.
  - It should've been us up there crucified and punished, but instead... Jesus became our substitute...

On the cross, what happened is what's been called a beautiful exchange:

- Jesus received his people's sins and took the full punishment that they deserved.
- And in exchange - his people received Jesus' righteousness and we're now made right before the sight of God.
  - Our sins... In exchange for his righteousness...
  - It's not a fair trade by far.

- And Jesus knows that. But he looks at his people - at you and me - And out of love, he says, "I'll make that trade... give me your sins & you can have my sinless life counted as yours."

And so for those who believe in Jesus, when God sees us, now what He sees is Jesus' righteousness covering us, and we're deemed worthy to go into Heaven (not because we ourselves are worthy but because Jesus' worthiness has been counted as ours).

That's the beautiful exchange that happened on the cross, and that's why Jesus was able to say confidently to this sinner, "Today, you'll be with me in paradise."

And for those of us who've already put our faith in Christ, we have that same assurance from our Lord Jesus... That when we die... we will be with him in paradise...

- And this means that even on your worst days - when you fall into sin, you can be assured that you're still counted as righteous through faith in Christ's work on the cross for you.
  - You don't need to fear losing your salvation; and you can rest in knowing that God perfectly loves you and there's nothing that you can do to make Him love you more or less.
- And this means that even on your best days - you don't need to feel pressure like you need to get right or stay right with God... But instead we can focus our efforts on enjoying God, pursuing holiness, and loving others.
  - This is the freedom that we now have...
    - Now we don't have to do good works to earn our salvation.
    - But we want to do good works to honor God, love each other, and point others to the Good News of Jesus.

<pause>

And as you can already tell, this Good News actually hinges on Christ's death...

- Because if Jesus did not truly die, then we still need to pay our debt in Hell.
- But if Jesus truly did die on the cross, then our sins died with him & our debt has been paid in full...

So did Jesus truly die for his people?

Let's look at verses 44-49...

Luke 23:44-49

44 It was now about the sixth hour, and there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour, 45 while the sun's light failed. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two. 46 Then Jesus, calling out with a loud voice, said, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!" And having said this he breathed his last. 47 Now when the centurion saw what had taken place, he praised God, saying, "Certainly this man was innocent!" 48 And all the crowds that had assembled for this spectacle, when they saw what had taken place, returned home beating their breasts. 49 And all his acquaintances and the women who had followed him from Galilee stood at a distance watching these things.

Look at verse 44 - It was now about the sixth hour (referring to the 6th hour after sunrise, which would be around noon). And there was darkness over the whole land for 3 hours...

- So this was not just an eclipse, but it was a supernatural display of God's judgment - an act of God!

Then Jesus called out with a loud voice, saying, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!" And having said this, Jesus breathed his last - which means that **Jesus truly died**.

**Which means that our sins - past, present, and future - truly died with him... Once and for all...**

<pause>

Now look at verse 45 - And the curtain of the temple was supernaturally torn in two (from top to bottom).

- Another act of God!
- And this curtain refers to the curtain inside the temple, which was used to divide up two rooms: the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place.
  - And the Most Holy Place was where God's presence dwelled.
    - And not everyone was allowed to go into that room...
  - So then what did God mean when He tore this curtain in two?
    - It means that access to God's presence is now made available to all who believe (there's no longer a separation between us and Him).

So God is assuring us that - in Christ - our relationship with Him has been reconciled!

- For those who believe in Jesus, no longer are we defined by our sins. But we've been given new identities:
  - Not condemned sinners, but redeemed people.

- Not enemies of God, but children of the living God.

So it's not an exaggeration to say that Jesus' death completely changed everything for us!

- And not only in the life to come, but also in this life that we're still living!
- Because what this means for us now... is that even as we go through trials... we're not alone but our God is always with us, watching over us as our Heavenly Father who cares for us and is working for our good.
- And consider how the Holy Spirit now dwells in us and we're living temples of the holy God.
  - God's presence now dwells in us...
    - So not only is there no longer a division between us and God, there's great intimacy and closeness between us and God.
    - Now, we're also able to come before our Heavenly Father at any time in prayer - just think of how special that is...
      - That we're able to speak to God at any time... and make our worries, concerns, praises, and thanks known to Him.
      - And amazingly, He hears our prayers!

The curtain has been torn into two - and that's good news for us - now and forever!

<pause>

Now, let's look at verses 47-49 - We see three different groups of people responding to Jesus' death: (1) the Centurion, (2) the crowd, and (3) Jesus' followers.

First, the Centurion (the Roman officer) - when he saw all that had taken place, he praised God saying "Certainly this man was innocent!"

- The centurion (who'd the Jews would consider to be a pagan and an unbeliever)... even he was able to praise God for what he saw and proclaimed that Jesus was innocent.
  - He's probably overseen many crucifixions in the past. But this was unlike anything he's ever seen.
  - Usually, those who are crucified would die from suffocation or loss of blood - it was a long, drawn-out process.
  - But Jesus was strong enough to cry out with a loud voice! And he was in control when he gave up his life!

Look at verse 48 - the second group (the crowds) responded to Jesus' death - all the crowds that had assembled for this spectacle (the one who earlier were just screaming,

“Crucify him! Crucify him!”), when they saw what had taken place, returned home beating their breasts (as a sign of their grief).

- Perhaps they're shaken by what they just witnessed and they're questioning what just happened.

And finally, look at verse 49 - all of Jesus' acquaintances [his followers; his friends] and the women who had followed him from Galilee stood at a distance watching these things unfold...

<pause>

And now, as we've also seen Jesus' death unfold through Luke's account...

And as we've looked at these various responses... They lead us to ask ourselves - How will I respond to Jesus?

- With revilement?
- Or with reverence?
  - With rejection? Or with faith?

If you haven't responded to Jesus yet, I invite you to respond to him today!

- Please do not delay - Because you should know that there is a time where it will be too late...
  - And it's going to be too late when your life on earth comes to an end (And none of us can really know whether or not we'll even be alive tomorrow)...
    - But when we all die, we will all be judged for our sins. And the only thing that can save us from eternal condemnation in Hell is faith in Jesus Christ.
    - So my hope is that you'd respond to Jesus with repentance and faith like the criminal on the cross.
      - And I pray that you'll remember Jesus' promise to those who put their faith in him... That “today you will be with me in paradise.”

### Conclusion

As we conclude, church, we should remember that there's a reason why we call today “Good” Friday.

And that's because Jesus' story did not end at the cross.

Before he died, Jesus said that on the third day, he would rise again. And he did! (That's what we'll celebrate this Easter Sunday!)

And this means that his death was not a defeat but a victory!

- Victory over sin.
- Victory over death.
- And victory for all who put their faith in him.

And so for those of us who are in Christ, how can we be so confident of our eternal life?

- Because just as we're united with him in his death, we're also united with him in his resurrection.
- And one day, we will be with our Lord in Heaven - face to face...
  - Together with all the saints! (Including the repentant criminal on the cross)
    - A redeemed people... saved by grace... through the blood of Jesus Christ...

Let's pray...