

Sermon on Luke 23:26-56 prepared by Jonathan Shradar

Luke 23:26-56

The Cross of Christ is the Defining Moment for all of humanity.

“Do you take... to be your lawfully wedded wife?” “I do.”

“I swear to uphold and defend the Constitution against all enemies, foreign and domestic...”

“I agree to pay the amortized amount for the next thirty years...”

The plus sign on the test...

“Do you want fries with that?” “Yes, yes I do!”

These are defining moments for us - big and small - that shape, form, and build who we are and what we experience. The roads we take matter. The choices we make. The commitments we live up to. The questions we ask. They all help to define us.

What we have arrived at in our study of Luke’s Gospel is THE defining moment of all of humanity. Not merely for Christians - but for all of world history - this is the shaping event. None matches the crucifixion of Jesus.

How did we get here? From the virgin birth, the moment of light announcing the arrival of the King.

The boy who declared that he must be about his father’s business.

Temptation in the wilderness. Ministry to those in the synagogues, to those in the villages, to those on the roads... all hearing the good news of the Kingdom.

The claiming of the title “Son of Man.” The profession from his disciples that he is the Christ of God.

Healing. Feeding. Restoring.

And now, his hour has come.

It is appropriate that as we prepare to mark the arrival (Advent), we see his defining moment. That which makes the man. That which shapes us.

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There is so much in this account, that we could mine it for weeks. But for our purposes today we want to recognize that this moment is one that is confirming, it is a moment that is champion, and a moment that is compelling.

Confirming Moment

Jesus has been put on trial. The religious elite thought he was having too great of an impact and they sensed their control slipping so they sought to kill him. Judas turned on Jesus and led the temple guards to him and he faced the religious counsel, the Governor Pilate, and the puppet king Herod. While there was no guilt to be found in him the crowd demanded his death.

Since Pilate was in Jerusalem to oversee some executions - to keep the people subdued - he bargained with the crowd and “delivered Jesus over to their will.”

The necessity of this death though goes back further. To the creation account and humanity's first decision to reject the way of God. For all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. Inherited more dominantly than the color of our eyes or shade of hair.

All of Scripture then becomes a flowing story of people in need of restoration/redemption and our failure to live up to it. It is a story of grace, the careful claiming of a people for God that are invited in but rarely get it right.

Alongside all of that is a perpetual promise. A Messiah (the Christ) that will come and make things right. Forgiving people of their sin and reigning over the expanse forever.

Anticipation for this anointed One - many who lived “looking for the kingdom of God.”

All the while in our study of this book there has been an abiding question - who is Jesus?

“Who do you say that I am?” becomes a vital question still today.

This death then is confirming who he is. Confirming by matching what was promised.

I have always been fascinated that Luke writes these things. He is a Gentile believer, comes to faith after the resurrection. Hasn't grown up memorizing Scripture. Yet in his account, relaying facts, his description matches OT prophecy... because Jesus does!

Isaiah 53:1–9 “Who has believed what he has heard from us? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? [2] For he grew up before him like a young plant, and like a root out of dry ground; he had no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him. [3] He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

[4] Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. [5] But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed. [6] All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

[7] He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth. [8] By oppression and judgment he was taken away; and as for his generation, who considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people? [9] And they made his grave with the wicked and with a rich man in his death, although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth.” (ESV)

The One to be numbered among the transgressions...

Psalm 22:1–18 To the choirmaster: according to The Doe of the Dawn. A Psalm of David. “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, from the words of my groaning? [2] O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer, and by night, but I find no rest.

[3] Yet you are holy, enthroned on the praises of Israel. [4] In you our fathers trusted; they trusted, and you delivered them. [5] To you they cried and were rescued; in you they trusted and were not put to shame.

[6] But I am a worm and not a man, scorned by mankind and despised by the people. [7] All who see me mock me; they make mouths at me; they wag their heads; [8] “He trusts in the LORD; let him deliver him; let him rescue him, for he delights in him!”

[9] Yet you are he who took me from the womb; you made me trust you at my mother’s breasts. [10] On you was I cast from my birth, and from my mother’s womb you have been my God. [11] Be not far from me, for trouble is near, and there is none to help.

[12] Many bulls encompass me; strong bulls of Bashan surround me; [13] they open wide their mouths at me, like a ravening and roaring lion.

[14] I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax; it is melted within my breast; [15] my strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to my jaws; you lay me in the dust of death.

[16] For dogs encompass me; a company of evildoers encircles me; they have pierced my hands and feet— [17] I can count all my bones— they stare and gloat over me; [18] they divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots.” (ESV)

We could spend ages highlighting the things of promise that Jesus fulfills but just in these 30 verses we see that this is the Christ - the Messiah - and this was the way it was meant to be.

So the cross is confirming. But more than just matching promise... the cross produces something miraculous. Defining!

Champion Moment

Now just seeing this account any level-headed person would not jump to the idea that this was winning. The hoped-for king is being slaughtered. This is a loss.

But in the divine redemptive plan, victory comes through what looks like defeat.

And since I couldn't come up with a "c" word that meant justification, and Iona played this old song on the way home from school on Monday - Champion is our word.

Carman's *Champion*. As cheesy as it is, it is the truth of how things went down.

"In the vast expanse of a timeless place,
Where silence ruled the outer space,
Ominously towering, it stood,
The symbol of a spirit war
Between the one name Lucifer,
And the Morning Star, the ultimate of good.

Enveloped by a trillion planets,
Clean as lightning and hard as granite,
A cosmic coliseum would host the end
Of the war between the lord of sin and death,
And the Omnipotent Creator of man's first breath,
Who will decide who forever will be the Champion..."

"Proclaim the news in every tongue,
Through endless ages and beyond!
Let it be voiced from mountains loud and strong!
Captivity has been set free, salvation bought for you and me,
'Cause Satan is defeated,
And Jesus is The Champion!"

In the darkness, being mocked by those that hated him, Jesus takes on all that we deserve. The full weight of wrath against sin. A life of perfect obedience given for others.

Luke 23:45–46 “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.” (ESV)

“Wave after wave of our sin was poured over Christ’s sinless soul. Again and again during those three hours his soul recoiled and convulsed as all our lies, infidelity, hatreds, jealousies, murders, and pride were poured upon his purity. “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree’” (**Galatians 3:13**). Jesus was cursed as he became sin for us!” Hughes

His body broken for you. His blood shed to establish a new covenant with you.

“The rending of the curtain means that access to God is granted to believers through the death of Jesus Christ and also symbolizes that the old covenant, the Levitical priesthood, and the temple, have come to an end.²⁹³ Now believers, as the letter to the Hebrews teaches, have bold access to God through the death of Jesus as their Great High Priest (Heb. 4:16; 6:19–20; 10:19–22)” TS

Defining, for all who believe, this death becomes yours. This satisfaction of the penalty of sin, yours. His righteousness made yours through a substitutionary death.

Lidie Hewitt “*My Faith Has Found a Resting Place*”

“My faith has found a resting place,
from guilt my soul is freed;
I trust the ever-living One,
his wounds for me shall plead.

I need no other argument,
I need no other plea,
it is enough that Jesus died,
and that he died for me.

Enough for me that Jesus saves,
this ends my fear and doubt;
a sinful soul, I come to him,
he'll never cast me out.

And everything changes.

Timelines and the multiverse. [Loki - Variant] When a variant acted, a new timeline would erupt...

When Jesus dies on the cross the timeline of humanity shifts, it changes direction and sails to redemption.

“In one sense, the whole storyline of the Bible has been about the tragic consequences of that separation and God’s plan to put an end to it. Here, at the moment of Jesus’ death, that plan of redemption comes to its fulfillment. The barrier is removed, the curtain is torn, and for the first time since Eden man is welcomed again into the presence of God.” SR

The Champion. Our King. Savior and Lord. He is who he said he was and he accomplished what he promised. And this means that you are rescued, ransomed out of the grave to have life and purpose and pleasure in him.

On the cross he sees you, personally, taking on your sin. Your burden too heavy to bear.

Hebrews 12:2 “Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.” (ESV)

“He creates the universe, already foreseeing—or should we say “seeing”? There are no tenses in God—the buzzing cloud of flies about the cross, the flayed back pressed against the uneven stake, the nails driven through the medial nerves, the repeated incipient suffocation as the body droops, the repeated torture of back and arms as it is time after time, for breath’s sake hitched up. If I may dare the biological image, God is a “host” who deliberately creates His own parasites; causes us to be that we may exploit and “take advantage of” Him. Herein is love.

This is the diagram of Love Himself, the inventor of all loves.” **C.S. Lewis**, Four Loves

Confirming, champion... victory won. All of it is meant to be compelling.

Compelling Moment

Luke 23:47 “Now when the centurion saw what had taken place, he praised God, saying, “Certainly this man was innocent!” (ESV)

Jesus' death is compelling. We see it in the response of those that witness it. The crowd leaves beating their chests in regret. The Centurion calls Jesus righteous.

Jospeh of Arimathea will risk his status and role to care for the body of his Savior.

Beyond the witnesses that day... this death is compelling because it is unique among all patterns of faith.

Every other way of believing - it is the self that arrives at bliss - or our actions that appease a deity. Only here in Christ does God lower himself and give of himself for us.

Like that day, all of humanity will fall into one of two categories. We are all one of two criminals on the cross.

We can join the rulers and mock Jesus. Using the breaths of agony in our struggle and experience to scoff at Jesus.

Or we can use them to cry out for mercy. To bring nothing but our need and ask to be remembered.

The defining difference is death or paradise.

“The certainty of Jesus’ words to this criminal have been precious to Christians for two millennia. Here is a man being executed for a life of sin, with no time to “make up for it” with a life of righteousness and nothing at all to offer Jesus. And yet his simple request for Jesus to remember him in his kingdom demonstrates his acknowledgment of Jesus’ identity and his trust in Jesus’ ability to save those

whom he wills. It is exactly what King Jesus requires—not righteousness, not credentials, but simple faith.” Story of Redemption

There is no space for neutrality at the cross. You either reject its work, its provision, or you receive it.

And it is so compelling that we stick with it for all of our lives.

There is a lot to Christianity - to living as citizens in the kingdom... but we never move passed the cross.

It's the pattern for all of Christianity.

1 Corinthians 2:2–5 “For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. [3] And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling, [4] and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, [5] so that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God. (ESV)

And through it we become the compelling community that draws others to Jesus. To their own defining moment of trusting him and giving their lives to him.

Like Simon, taking up our cross and following Jesus.

Luke 4:18–19 “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to proclaim good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives
and recovering of sight to the blind,
to set at liberty those who are oppressed,
[19] to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.” (ESV)

It is fulfilled in our hearing and in his death for us.

2 Corinthians 5:17–21 “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. [18] All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; [19] that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not

counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. [20] Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. [21] For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.” (ESV)

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Be compelled to come in - This cross is for you. You can't earn it. You can't pay for it with heritage or wealth. It is a gift if you will ask for mercy, if you will surrender to this king. Come to Jesus. Trust him. Trust his finished work for you. It is forgiveness. Life. Purpose. And a future.

Cling to the Cross - Careful not to grow weary of glorying in the cross. Dwell on it. Live from it. Take it up yourself. So others will see and be seen by Christ.

This is what defines us. This is the moment that makes us. Therefore we can live.

Isaiah 53:10–12 “Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him; he has put him to grief; when his soul makes an offering for guilt, he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days; the will of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. [11] Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities. [12] Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors.” (ESV)