

Topic	Good Friday Service
Reference	
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On Good Friday we remember the sacrificial death of Jesus on the cross, as he paid the penalty for our sin. The message of Jesus suffering on the cross is especially relevant to our world today, as we are dealing with an additional crisis, one that appears to be affecting the entire earth, the coronavirus.

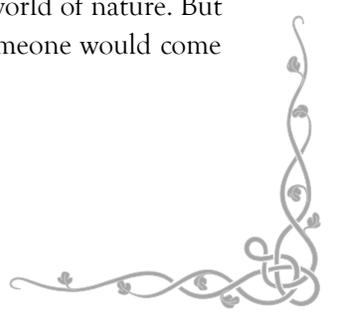
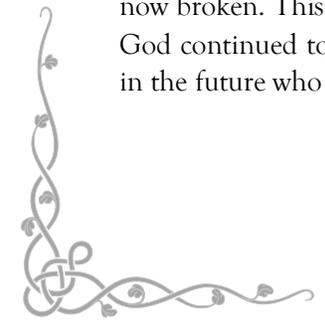
Now the message of the cross is always relevant, but perhaps at times like this, people are more prepared to listen to what God has to say. In a recent article in the Telegraph, a British newspaper, in large letters where the words, “At times like this we realized just how powerless mankind is”. He was of course speaking about our lack of power to stop the spread of COVID-19. But I would add that we are also powerless to live without sin, powerless to stop the consequences of sin and powerless to bring about forgiveness of sin. That's why we are dependent upon the power of God and the power of the cross of Christ. Tonight you will not be hearing a sermon in a traditional sense, but rather you will hear the biblical story. The story of salvation up to the events of that first Good Friday, but you'll hear very little commentary.

We will not start with the events of passion week because to really understand who Jesus is, why he came and why he had to die it helps just to know the background of salvation history, going all the way back to the beginning of time. God's plan to ransom a people for himself through the blood of Jesus who was described as a lamb without spot or blemish goes way back before the foundation of the world. So before we get to the events of passion week tonight, we will highlight some of the major stories from the Old Testament that point to Jesus and to his atoning work. May the words from scripture about the story of salvation speak to you.

In the beginning God created the heavens and He created the earth and He created everything that there is. He created man and woman as the most special part of his creation. And he created them in his own likeness. He created them to have a close relationship with Him to worship Him, to glorify Him. When he was finished with his creative work, He looked at all that He had made and He said, this is very good.

God created a beautiful garden in which he placed the first man and woman to live. He told them they could eat of every tree in the garden except for just one, but if they ate of that tree they would die. So for a period of time, the man and woman lived in a very close relationship with God and in a close relationship with each other. But one day the devil in the form of a serpent tempted the people he said, “God knows that if you eat of that tree, you will not die. Instead, your eyes will be opened and you will be just like God.”

So they looked at the fruit and it looked good, and they thought to themselves, if we eat of that fruit, we will be like God. So they both ate and immediately everything changed. Their eyes were opened and they felt shame. So they made clothing out of fig leaves to try to cover their shame. And they became fearful of God, tried to hide themselves from him, from the very one who had created them and given them life. Because of their failure to believe and obey God and because of their wish to follow their own desires their relationship with God, which had been so close was now broken. This led to pain and conflict in personal relationships and to difficulties from the world of nature. But God continued to show his love for his people, his special creation. He made a promise that someone would come in the future who would crush the power of Satan and evil.



And he made clothing out of animal skins to cover the shame of the people, but they were sent out of the garden and never allowed to enter again.

The man and the woman had children and these children disobeyed God, just like their parents and their children had children and these sinned as well. Every person is just like those first people. We have all failed to believe, to trust and obey God, but God had a plan to bring forgiveness to his special creation. One day he spoke to a man named Abraham. He said to him, Abraham, I will bless you and I will give you many descendants that will become a great nation. God would act in history through the descendants of Abraham to bring about salvation and he would make it possible for people from every nation to be able to come back into a right relationship with him. You see, God promised Abraham that through him and his descendants all peoples of the earth would be blessed.

Many years past, but Abraham still had no son, but despite that Abraham believed the Lord and the Lord counted it to him as righteousness. Finally, after 25 years, God did give Abraham a son, Isaac, and it would be through Isaac's descendants that God would bring blessing to all peoples of the earth.

One day, God said something startling to Abraham, even disturbing. He said, Abraham, take your son, your only son whom you love and sacrifice him to me. Now, this was the son through whom God promised blessing. But nevertheless, Abraham trusted God and so he took his son on a journey to a place that God would show them. On the way the son asked father, I see the fire, I see the wood, but where is the lamb for the offering? Abraham said, God will provide the lamb. Then they came to the place that God showed them, and there Abraham built an altar and he took a knife to sacrifice his son. But the angel of the Lord said to him, "Abraham, don't lay a hand on the boy. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld your beloved son from him." Then Abraham looked. And he saw a ram in the bush. He took the ram and he offered the ram to the Lord as a burnt offering instead of his son, then an angel spoke again to Abraham and said, "all peoples of the earth will be blessed through your descendant because you have obeyed my voice."

God did keep his promise to Abraham and Isaac. He gave them many descendants, which became a large nation, the Hebrew people, but after several years they became slaves in the land of Egypt. So they cried out to God for God to deliver them. So God spoke to a man named Moses and told him to go to the King of Egypt, the Pharaoh, and tell him to set the Hebrew people free, but the Pharaoh refused. So as judgment God sent nine plagues on the land of Egypt, but still the Pharaoh would not let the Hebrews go. Then God told Moses, "I am going to send one last plague on the Egyptian people, and then the Pharaoh will let my people go free. Every firstborn in Egypt will die, but I want to save my people from death. And this is how I will do it. Have each family sacrifice a perfect lamb and then place the blood of the lamb on the sides and the top of their door."

So the Hebrews did what God had said. That night at midnight, the first born of the Egyptians died. But when the angel of death saw the blood of the lamb on the doors of the Hebrew people, he passed over those houses and everyone inside was saved. Well that night, the Pharaoh called Moses and said, "go leave this land, take all your people with you.": So the Hebrew people left Egypt and freedom. God had delivered his people from slavery.

God led his people through the desert towards the promised land. And they came to a mountain that God showed them. Then God said to Moses, "Say to the people of Israel, you have seen what I did to the Egyptians. How I bore you up on Eagle's wings, how I brought you to myself. Now, if you will obey my voice, if you will keep my covenant, then you will be my special possession among all peoples." Then God gave his law to Moses and his people. Now these laws were good laws to help the people live in a right relationship to God and to live in peace and harmony with their fellow man. Moses then built an altar and he offered burnt offerings to the Lord. He sprinkled part of the blood on the altar and he put the rest in basins. Then he read to the people from the book of the covenant and the

people said, all the words of the Lord have spoken, we will do. Then Moses took the blood from the basins. He sprinkled it on the people and he said, "This is the blood of the covenant that the Lord has made with you."

God had given his people the Ten Commandments and they had promise that they would do everything God has said, but God knew that nobody could all be all of the law all of the time. And sin brings death physical also spiritual and eternal death. So God, in his mercy and love provided a way for forgiveness if the people would confess their sins and repentance in faith. God said all of the people should gather together. And first of all, the high priest should sacrifice a bull for his sins and the sins of his family. Then you should take a goat from the people and sacrifice it as an offering for their sins. Some of the blood from the bull and the goats was to be sprinkled on the altar and some of the blood from the bull and the goats should be sprinkled on the mercy seat, behind the veil of the tabernacle. By sacrificing of the animals the people could then see that sin does bring death and they would also see that without the shedding of blood, without the giving of a life, there is no forgiveness of sin. After that the high priest was to take a live goat and placed his hands on the head of that goat and confess all of the sins of the people. And when he did that, God would transfer the sins off of the people and place them on the head of the goat. And then the goat would be sent away into the wilderness, never to return. This provided the people a picture of what God was doing with their sin as he took their sin away. But these sacrifices on the day of atonement had to be repeated every year. They were not a once for all sacrifice, rather they were pointing to God's plan that would be fulfilled sometime in the future.

God led the people on into the promised land and many years past God raised up leaders, such as King David to whom God promised that one of his descendants would reign on his throne forever. Over the years, many of the Hebrew people turn their backs on God and they worship idols. Others continue to offer sacrifices to the Lord. But for many, it was just a ritual. There was no repentance and there was no faith. So God sent prophets to call the people to turn back to him, or they would face judgment, but the people refuse to listen. And God did bring judgment.

But God also sent prophets with messages of hope. One prophet named Isaiah said, "one would come, who would be born of a Virgin. A child would be born, who would be called wonderful counselor, mighty God, Prince of peace. And he would be the one to reign on the throne of King David forever. But Isaiah said. The promised one would be despised and rejected. He would be a man of sorrows. He would be a suffering servant, but through his suffering, he would bear our griefs and carry our sorrows. Isaiah then said, we, people are like sheep. Just as sheep wander a way going their own direction. We too go astray from the past, I think God would have us beyond.

We choose to go our own way and disobey God and Isaiah also said, the promised one, the suffering servant he too will be like a sheep and that he will be a sacrificial lamb. He will be beaten and killed for our sin, but that's not the end of the story. He will see life again and because of what he does, people will be able to have a restored relationship with God experiencing forgiveness and peace. And from that time forward, the people waited expectantly looking forward to the time when God would send the promised one.

Many years later, God did send his son the promised Messiah to earth. This is the one that God had promised in the garden of Eden who would crush the power of evil. This is the one that God promised to Abraham through blessing would come to the world. This is the one born of a Virgin who would suffer and die for our sins. One day, an angel of the Lord appeared to a Virgin named Mary and the angel said to her, "Mary, you will give birth to the promised saviour", but Mary asked, "how can this be? I'm not married", but the angel said to her, "nothing is impossible with God. You will conceive by the power of God's spirit."

Months later, Mary and her husband, Joseph went to Bethlehem to the city of David to be taxed. And there Mary gave birth to a son and they named him Jesus, which means saviour because he would save his people from their

sins. When Jesus was born, an angel appeared to shepherd saying, I bring you good news for all people. Today is born a saviour who is Christ the Lord. Then a choir of angels saying “glory to God in the highest.

Years past, and Jesus grew to be a man, but before he started his public ministry, God sent a man named John to prepare the way for Jesus. John preached the message of repentance that people should turn away from sin and self and turn in faith to God. And then John would baptize those who had truly repented, but he refused to baptize those who saw this only as a religious ritual and did not repent. Some religious leaders asked John, “are you the promise Messiah?” But John would say, “no, I am just a messenger to prepare his way. I am not even worthy to bend down to unloose his sandals.”

One day as John was preaching, he saw Jesus coming and he told the crowd, “look, there is the lamb of God who will take away the sin of the world.” As Jesus came to John, he requested that John baptize him. Now Jesus had never sin, so he had no need to repent, so John said, “no, it is I who needs to be baptized of you”, but Jesus said, allow this to be so because it is the will of God.

So John baptized Jesus, and when Jesus came up out of the water, the heavens opened and the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove descended upon Jesus. And the voice of God spoke and said, “This is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased.”

Do you think the people understood what John meant when he called Jesus “The lamb of God?”

Probably not, but they could have, they should have, they knew their history. They knew the story of when God asked Abraham to sacrifice his son, that God provided a lamb for the sacrifice. And they knew the story of when God freed the people from slavery in Egypt, that it was the blood of lambs that saved the people from death. Every year, they celebrated the day of atonement where the blood of animals was sprinkled on the altar and on the mercy seat to provide forgiveness. Plus everyday animals lambs were sacrificed at the temple.

But it appears to me that they did not understand, even his disciples, his closest followers did not want to listen to him. Even though he told them time and time again, that he would suffer that he would die and that he would be raised to life again. Even though they had heard the story from Isaiah about the Messiah being a suffering servant, they continue to argue among themselves who would be the greatest. It appears they did not understand. They just adopted the popular notions of the time that the Messiah would be a great statesman or that maybe he would be a military hero and that he would come to get rid of the oppression that the Romans had put on the people.

Well, large crowds gathered around Jesus. He was a wonderful teacher and he did many miracles. For example, he ordered demons to come out of people and the demons obeyed. This showed that Jesus had power over Satan and all the forces of evil. One day, Jesus fed 5,000 people with only five loaves and two fish showing his compassion for people and is concerned for their physical needs.

One time, He still a raging storm just by his spoken word, showing his power over the forces of nature. And one time he even raised a man back to life who had been dead for four days, showing his power over a life and death.

Some of the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem began to be jealous of Jesus. And they became afraid that they would lose their power and their position. So they began to plot how they could kill him. Even though Jesus knew what the religious leaders would do to him, if he went to Jerusalem, he set out with determination to go there. Along the way he told his disciples for the third time that what the prophets has said about him would take place that he would be handed over to the Romans, that they would mock him, that they would mistreat him, that they would spit upon him.

And then after whipping him, they would kill him. But that on the third day he would rise again. But the disciples understood none of these things.

Well, Jesus and his disciples came near to Jerusalem. Jesus was riding on a donkey and a large crowd gathered to welcome him. The people spread their coats and Palm branches on the road in front of him. And they began to praise God, joyfully, crying out. "Hosanna to the son of David. Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord". But some of the religious leaders in the crowd were angered with what they heard. They said that Jesus rebuke your disciples, but Jesus said, if they are silent, then God will cause these stones to cry out in praise.

As Jesus got closer to Jerusalem, he saw the city and he went over it. He said, "Oh, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones, those who God sends to it. How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen, gathers her brood. But you were not willing. Behold, the days will come when you will be level to the ground and become desolate. And you will not see me again until you say blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord."

As Jesus entered into Jerusalem, the city was filled with excitement. But during that week, the opposition to Jesus grew stronger and the religious leaders looked for an opportunity to arrest him, to put him to death. They were able to make a plan when one of Jesus's disciples named Judas went to them and in exchange for money offered to betray Jesus.

Well on Thursday evening, that week. Jesus gathered with his disciples for the Passover meal. Remember the Passover was observed every year to remind the people of God's freeing of the Hebrew people from slavery in Egypt. At Passover lambs were sacrificed, and this would remind the people of how their forefathers had been saved from death by having the blood of the lamb on their doors. And the sacrifice of a lamb would also remind them of the covenant God had made with their ancestors, which was formally sealed with blood. As they were eating the Passover meal, Jesus gave his disciples a fuller understanding of the meaning of the familiar elements of the meal. Instead of speaking of the deliverance from slavery in Egypt that their ancestors had experienced Jesus focused on the deliverance from slavery to sin that he would provide, because it would be his death on the cross that would fulfil the meaning of the Passover sacrifice.

So Jesus took the bread. He broke it. Gave thanks then gave it to his disciples saying "This is my body, which is given for you do this in remembrance of me". After the meal, he took the cup gave thanks. And he said, "this is my blood of the new covenant, which is poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins. Do this as often as you drink it in remembrance of me." After the meal, they sang a hymn, then went out.

Jesus took his followers to a garden outside Jerusalem to pray. And there he said to them, "I am overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Sit here, watch and pray." Then Jesus went a little further and he fell on his knees, crying out to God. He said, "God, if there's any way to take this suffering away from me, please take it away. But I don't want what I want. I want what you want." Then an angel came and gave Jesus strength to continue praying and strength to face what was to come. Jesus was in such agony that he sweat drops of blood. When he had finished praying, he went back to his friends. He found them fast asleep. He woke them and said, "My betrayer is here."

Judas has left the Passover meal before it was over in order to go inform the authorities where they could find Jesus to take in prisoner. Now Judas with a mob that was armed, who had been sent by the religious leaders, came to the garden where Jesus was. They took hold of Jesus. They bound him and they took him to the religious council. The high priest questioned Jesus and said, if you are the Messiah, tell us. Jesus said, if I tell you, you will not believe me.

The high priest asked again, "are you the Christ? The son of the blessed one". Jesus said "I am. And you will see me, the son of man sitting at the right hand of power and coming with the clouds of heaven." Then the high priest tore his clothes and said, "Blasphemy" You see when Jesus said "I am" and when he claimed that he would sit at the

right hand of God with any eternal kingdom, he would come with the clouds in judgment. The religious leaders understood that Jesus was claiming to be divine. So they all condemn Jesus to death.

They handed Jesus over to the Roman governor, whose name was Pilot, but Pilot said, what evil has he done? I find no fault in this man. Then the crowd who was there cried out repeatedly, crucify him, crucify him. So Pilot decided that their demand should be granted and he delivered Jesus over to be crucified. According to the governor's orders, the soldiers flogged Jesus, stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, then twisting together a crown of thorns they put it on his head and they put a reed in his right hand. They began to mock him and they said, "Hail King of the Jews." Then they stripped him of his robe and led him away to be crucified.

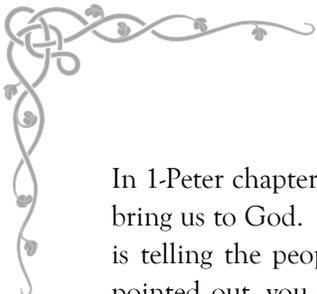
The Roman soldiers took Jesus to the place called the skull and there they crucified him between two criminals. Despite the terrible injustice and the excruciating pain Jesus prayed, "Father, forgive them. They do not know what they are doing.: Some of the religious leaders who had come to watch, they mocked Jesus and said he saved others let him save himself if he is the anointed one from God. Some of the soldiers also joined in saying, "if you are the King of the Jews then save yourself. Even one of the crucified criminals hanging next to Jesus, mocked him saying, "if you are the Messiah, then save yourself and save us too." But the other criminal rebuke the first one saying, "Do you not fear God, we are going to die today. And we deserve our punishment. But this man has done no wrong. Then he said to Jesus, "Remember me when you come into your kingdom." And Jesus said, "Truly today you will be with me in paradise".

Even though it was the middle of the day, darkness fell over the land. Then Jesus cried out with a loud voice. My God, my God, why have you forsaken me. Then shortly before he died, Jesus said "it is finished". Showing that he had accomplished his mission dying for the sins of the world. Then he prayed father into your hands I commit my spirit and he bowed his head and he died.

The skies were already dark. Now the earth shook, rocks split and the commander of the Roman soldiers at the crucifixion having seen and heard what had happened, he was filled with awe and he said, truly, this was the son of God. And inside the temple, outside of public view, the heavy curtain that had blocked off the most holy place miraculously torn in two from the top to the button. What did this signify? Well up until this time only the high priest could go past the veil into the most holy place, and he could only enter once a year on the day of atonement. To bring some of the blood from the sacrifices and sprinkle that blood on the mercy seat in the presence of God. Then God would grant forgiveness. But now God had torn this heavy curtain in two, thus symbolizing that God now made it possible for people to come directly into his presence through the atoning death of Jesus. The Book of Hebrews explains, we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus. By the new and living way he opened for us through the curtain that is through his flesh.

You see like the first people at the beginning we all sinned. We go our own way rather than God's way. We turn our backs on the creator, on the source of life. Therefore, the result is death, physical death but also spiritual death, separation from God while we are alive physically and then eternal death being separated from God forever. The only way for forgiveness is the way that God makes possible. Because sin brings death, there is no forgiveness without the shedding of blood, without the sacrifice, the giving of a life. The sacrifices of perfect animals in the Old Testament were pointing to the ultimate sacrifice that Jesus would make but it was impossible that blood of bulls and goats to take away sin.

Only the perfect lamb of God could do that. Hebrews 10:10 says, *By this will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.*



In 1-Peter chapter 3 we read, for Christ also suffered once for sins. The righteous for the unrighteous that he might bring us to God. How do we respond? We respond in repentance and faith. The disciple Peter in the Book of Acts is telling the people, therefore you need to repent and turn to God to have your sins bloated out and then he pointed out, you are heirs of the covenant that God made with your ancestors when he told Abraham. Through your descendant all the families of the earth will be blessed and what was that blessing, Peter continues and says,

When God raised up his servant Jesus, he sent him first to you to bless you by turning every one of you from your evil ways. So come in faith to God, trusting in his grace and mercy. Asking for his forgiveness, allowing him to take control of your life and to lead you as you submit yourself to his lordship. Those of us who are believers who have already accepted Jesus offer of forgiveness but remember to always continually thank God for the cross, for the provision he made for our sins. That's coming into the presence of God regularly through the path that he has opened, lets enter into the holy place through the blood of Jesus Christ.